

**A Pastoral Critique of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC)  
Methods of Bereavement Counselling: Retrieving the Eggon Indigenous  
*Awhiku* Concept of Bereavement Management**

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Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,  
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**2015**

**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
DECLARATION**

I, Monday Engom Affiku, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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## Abstract

This study focuses on the exploration of the nature of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management and the methods of the ERCC (Church) bereavement counselling. The purpose of the study is to engage the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management and the current ERCC methods of bereavement counselling into a critical dialogue in order to formulate and develop a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC. Using inculturation as the main tool in this exploration, I argue that by consciously allowing Christian faith and the local culture(s) to engage in a dialogue, the Christian reality will be appropriated from within the perspectives and resources of the Eggon culture to challenge and transform the current ERCC model of bereavement counselling, thereby resulting in the comprehensive model of bereavement counselling. The thesis argues that the current methods of bereavement counselling used by the ERCC among the Eggon Christians are not sufficient. Reasons for this include the ignorance exhibited by the early Christian missionaries who brought the gospel but did not give adequate attention to the Eggon traditional practices of bereavement management in order to incorporate the positive aspects into the Christian model of bereavement counselling. In addition, there is the influence of westernization, urbanization, globalization, multi-ethnic and cultural associations, the internet and other technology in general. The study also finds that many Eggon youths are ignorant of the Eggon traditional methods of bereavement management and its significance. This is due to external influences mentioned above, and to their migration at an early age with their parents, in search of greener pastures to make a living, or to the cities looking for job opportunities. I argue that the failure on the part of the early missionaries as well as the indigenous ERCC leadership to employ an intercultural approach to bereavement counselling is the major cause of the problem of increasing isolation and loneliness of those in need of care as a result of a diminished community support network (involvement). The result is that many bereaved families and those faced with other crises are left feeling isolated and alone as people tend to be more concerned with their immediate families, relegating the accompaniment of others in crisis situations to the pastor or the elders of the church. The question that the study wishes to answer is: How can the ERCC provide bereavement counselling among the Eggon people taking into account their indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management for effective healing? In attempting to answer this question three theories were used to test the church's methods of bereavement counselling, namely inculturation theory, the theory of incorporation and community theory. The study is structured into eight chapters. Participants in the study are categorized into three groups: the ERCC ministers/church elders, elderly members of the Eggon community and the bereaved families. Through interviews and focus group discussions with participants, relevant data was generated and subjected to rigorous analysis. Most of the participants, including the ERCC ministers and some of the early missionaries, acknowledged that they have taken no notice of the model Eggon people used to provide as a coping mechanism to one another during bereavement. This thesis proposes a comprehensive model that encompasses both the Christian and the cultural approach to bereavement counselling.

### **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to God Almighty for the grace, wisdom and strength given to me throughout the course of my study and to my wife Mrs. Mary Atewa Affiku and our children Ashesla Rejoice and Oshla Emmanuel for their sacrifices and love during the period of the study.

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## Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
Abbreviation and Acronyms.....	xiv
<b>Chapter One: Preliminary discussions.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 The motivation for the research.....	1
1.3 Research problem and research objectives.....	2
1.3.1 Research problem and questions.....	2
1.3.2 Research objectives.....	3
1.4 Significance of the study.....	4
1.5 Research design and Methodology.....	4
1.5.1 Research design.....	4
1.5.1.1 Qualitative empirical research.....	5
1.5.1.2 Research site and the procedure to gain access.....	6
1.5.2 Research methodology.....	7
1.5.2.1 Procedures for data collection.....	8
1.5.2.2 Methods of data collection.....	9
1.5.2.3 Research participants.....	14
1.5.3 Data analysis: Procedures and methods.....	16
1.5.3.1 Procedure for data analysis.....	16
1.5.3.2 Methods of data analysis.....	17
1.5.4 Methodological limitations.....	18
1.5.5 Confidentiality and ethical considerations.....	19
1.6 Definition of key concepts.....	19
1.6.1 Pastoral.....	19
1.6.2 Critique.....	20
1.6.3 Method.....	20
1.6.4 Counselling.....	20

1.6.5	Indigenous.....	21
1.7	Outline of the chapters.....	21
1.8	Conclusion.....	24

**Chapter Two: Pastoral Care & Counselling, Bereavement, Inculturation and Community..... 25**

2.1	Introduction.....	25
2.2	The concept of pastoral care and counselling.....	25
2.2.1	Pastoral counselling within the discipline of pastoral care.....	25
2.2.2	The meaning of pastoral care and counselling .....	26
2.3	The concept of bereavement counselling.....	28
2.3.1	The perspectives of bereavement counselling.....	31
2.4	The principal theories underpinning the study.....	36
2.4.1	The framework of inculturation.....	36
2.4.2	The theory of incorporation by Emmanuel Lartey.....	38
2.4.3	The community theory by Evans Maitland.....	39
2.5	Conclusion.....	40

**Chapter Three: Historical background of the Eggon people, understanding death and the Eggon model of bereavement management..... 42**

3.1	Introduction.....	42
3.2	The historical overview of the Eggon People.....	42
3.2.1	Origin of the Eggon people.....	44
3.2.2	Social structure of the Eggon people.....	49
3.2.3	Political structures of the Eggon people.....	53
3.2.4	The economic life of the Eggon people.....	54
3.2.5	The Eggon traditional religious belief.....	56
3.3	Death and bereavement among the Eggon people.....	58
3.3.1	Name of death.....	58
3.3.2	Causes of death.....	58
3.3.3	Ways of disseminating information when death occurs .....	61
3.3.4	Reaction to death .....	62



3.4	The meaning of the word <i>Awhiku</i> as Eggon traditional ways of helping the bereaved.....	64
3.5	The Eggon indigenous model of bereavement management.....	65
3.5.1	<i>Okuj eku</i> wailing and the coming of the people to the deceased's residence.....	65
3.5.2	<i>Onglo okmo</i> bathing the corpse, <i>owu okmo anzho</i> dressing of the corpse and <i>Sai okmo zga etsakpa</i> the lying-in-state.....	67
3.5.3	<i>K'pa engu</i> grave digging and <i>ngybi okmo</i> burial ceremony.....	70
3.5.4	<i>Bij manga</i> drumming, <i>fubonj</i> singing of songs, <i>zhga ara</i> dancing.....	73
3.5.5	<i>Ashum eku</i> bringing of foodstuff, drinks, cash donations and other material condolences.....	78
3.5.6	<i>Ozhu awhi eku</i> staying with the bereaved family during the post-funeral activities.....	81
3.6	The advantages and disadvantages of the Eggon model of bereavement mangement.....	83
3.6.1	The advantages of the Eggon model of bereavement management.....	83
3.6.1.1	The coming of the relatives, community members and friends to the deceased's residence when death occurs.....	83
3.6.1.2	Communal digging of the grave and other funeral preparations...	84
3.6.1.3	Bringing of foodstuff, drinks, cash donations and other material condolences.....	84
3.6.1.5	Staying with the mourners during the post-funeral activities.....	85
3.6.2	The disadvantages of the Eggon model of bereavement management.....	86
3.6.2.1	Subjecting women to overt public display of emotions when death occurs.....	86
3.6.2.2	Speaking mocking words and other unhealthy actions during the funeral dance.....	87
3.6.2.3	Inheritance of widows.....	87
3.6.2.4	Minimal and or lack of control in the community's participation during bereavement management.....	88
3.7	Conclusion.....	88

**Chapter Four: The historical development of the ERCC and its pastoral model of bereavement counselling among the Eggon people..... 90**

4.1	Introduction.....	90
4.2	The historical development of the ERCC.....	90
4.2.1	ERCC vision and mission statement .....	96
4.2.2	ERCC theology and beliefs .....	96
4.2.3	ERCC policies and practices .....	98
4.3	The advent of Christianity (ERCC) to Eggon land.....	98
4.3.1	The reaction of the Eggon people to the Christian gospel .....	100
4.3.2	The influences of the gospel and technology on the Eggon traditional practices.....	102
4.4	The meaning of bereavement counselling in the ERCC.....	106
4.5	The ERCC model of bereavement counselling among the Eggon people.....	107
4.5.1	Pastoral presence in the deceased’s residence when death occurs.....	107
4.5.2	Planning of the funeral service program in collaboration with the deceased’s family.....	109
4.5.3	Wake-keeping.....	111
4.5.4	Conducting funeral service.....	111
4.5.5	Collecting and contributing of material condolences.....	117
4.7	The advantages and disadvantages of the ERCC model of bereavement Counselling.....	118
4.7.1	The advantages of the ERCC model of bereavement counselling.....	118
4.7.1.1	Pastoral presence in the deceased’s residence when death occurs... 118	
4.7.1.2	Planning of the funeral program, wake-keeping and conducting of funeral service.....	119
4.7.1.3	One-on-one counselling opportunities with the pastor.....	120
4.7.2	The disadvantages of the ERCC model of bereavement counselling.....	121
4.7.2.1	Counselling only left in the hands of the pastor or church elders... 121	
4.7.2.2	Lack of forum for group discussion or communal counselling.....	121
4.8	Conclusion.....	122

**Chapter Five: Drinking from the Eggon’s well: The dialogue between the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* and the ERCC model of bereavement counselling..... 124**

5.1 Introduction..... 124

5.2 Changes in the Eggon traditional *Awhiku* ways of helping the bereaved family... 125

5.2.1 Wailing or crying when death occurs..... 125

5.2.2 Superstitions about death..... 128

5.2.3 The nature of grave, burial materials and shift in the roles played..... 130

5.2.4 Drumming, dancing, and masquerades..... 132

5.2.5 Inheritance of widows..... 133

5.2.6 Paradigm shift from African worldview of inter-dependency to the attitude of self-sufficiency..... 134

5.3 The dialogue between the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* and the ERCC model of bereavement counselling..... 135

5.3.1 Forms of disseminating information when death occurs..... 135

5.3.2 Ministry of presence..... 136

5.3.3 Burial procedure..... 140

5.3.4 Collections and contributions of material condolences..... 141

5.3.5 Post-funeral counselling..... 142

5.4 Conclusion..... 143

**Chapter Six: The proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC..... 144**

6.1 Introduction..... 144

6.2 The proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC... 144

6.2.1 Pastoral presence in the deceased’s residence when death occurs..... 145

6.2.1.1 Allowing individuals the opportunity to grieve in a way that is best for them..... 148

6.2.2 Burial procedure and ritual as a moment of healing..... 150

6.2.2.1 Guiding and planning funeral program in collaboration with the bereaved’s family..... 150

6.2.2.2 Organizing wake-keeping service..... 152

6.2.2.3 Conducting funeral service..... 153

6.2.2.4 Collecting and contributing of material condolences..... 157

6.2.3	Post-funeral counselling.....	158
6.2.3.1	One-on-one counselling with the pastor.....	158
6.2.3.2	Developing a lay-counsellors’ grief recovery ministry within the church.....	159
6.2.3.3	The need for referral to seek for other professionals’ further support.....	163
6.2.3.4	Developing policies that will guide and protect the rights of the bereaved family.....	168
6.3	Conclusion .....	169

**Chapter Seven: Reflections on the facilitating comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for holistic healing..... 172**

7.1	Introduction.....	172
7.2	The location and context of ERCC Bukuru.....	172
7.3	Reflections on the recent bereavement counselling experiences in ERCC Bukuru.....	173
7.3.1	Dissemination of information when death occurs.....	174
7.3.2	Pastoral presence in the deceased’s residence.....	174
7.3.3	Wake-keeping service.....	176
7.3.4	Conducting the funeral service.....	176
7.3.5	Collecting and contributing of condolence materials.....	176
7.3.6	Post-funeral counselling.....	176
7.3.6.1	One-on-one counselling session with the pastor.....	176
7.3.6.2	The development of the lay-counsellors’ grief recovery ministry within the church.....	177
7.4	Analysis on the reflections of the example of the bereavement counselling .....	178
7.5	Conclusion.....	181

**Chapter Eight: Summary of the thesis, conclusions and recommendations..... 182**

8.1	Introduction.....	182
8.2	Summary of the thesis.....	183
8.3	Conclusions.....	190
8.4	Suggestion/recommendations for further research.....	193

<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>217</b>
Appendix 1: Turnitin Originality Report.....	217
Appendix 2a: Informed consent letter (English).....	219
Appendix 2b: Informed consent letter (Hausa).....	220
Appendix 3a: Informed consent form (English) .....	221
Appendix 3b: Informed consent form (Hausa).....	222
Appendix 4a: Letter of request to gate keepers for permission.....	223
Appendix 4b: Gate keepers’ letter of permission.....	224
Appendix 5a: Letter of request to pastoral counsellor to offer counselling services.....	225
Appendix 5b: Pastoral counsellor’s letter of acceptance.....	226
Appendix 6a: Letter of request to the medical Doctor to offer counselling services.....	227
Appendix 6b: Medical Doctor’s letter of acceptance.....	228
Appendix 7: Ethical clearance letter.....	229
Appendix 8a: Questions for the ERCC Ministers (English).....	230
Appendix 8b: Questions for the ERCC Ministers (Hausa).....	231
Appendix 9a: Questions for the elderly persons in Eggon (English).....	232
Appendix 9b: Questions for the elderly persons in Eggon (Hausa).....	233
Appendix 10a: Questions for the bereaved family (English).....	234
Appendix 10b: Questions for the bereaved family (Hausa).....	235
Appendix 11a: Questions for the focus group discussions with the ERCC Ministers and church elders (English).....	236
Appendix 11b: Questions for focus group discussions with the ERCC Ministers and church elders (Hausa).....	237
Appendix 12a: Questions for focus group discussions with the Widows/Widowers (English).....	238
Appendix 12b: Questions for focus group discussions with the Widows/Widowers (Hausa).....	239
Appendix 13a: Questions for focus group discussions with the bereaved family (English).....	240
Appendix 13a: Questions for focus group discussions with the bereaved family (Hausa).....	241
Appendix 14: Samples of some transcribed interviews.....	242
Appendix 15: Tables showing distribution of the participants.....	249

## **Abbreviation and Acronyms**

BA:	Bachelor of Arts
BTH:	Bachelor of Theology
CBC:	Conference Bible College
CBTS:	Conference Bible Training School
CCCN:	Church of Christ in Central Nigeria
CEM:	Children Evangelism Ministry
CPE:	Clinical Pastoral Education
CRI:	Christian Religious Instructions
DTH:	Diploma of Theology
DCRE:	Diploma in Christian Religious Education
EC:	Executive Council
ECDA:	Eggon Cultural Development Associations
EKAN:	Ekklessiyar Krista a Nigeria
EKAS:	Ekklessiyar Krista a Sudan
ERCC:	Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ
GCC:	General Church Council
LCC:	Local Church Council
LGC:	Local Government Council
LGEA:	Local Government Education Authority
LTI:	Lutheran Theological Institute
MA:	Master of Arts
MTH:	Master of Theology
NASB:	New American Standard Bible
NIV:	New International Version
NCE:	National Teacher Certificate
PC:	Pastoral Counselling
PhD:	Doctor of Philosophy
SSCE:	Senior Secondary Certificate Examination
SRPC:	School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics
SUM:	Sudan United Mission
TCNN:	Theological College of Northern Nigeria
TEE:	Theological Education by Extension

TEKAN: Tarrayar Ekklesiyoyin Kristi A Nigeria (Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria)

UKZN: University of KwaZulu-Natal

WAEC: West African Examination Council

WARC: World Alliance of Reformed Churches

WCC: World Council of Churches

WCRC: World Communion of Reformed Churches

# CHAPTER ONE

## Preliminary Discussions

### 1.1 Introduction

This study seeks to critique the methods of bereavement counselling in the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) by trying to retrieve the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management in order to develop a more comprehensive model of bereavement counselling that will be relevant to Eggon Christians. The study attempts to explore how the ERCC undertakes bereavement counselling among the Eggon Christians and the nature of bereavement management used by the Eggon people during the pre-colonial era. To achieve this, the study uses inculturation as a tool to help understand the mutual dialogue between the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling. In addition, the theory of incorporation by Emmanuel Lartey and the community theory by Evans Maitland will be utilized to assess the effect of the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling among the Eggon Christians.

This chapter provides an overview of the study's structure with introductory remarks that focus on the motivations for the study, research problem and objectives, significance of the study, research methodology and design, definitions of key concepts, outline of the thesis and the closing remarks.

### 1.2 The motivation for the research

This study is motivated by two factors: First, the changes and the disorganization of the Eggon cultural and traditional practices as a result of the advent of Christianity in the early 1920s. This made first generation Eggon Christians to embrace the Christian gospel that came with the western worldview as their major source of morality. The Christian missionary in turn tried to make them replicas of the European model of Christian life without any substantial reference to their indigenous culture and customs.

The second motivation is due to the influences of westernization, urbanization, globalization, multi-ethnic associations and the internet which have created challenges whereby today many Eggon sons and daughters are living with two worldviews: the Eggon traditional communal lifestyle and the western individualistic worldview. The latter seems to be more appreciated; the result is that many bereaved families and those faced with other crises are left feeling



isolated and alone, as people tend to be more concerned with their immediate family, relegating the accompaniment of others in crisis situations to the pastor or the elders of the church. This growing individualism is threatening to destroy the communal management of grieving and general supportive network among the Eggon people. This study therefore seeks to engage the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling in a critical dialogue in order to formulate or develop a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling to be used by the ERCC.

### **1.3 Research problem and the objective of the study**

This section is concerned with the key question the study seek to address as well as the objectives of the study.

#### **1.3.1 Research problem and questions**

This study deals with the issue of counselling which falls under the discipline of practical theology. While other theological disciplines may begin in theory or doctrine, practical theology in particular takes responsibility for the description of this world, its inhabitants, and the way it negotiates religious practices and theology.<sup>1</sup> Oden asserts that practical theology “seeks to join the theoretical with the practical. It is theoretical insofar as it seeks to develop a consistent theory of ministry, accountable to Scripture and tradition experientially sound and internally self-consistent” (1983:x-xi). The research problem which this study seeks to address is the diminishing of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management which has enabled them to cope with different crisis situations over the years. This study will therefore seek to answer this key or central research question: How can the ERCC provide bereavement counselling among the Eggon people taking into account their indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management for effective healing? In order to answer this question, here are the sub-questions:

1. How do pastors from the ERCC do bereavement counselling among the people of Eggon?

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<sup>1</sup> This statement was made by the organizers of the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the International Academy of Practical Theology (IAPT) held in Toronto, Canada with the topic, “Complex identities in a shifting world: One God, many stories” <http://www.ia-pt.org/conferences/2013-conference/> (Accessed 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2013).

2. What is the nature of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management?
3. What are the convergences and divergences between the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling?
4. What kind of methods will be relevant to contemporary Eggon Christians?

The research question simply refers to the question the study seeks to address or the phenomenon investigated. Kopano Ratele argues that “the sources of research questions encompass the extant literature on the problem, an exploratory investigation on what to study {particularly where there is insufficient research or an undocumented aspect of the social life on the topic under review} and personal speculations and experience” (2006:540). This was the basis that informed my formulation of the above sub-questions as well as the participants’ questions for the interviews and focus groups discussions.

### **1.3.2 Research objectives**

The objectives of this study are purposely designed to respond to the above key research question and the sub-questions:

1. To investigate the methods of bereavement counselling rendered by the ERCC among the Eggon Christians.
2. To explore the nature of the Eggon indigenous methods of bereavement management.
3. To interrogate the convergences and divergences between the Eggon indigenous and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling.
4. To develop a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling to be used by the ERCC.

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

Dahlberg and McCaig argue that the essence of most academic study is to make new discoveries in order to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and/or to help improve on existing knowledge (2010:6, Reynolds 2012:14). The motivations for this study and the reasons for choosing the topic point to the urgent need for a study that will investigate the causes of the problem in order to tackle them (see Reynolds 2012:14).

First, the study examined how the ERCC pastors rendered bereavement counselling among the Eggon people. Second, the study explored the nature of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management. It was discovered that the methods used by the church were inadequate as it does not take into account the Eggon traditional model of bereavement management. My purpose in this study is to engage the Eggon indigenous and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling into a critical dialogue with the aim to develop or formulate more comprehensive and practical methods that will be relevant for the Eggon Christians within their context for holistic healing.

Lastly, although this study was conducted using a particular ethnic group, it may shed some light on common experiences shared by other ethnic groups who are recipients of the ministry of bereavement counselling within the ERCC. The findings of this study could motivate the ERCC to make a concerted effort towards providing bereavement counselling that will be cross-culturally relevant. Research by Walsh-Burke made us aware that a pastoral counsellor's failure to understand and acknowledge cultural perceptions of the client can be perceived by the mourners as disrespect and may impede his or her ability to be helpful (2006:63). Hence, the findings could encourage the ERCC theological institutions to develop and formulate a curriculum of theological studies that prepares and empowers students sufficiently to engage in cross-cultural care and counselling to those who are emotionally troubled. It will also serve as an entry point for further research on related issues in this field and other academic disciplines.

## **1.5 Research design and methodology**

### **1.5.1 Research design**

The study is a qualitative empirical research which seeks to present the people's spoken words as the researcher interacts with them through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim argue that qualitative study allows participants to

speak for themselves in their own words as it seeks “to describe and interpret people’s feelings and experiences in human terms rather than through quantification and measurement” (2006:272). Qualitative research also allows for new theological integrations that can help the researcher to go beyond initial preconceptions and frameworks. Smith opines that qualitative research helps the researcher to present the “explanation of the process occurring in local contexts...chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanation” (1984:15). Flick also maintains that in qualitative research “...there is mutual interdependence of the single parts of the research process and this has to be taken into account much more” (2002:40). It is this understanding of mutual interdependence that makes qualitative research most appropriate for my study.

This section presents the plan of the study which serves as a road map which provides direction on how the research was carried out. Kumar argues that “a research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so concerned as to obtain answers to research questions or problems” (2012:94). Mouton and Marais (1990) noted that a research design is aimed at planning and structuring a “given research project in such a manner that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximized” (Mouton and Marais in 2006:37). Durrheim argues that “a good research design is both “valid and coherent” (2006:38). The design coherence according to Durrheim is “concerned about whether a study will be able to achieve a broader set of objectives, including answering research questions” (2006:39). The researcher has adopted an interpretive research model to explore the meaning of the participants’ responses (see Reynolds 2012:95; Durrheim 2006:38). Research design as argued by Kumar is the blueprint of the entire study process (2012:94) and can maintain or be in the following order, with each step building upon the last and leading to the next one: empirical method, purpose of the study, context of the study, theoretical paradigm, and research techniques employed to collect and analyse data (Durrheim 2006:37; Reynolds 2012:95;).

### **1.5.1.1 Qualitative empirical research**

The study was conducted within Nasarawa-Eggon Local Government Area in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study took the form of a qualitative empirical work which handled both the written and spoken information from interactions with the respondents through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Henning states that, “a qualitative study is a study presented largely in language [as opposed to figures] and is about the meaning constructed

from the language that presents the data” (2013:31). Henning further reiterates that qualitative study allows for new theological integrations that can help the researcher to go beyond the initial preconceptions and frameworks, as against quantitative study which replaces informants’ expressions with figures and is less able to explore subtle meanings (2013:3). The best way to describe or understand the phenomenon being studied, according to Babbie & Mouton, is to look at it “from the perspective of the social actors themselves” (2001:270).

The choice of the qualitative research method as the most appropriate for this study was due to the fact that the topic under discussion is relatively unexplored by key scholars amongst the Eggon indigenous people and the ERCC. Hence, this approach enabled the researcher to explore the nature of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling among the Eggon Christians, as he seeks to listen to the participants and build an understanding based on their views (see Ukeh 2013:43; Creswell 2003:30) with the aim of developing a more comprehensive model that will be relevant for Eggon Christians.

#### **1.5.1.2 Research site and the procedure to gain access**

Strydom argues that the “nature of the problem is automatically directly linked to the particular field in which the inquiry is to be undertaken” (2005:282). The study is mainly within the Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa state, Nigeria. Since the study focuses on Eggon indigenous people and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling, the participants that were chosen are persons who have an idea about Eggon traditional ways of helping bereaved persons and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling (see Muller 2009:166). The focus is on the three major Eggon clans, namely: Anzo clan, Eholo clan and the Eg̃o Ero clan. The essence is to obtain fair and balanced views on both the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management as well as the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling among the Eggon people. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with ERCC ministers who spent at least 3-5 years of their ministry among the Eggon people within the last ten years, and some Eggon elderly persons (male and female) between the ages of 50-80 years who are familiar with both the indigenous practices of bereavement management among the Eggon people and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling. The participants selected cut across the three Eggon major clans, as the idea was to obtain more coherent and balanced views. The essence for the choice of this

age group was to enable me to obtain their views concerning the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management even before the coming of the Christian missionaries into the Eggon land and the current practices. Finally, bereaved families who have lost a loved one no less than two years prior to the interview were chosen, so as to enable them the opportunity to talk through their bereavement. The participants were from among the Eggon Christians who are members of the ERCC, since the study focuses on exploring the model of bereavement counselling in the ERCC and among the Eggon indigenous people. Both the individual in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions were conducted in English and Hausa languages respectively. The essence was to enable the participants to fully express themselves in clear terms. The three focus group discussions were conducted mainly in the Hausa language. Hence, it became necessary for the questions to be translated from English into the Hausa language to facilitate our interaction and to put the participants at ease as they expressed their views (see Appendix 7a-12b). The data from the field were carefully analyzed and translated from Hausa to English so as to avoid the danger of losing its essence. The next section explains how the research was conducted.

## **1.5.2 Research methodology**

The researcher needs both methodology (philosophy and general principle guiding the research) and methods; that is, the tools used in gathering information. Research methodology and method serve as a map or compass indicating the direction and processes the researcher follows to arrive at his/her conclusion(s) (see Dawson 2002:22; Hofstee 2013:107). According to Henning, methodology is “concerned with the specific ways”, that is, the methods the researcher uses to try to understand better his or her worldview as well as that of others in a given context (2013:15). Henning further argues that the research methodology is “the coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the ‘goodness of fit’ to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose” (2013:36).

### **1.5.2.1 Procedures for data collection**

Having identified my research questions, key participants who had the potential of providing rich information were acknowledged. Wolf Michael Roth argues that the selection of relevant participants to answer one’s research question is a key element of the study design (2005:329). I used two means of communication to establish contacts with my participants:

phone calls and emails. Other participants were contacted and presented with the informed consent letter and the accompanying form for them to study. Afterwards, appointments were arranged to conduct the interviews. As the researcher, I at some points, encountered difficulties in the area of searching for participants to be interviewed due to network problems and also some of the villages were very far from each other. This really required a great deal of money to do all the travelling. And then, I lost contact with some of the intended participants due to financial constraints that prevented me from visiting some of the villages a second time.

There were no difficulties in getting permission because, first, most of the people were familiar to me as the researcher and they viewed me as a clergy colleague within the Eggon and the ERCC. Second, a letter of permission from the gatekeepers was given and the authorities gave those concerned appropriate information concerning my coming and the reasons thereof prior to the time of the interviews and focus group discussions (see Appendices 4a and 4b).

The interview questions were not given to the research participants in advance because the objective was to get their candid responses to the questions and I did not want them to engage in prior consultations on the questions which could compromise their responses. Therefore, it can be argued that most of the responses represented a true reflection of what the participants know concerning the methods of bereavement counselling in both the Eggon culture and the ERCC respectively. Where the participants were not clear in their responses, probing and engaging approaches were used to elicit more information from them (see Flick 2009). However, even with further probing questions, some of the responses do not contain any useful information for the study. Some participants confessed that they lacked proper knowledge of the methods of bereavement counselling used by the ERCC, hence, they opted to decline carrying on with the interview, and the interview ended at that level. The field research was conducted within the period of July 2014 and December 2014 in order to engage in a thorough and rigorous investigation with the participants during both the individual in-depth interview and focus group discussions.

### **1.5.2.2 Methods of data collection**

The researcher embarked on two major methods of gathering information from different sources: Library work, which consisted of reviewing the existing literature, and field research which was concerned with individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

### **The library work**

This focused on materials that were relevant and related to the theories, methodology and literature on the subject of bereavement counselling and debate in this regards. The aim was to discover the gap that exists, namely lack of comprehensive model of bereavement counselling that would be transformative in nature. Primarily, the researcher used the libraries of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI), the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), Bukuru, the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Seminary, Fadan Ayu, Sanga Local Government, Kaduna State, Nigeria, and Internet sources. These were of great help to me in terms of providing me with the relevant resources needed for this study.

### **Field research**

The field research was conducted within the Nasarawa-Eggon Local Government Area. This local government was deliberately chosen because all the three major Eggon clans, namely, Anzo, Eholo and Egoṅ Ero, are found within this area. This selected population gave the researcher good representative form(s) of bereavement management in the context of *Awhiku* among the Eggon people.

The field research was divided into two parts: individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions using an interview schedule. Individual in-depth interviews were appropriate for this study because it sought to explore the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling and the Eggon Indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management from the ERCC Ministers, elderly Eggon persons and bereaved families' lived experiences. Henning opines that, "... participants can give their experiences best when asked to do so in their own words, in lengthy individual reflective interviews and in observing the context in which some of these experiences have been played out" (2013:37). The focus group discussions, according to Litoselliti, provide a rich variety of responses which complement those obtained from individual interviews, and it also enables the participants to learn from each other, "reconsidering or re-evaluating their own understanding and experiences" (2003:19).



Structured questions were used for both the individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The questions were designed for three different categories of participants, namely: the ERCC Ministers, the Eggon elderly persons, and the bereaved family. These two methods enabled the researcher to see the reality of the context of the study as it gave the opportunity for the researcher to interact with the respondents. The individual in-depth interview sessions lasted for 30-35 minutes each while the focus group discussion lasted for 40-50 minutes with each group. The individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were recorded using a digital voice recorder with the consent of the interviewees (see Appendix 3a & 3b). I shall now turn to discuss what these two methods involve, indicating how each of them is relevant to the study. Thereafter the description of the research participants will be presented.

### **Individual in-depth interview**

Kvale defines qualitative research interviews as attempts to understand the world from the participants' point of view and unfold the meaning of the people's experiences (1996:1). An individual in-depth interview according to Johnson refers to "face-to-face interaction between an interviewer and an informant, and it seeks to build the kind of intimacy that is common for mutual disclosure" (2002:103). Henning describes an interview participant as one who agrees to "travel or wander" with the researcher and "can shed optimal light" on the subject under investigation (2013:70-71). Woods affirms the relevance of flexibility in this method of data collection and maintains that the interview is a method used in research of collecting information about the experiences of others to "supplement and extend our knowledge about individual(s) thoughts, feelings and behaviours, meanings, interpretations..." (2011, n.p). Henning further comments that interviewing is a way of life that "assumes that the individual's perspective is an important part of the fabric of society and of our joint knowledge of social processes and of the human condition" (2013:50).

The individual in-depth interview sessions were held with a total sampling of thirty-one persons comprising of twelve ERCC ministers who had spent at least 3-5 years of their ministry among the Eggon people within the last ten years. The reason for the choice of twelve Ministers and the years of experience is because the total number of the ERCC Local Church Council (LCCs) that are predominantly Eggon in the site of my study are about 20-25; thus I hope their responses will give me a good representation of the methods of

bereavement counselling the ERCC pastors give among the Eggon people. Nine Eggon elderly persons (male and female) between the ages of 50-80 years who were familiar with both the indigenous practices of bereavement management among the Eggon people and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling were chosen. The selection included the three major clans among the Eggons, namely, Eggo Anzo, Eggo Eholo and Eggo Ero, in order to obtain balanced and coherent views. The purpose for the choice of age group was to enable me to obtain their views concerning the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management before the coming of the Christian missionaries into the Eggon land as well as the influences of westernization, urbanization, multi-ethnic and cultural associations, internet and other technology in general that might have impacted their current practices. Finally, ten persons who have lost a loved one no less than two years prior to the interview participated so as to grant the person(s) the opportunity to talk through their experiences. The participants were from among the Eggon Christians who are members of the ERCC since the study focuses on exploring the methods of bereavement counselling within the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* and the ERCC. This provided essential information concerning the kind of supports the mourners received from the two contexts.

The individual in-depth interviews were transcribed and participants' recorded words were typed verbatim. The recordings were listened to several times and analytical notes that captured the attention of the researcher were made during the transcription. These were cross checked to get a clear image of the interviews and the information drawn from the interview sessions for effective analysis and interpretation of data (see Kelly 2006:303).

### **Focus group discussion**

Focus group discussion is “where participants share and respond to comments, ideas and perceptions” (see Litoselliti 2003:1; Kumar, 2012:127). Kelly describes a focus group as “a general term given to a research interview conducted with a group” (2006:304). A focus group, according to Kelly, is “typically a group of people who share a similar type of experience, but not naturally constituted as an existing social group” (2006:304). In this form of data collection, the participants respond to and build on the views expressed by others in the group. This is an approach that produces a range of opinions and experiences, and thus generates insightful information (see Dawson 2002:30; Litoselliti 2003:2). Hennink defends

that “the purpose of the focus group discussion is to identify a range of different views around the research topic and to gain an understanding of the issues from the perspectives of the participants themselves” (2007:4). Mouton adds that focus group discussions “allow people to communicate in a more meaningful way on a particular topic” (2001:292). It is this synergistic approach to discussion on a particular topic and the meaningful contribution from participants that focus groups offer that was harnessed to enrich the present study (see Mouton 2001:292). The groups were made up of six to eight members who shared certain things in common and who were familiar with each other. This also made the interaction between them freer (see Litoselliti 2003:32).

This approach is necessary because of the influence of the interviewers on respondents’ comments and the limitation of pre-determined chosen questioning in terms of enabling spontaneous responses or identifying new issues. This form of data collection creates greater spontaneity in the contribution of participants as it replicates every day social interactions more than a traditional one-to-one interview (Litoselliti 2003:2; Hennink 2007:5). Kumar observes that “this method consumes less time and is not very expensive compared to others” (2012:128). The problem with this method as argued by Kumar is that if the discussion is not properly directed, only the opinions of those who dominate the discussion will be reflected (2012:128). A focus group discussion that typically consists of six to ten participants is enough to facilitate meaningful dialogue and make the collection and analysis of data feasible, but the size can range, and can be as few as four (see Litoselliti 2003:3; Tamilio 2011:19). Litoselliti further argues that a “larger group is difficult to manage, moderate, and analyze successfully” and recommends a smaller group which to her is “more appropriate if the aim is to explore complex, controversial, emotional topics or to encourage detailed accounts” (2003:3). Litoselliti further explains that “small groups offer more opportunity for people to talk and are more practical to set up and manage, as they can easily take place in less formal settings, such as homes and restaurants” (2003:3).

This section involved three focus group discussions: the ERCC ministers and church elders focus group, widows and the widowers group and the bereaved family<sup>2</sup> group. To ensure effective interaction, the focus group discussions involved between 6-8 persons from each group and lasted between 40-50 minutes. A few issues were identified for the discussion but

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<sup>2</sup> The participants under the bereaved family group are youths who had suffered the loss of a parent or both parents, siblings, paternal or maternal relatives, a friend, colleague or intended marriage partner.

the discussions were open and sensitive to every opportunity to include the additional relevant issues as the discussion progressed (see Kumar 2012:128).

In order to gain access to participants in the three focus groups, the following procedures were followed: for the ERCC ministers/church elders and the bereaved family focus group, the researcher first contacted them individually and afterward an appointed venue was agreed upon. For the widows and the widowers focus group, their leaders mobilized them and suggested the names of the participants who were from the Eggon tribe and from within the three Eggon major clans. Thereafter I met twice with each group; the first meeting was an introductory session where they were told what was expected of them while the second meeting was the discussion proper. The choice of the ERCC ministers/church elders group was to gain more comprehensive information on the methods of bereavement counselling ERCC uses among the Eggon people since the ministers and church elders carry the obligation for the pastoral care and nurturing of the church members (see ERCC Service Handbook 56-60; ERCC Constitution 2009:41-43). Choice of the widows, widowers and bereaved family groups was informed by the fact that they were the people who received the support directly. The selection of the participants was based on the following: first, persons were chosen who had lost a loved one no-less than two years prior to the interview, so as to grant the person(s) the opportunity to talk through their experience; second, persons from among the three Eggon major clans were chosen, so as to obtain fair representative views about the Eggon indigenous communal caring; thirdly, members of ERCC were selected as this would enable them to express their opinions on the kinds of supports received from both sides. Finally, the selection of the participants was purposive based on those thought to potentially be 'information-rich', who would provide the information needed (see Kumar 2012:192; Kelly 2006:304). During the actual session, the participants sat in a circle for easy communication and interactive participation. This was also to help ensure that participants were able to address everyone and helped to create a friendly, informal atmosphere (Litoselliti 2003:48).

### **1.5.2.3 Research Participants**

The research participants fall within three categories: the ERCC ministers, the elderly Eggon persons and bereaved families. The break-down of participants interviewed was as follows: twelve ERCC Ministers, nine Eggon elderly persons, male and female, between the ages of

50-80; ten persons who had lost a loved one no-less than two years prior to the interview, so as to grant the person(s) the opportunity to talk this through. All the participants were presented with an informed consent letter and form which they signed (see Appendices 2a & 2b and 3a & 3b). It is important to state here that amongst the ERCC ministers, there was no female representation as the church does not practice women's ordination. For all other categories, including the focus group discussion with the ERCC ministers and church elders group, females were represented. Although the church does not ordain women, women participate fully in the leadership and decision making of the church, from the national to the class level, which is the lowest structure in the hierarchy of the church.

The participants in both the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews fell within different educational levels ranging from the Primary School Leaving Certificate to Master's Degree and from various age brackets. Their exposure on the subject in question also differed. With the ERCC ministers and church elders, they had more information concerning the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling as they are responsible for counselling those who are emotionally hurt or troubled. The elderly Eggon persons had more experience of the Eggon traditional ways of helping those who are bereaved since they were deeply involved in providing coping skills to one another. The bereaved families had thoughts on both methods, more so than the other categories of participants, simply because they were the recipients of the support directly. Notwithstanding, in each of the categories of respondents mentioned, their level of exposure and expression also differs and to make sense of why the participants responded the way they did, an awareness of their educational background is necessary. Similarly, information concerning the educational levels of the respondents, their roles and experiences in both the church and among the Eggon people as well as their age ranges helps in clarifying some of the factors responsible for the responses they gave during the course of the interviews and focus group discussions.

My study covers two areas: the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling. In order to get complete pictures of Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* methods of bereavement counselling and the ERCC, the following categories of people were engaged in an interview and focus group discussion.

### **ERCC Ministers**

The twelve ministers interviewed were chosen based on their years of experience during their ministry among the Eggon dominated congregations for at least five to last ten years. They possessed the following educational qualifications: two had a Master's in Theology and Divinity degrees respectively, while six had a Bachelor of Theology degree and the other four had a Diploma in Theology. Their ages were between 35 and 80 years (see Appendices 8a & 8b, and Appendix 15, Table one).

### **Eggon elderly persons (male and female)**

The nine Eggon elderly male and female participants were purposively selected, cutting across gender and various levels of education, and were mainly those who fall between 50 years and above. From the three Eggon clans, they were chosen as they would be able to express their views on the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management before the arrival of Christian missionaries, and the aftermath. Their educational qualifications are as follows: two had 1<sup>st</sup> degree, two had a diploma and the other five included a primary school leaving certificate and adult school (see Appendix 9a & 9b also Appendix 15 Table two).

### **Bereaved family**

A total number of ten persons who have lost a loved one no-less than two years prior to the interview were selected so as to grant the person(s) the opportunity to talk through their experience. They possessed the following educational qualifications: two had 1<sup>st</sup> degree, two had a national certificate of education (NCE), three had Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) qualifications, one had a primary school leaving certificate and the other two had adult education. Their age brackets fell between 30 and 80 years (see appendices 10a & 10b also Appendix 15 Table three).

### **ERCC Ministers and church elders focus group discussions**

The focus group discussion was conducted with the ERCC ministers and church elders, whose ages ranged from 35 to 75 and who had varying academic backgrounds. The participants were eight in number, five were male and three female (see Appendices 11a & 11b also Appendix 14 Table four).

### **Widows and widowers group**

The focus group discussion was also conducted with widows and widowers, whose ages ranged from 35 to 65; they also had varying academic backgrounds. The numbers of participants were seven, three were male and four were female (see Appendices 12a & 12b also Appendix 15 table four).

### **The bereaved family group**

The focus group discussion was conducted with a total number of eight bereaved family, whose ages ranged from 25 to 45 and who had varying academic backgrounds. The participants were divided equally, four were male and four female (see Appendices 13a & 13b also Appendix 15 table four).

## **1.5.3 Data analysis: procedures and methods**

### **1.5.3.1 Procedure for data analysis**

Having explained how the research data was collected, I will now move on to discuss ways by which data was analyzed. Swinton and Mowat argue that “data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the complicated mass of qualitative data that the researcher generates during the research process” (2007:57). Swinton and Mowat further state that analysis refers to the process of breaking down the data and thematizing it in ways which draw out the meanings hidden within the text. The first attempt to analyze the data was to upload the interviews from the digital voice recorder to the computer and label each of them. After this, the researcher tried to listen to the conversations repeatedly and transcribed these verbatim into text (2007:57). Reynolds argues that replaying the tapes several times affords the researcher the opportunity to go deeper into the minds of the interviewees thereby adding to the quality of the data available (2012:105). The data generated from the field was reflected upon through engagement with other resources such as literature and the researcher’s personal and professional experiences (see Swinton and Mowat 2007:57).

The researcher used the names of the groups and categories of participants as codes for the individual in-depth interviews as follows: the ERCC ministers, Eggon elderly persons, and the bereaved family. The focus group discussions were also coded according to their respective groups, namely: widows and widowers’ group, the ERCC ministers/church elders group and the bereaved family’s group (see Appendix 15).

### **1.5.3.2 Methods of data analysis**

The researcher analyzed the qualitative data collected from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, according to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, is a search for themes that emerge during data collection as a means to describe an important phenomenon (2006:3). Thematic analysis as argued by Ibrahim provides the opportunity to code and categorize data into themes (2012:12), after which the categories of themes in the body of data collected are then identified and discussed (see Fulcher 2013:5). Theological analysis was also employed to engage the data with the existing literature on bereavement counselling. The transcribed document was carefully read and manually coded into the data (see Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006:4). Reynolds argues that “coding is done in order to produce a coherent and comprehensible analysis for readers who are not directly acquainted with the social world of the participants” (2012:106). This process involves a careful listening to the interviews recorded thereby identifying meaningful categories of themes that emerge from the data collection. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane argue that it is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for the analysis (2006:4). Joffe and Yardley maintain that “a theme refers to a specific pattern found in the data in which one is interested” (2004:57). Joffe and Yardley further argue that in thematic analysis, “a theme of a coding category can refer to the manifest content of the data, that is, something directly observable, such as mention of the term ‘stigma’ in a series of transcripts. Alternatively, it may refer to a more latent level, such as talk in which stigma is implicitly referred to (for example, by comments about not wanting other people to know about an attack of panic or epilepsy)” (2004:57). The researcher sorted the coded data into themes related to the research questions and other related issues that emerged in the course of individual in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions. The coding pattern chosen for this study is mostly inductive, that is, from the raw information itself. The reason is because inductive themes drawn from the data, as argued by Joffe and Yardley, are often useful in new areas of research (2004:58). Joffe and Yardley further observe that in any research that is qualitative in nature, no theme can be entirely inductive or deductive since the researcher’s knowledge and preconceptions will inevitably influence the identification of themes. Coding in thematic analytic research is taxing and time consuming because there are generally no standardized categories, instead the researcher codes in order to answer the research questions (2004:58-59). The data was coded thematically into the



following topics: the respondents' personal understanding of the etymology and the meaning of the word *Awhiku* as a traditional way of helping the bereaved; the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management; changes in the Eggon traditional *Awhiku* ways of helping the bereaved family; the methods of bereavement management that needed to be retained; respondents' personal understanding of the meaning of bereavement counselling; the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling; the Eggon methods of bereavement management as noticed by the ERCC pastors; and finally the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management adopted by the ERCC.

#### **1.5.4 Methodological limitations**

The researcher's insider position as a member of the Eggon tribe and also as clergy from the ERCC connected him to the participants through a trustworthy and legitimate social network that facilitated his access and rapport with the participants (see Chavez 2008:482). However, this insider position has both advantages and disadvantages. Some of the disadvantages include being biased, that is, the tendency to draw oneself closer to the participants as members of his community rather than viewing issues at hand from the perspective of an objective researcher (Reynolds 2012:106; Dahlberg and McCaig 2010:1-12, Chavez 2008:478). In order to overcome this limitation, in-depth explanation of the role of a researcher was given in order to facilitate critical distance and respect for my role, not as someone "working on behalf of the church" but as a scholar seeking critical information that will contribute to knowledge as Reynolds explains (2012:106; Dahlberg and McCaig 2010: 6, Chavez 2008:485). Chavez argues that "an insider's familiarity with the community can provide facile and economic access and movement in the field as well as provide multiple levels of insight about human behaviour necessary for data collection, interpretation, and representation" (2008:480). Chavez further postulates that this is possible because the community sees the researcher as a friend and not as enemy (2008:490). However, this is one of the potential disadvantages according to Flick for an outsider researcher who is not familiar with the people, and may need to some extent to get into the "natives' heads, skins, or shoes" so as to really understand their mode of operation and activities (2002:58).

#### **1.5.5 Confidentiality and ethical considerations**

Based on awareness of the ethical issues involved in this research, appointments were made with the people involved for both the individual in-depth interviews and the focus group

discussion. An informed consent letter and form were provided for the participants to read and sign before conducting the interviews. Participants who agreed to participate in the interviews were assured that their names would not be reflected during the coding of the data. Therefore, names and identifying information were changed to ensure confidentiality. This also ensured that participants remained anonymous. Hence, emphasis was made clearly to the participants that certain measures would be adopted to maximise confidentiality. To this end, the interviewing researcher was able to ensure that adequate provisions were taken to protect the privacy of participants and maintain the confidentiality of data (see Meho 2006:1289). The researcher used the following as the code names: the ERCC ministers, elderly Eggon persons, and the bereaved family in the individual in-depth interviews. The focus group discussions were coded according to the names of their respective groups thus: the ERCC ministers/church elders' group, widows and widowers' group and the bereaved family's group (See Appendices 2a & b, 3a & b and 15).

## **1.6 Definition of key concepts**

### **1.6.1 Pastoral**

Edwina Ward defines "pastoral" as a metaphorical term describing the shepherding activity of care (2001:85). In this study, it is used broadly to include "the expression of the unity of persons and work in Christ" and the context of care for the believing community which defines what caring ministry is about (see Ward 2001:85). Hopewell argues that although the lists of ministries in 1Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 distinguish pastors from the others, the pastoral model underscores the integrative and corporate nature of nurturing and rendering caring support. This means that believers have a corporate task in the ministry of the church (1990:827). Ward further asserts that the metaphor of the "shepherd" has come to be associated with leading, healing, and nurturing. The implication is that the task of the church, and what it exists for, must be interpreted in the context of the corporate nature of the church as a nurturing agent, which is the essence of pastoral ministry (2001:vi). This study also acknowledges the recent existing debates on the need for those being ministered to, to be active in the overall process of healing and nurturing and not just to be passive sheep depending on the directives of the pastor who is the shepherd.

### **1.6.2 Critique**

Critique is derived from the Greek word ‘kritikḗ’ (tekhnḗ) which has been used as verb meaning “to review or discuss critically”.<sup>3</sup> Critique is a word used for a serious examination and judgment of something.<sup>4</sup> Critique can also mean a carefully written examination of a subject that includes the writer’s opinions.<sup>5</sup> It is a careful judgment in which you give your opinion about the good and bad parts of something (such as a piece of writing or a work of art).<sup>6</sup> In the context of this study, critique is defined as a careful assessment or evaluation of the methods or procedure of doing things. In this case, the researcher carefully and objectively attempted to critique the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling among the Eggon people. The aim is to see its strengths and weaknesses in light of the Eggon cultural and traditional values thereby integrating it into a more effective model of bereavement counselling that will be more relevant to the Eggon Christians.

### **1.6.3 Method**

Method, according to Lesley, is “a mode of procedure; a (defined or systematic) way of doing a thing in accordance with a particular theory or as associated with a particular person” (1993:1759). Hornby also looks at method as a particular way of doing something or the quality of being well planned or organized (2010:932). Method as used in this study refers to the systematic way by which the ERCC and the Eggon people undertake bereavement counselling.

### **1.6.4 Counselling**

Counselling in this study refers to help given to a person or group of persons facing problems or challenges to enable coping. It is also an act of responding to another person(s)’ need for physical, emotional and spiritual support. Gary R. Collins argues that “counselling attempts to provide encouragement and guidance for those who are facing losses, decisions, or disappointments” (2007:36). Collins further asserts that helping relationships stimulate personality growth and development, which help individuals cope more effectively with the problems of living, with inner conflict, and with crippling emotions (2007:36). Waruta and Kinoti assert that pastoral counselling is a “religiously oriented approach to counselling

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.thefreedictionary.com/critique> (Accessed 9th July 2014).

<sup>4</sup><http://www.thefreedictionary.com/critique> (Accessed 9th July 2014).

<sup>5</sup>Macmillan Dictionary <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/a> (Accessed 9th July 2014).

<sup>6</sup><http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/critique> (Accessed 9th July 2014).

which is founded on theological views, and evokes biblical language and ethos” (2000:5-6).

Collins refers to this kind of counselling as a:

specialized part of pastoral care that involves helping individuals, families, or groups as they cope with the pressures and crises of life. Usually, it is done by pastors with theological education and often with specialized training in pastoral counselling. It uses a wide variety of healing methods to help people deal with problems in ways that are consistent with sound biblical and theological teaching. The ultimate goal is to help the counselee experience healing, learn coping and relational skills, and grow both personally and spiritually (2007:36).

Furthermore, this kind of counselling works on the presupposition that the universe has a Creator and affirms that human beings have dignity; therefore they must be supported in a way that their dignity must be enhanced. Waruta and Kinoti state that “human problems have a spiritual dimension that can be overcome by meeting the spiritual yearning of the human being” (2000:5-6). Similarly, Lartey notes that the “dignity, worth and uniqueness of the individual lies at the core of counselling theory and practice. Pastoral counselling reflects the Christian tradition of cure of souls and values clinical practices that facilitate the expression and exploration of thought, feelings and behavioural patterns. Thus, wholeness, well-being and growth are key focus areas of pastoral counselling” (2003:81).

### **1.6.5 Indigenous**

Lesley describes ‘indigenous’ as native, born or produced in a particular land or region and / or belonging naturally to a region, a soil, and so on (1993:1350). ‘Indigenous’, according to Hornby, is “belonging to a particular place...” (2010:764). Indigenous could also mean, “Originating in and or characteristic of a particular region, country or native”.<sup>7</sup> This concept is important for this study because of the fact that the study focuses on retrieving the Eggon indigenous methods of bereavement management in order to integrate into the existing ERCC methods of bereavement counselling that will be relevant to the Eggon Christians.

### **1.7 Outline of the chapters**

This thesis comprises of eight chapters; chapters one and two deal with the general introduction and the background as well as the methodologies of the study, locating the literature within the context in general and the theoretical framework guiding the study. Chapters three and eight discuss the historical development of the two contexts as a means of locating the literature within our context, as well as the presentation, discussion and the

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<sup>7</sup><http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/indigenous> (Accessed 9th July 2014).

analysis of the field study. It also reflects upon the proposed comprehensive model and upon general research findings. Below is the descriptive summary of the outline of the thesis.

Chapter one, as the introductory chapter, gives an overview of the background to the study and deals with the following: the motivation for the research, research problem, research objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study. It also presents the research design, methodology and methods used in the study. It adopts a general qualitative empirical research perspective, discussing first the data-production process and then progressing to the data-analysis process. The discussion is divided into the following sections: research design, qualitative empirical research; research site and the procedure to gain access; procedure and methods for data collection; tools for data collection and research participants. The chapter also deals with procedure and methods of data analysis, limitations of the study and ethical considerations.

Chapter two focuses on the analysis of the existing literature within the context in general, dealing primarily with issues related to pastoral care and counselling, bereavement and the perspectives of bereavement counselling. In this chapter, the principal theoretical framework guiding the study was also discussed. Silverman argues that without a theory, such phenomena as “death”, “tribes” and “families” cannot be understood (2013:112). Silverman further states that “theory provides both a framework for critically understanding phenomena and a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organized” (2013:112).

In order to locate the study in our own context and in particular the Eggon indigenous society and the ERCC, chapters three and four examine the methods of bereavement counselling within these two contexts. I use both the oral and written sources jointly with the aim to complement and interrogate each other where necessary as suggested by Philippe Denis and Graham Duncan (2011:6).

In chapter three I provide a general historical background of the Eggon people. I begin by analyzing the origin of the Eggon people, describing their socio-political, economic and religious life. Then I examine the respondents’ understanding of the meaning of *Awhiku* as a traditional way of helping the bereaved. I note the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* methods of bereavement management and subject these to a critical analysis with the idea to bring forth

those key elements that have the potential to add value to the current model of the ERCC bereavement counselling and which may be included in a comprehensive model which I propose to be used by the ERCC. The analysis indicates that there are aspects of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* model of bereavement counselling that tend to hinder or prolong the healthier healing process because of its discriminative approach to women and children during their funeral rituals and the mocking words expressed by some masquerades<sup>8</sup> during the funeral dance in general.

In chapter four I address the historical development of the ERCC, its theology and belief system. In this chapter I examine aspects of the ERCC vision and mission statement as well as their policies and practices, especially those related to the issue of bereavement counselling. I also examine the advent of Christianity (ERCC) to Eggon-land, how the Eggon people reacted and react to the gospel and the influences of the gospel and Westernization, urbanization, multi-cultural associations, internet and other technology in general on them. Finally, I explore the ERCC model of bereavement counselling among the Eggon people. My evaluation further reveals that the current ERCC model is not sufficient due to the fact that it fails to consider or incorporate some of the key themes in the Eggon indigenous bereavement practices. The results indicate that the current ERCC model is not transformative and life affirming since the parishioners' worldviews is completely ignored.

Chapter five examines the changes the Eggon traditional practices have encountered during the colonial and post-colonial era. The chapter also engages the Eggon indigenous and ERCC methods of bereavement counselling into a critical dialogue with the aim to formulate or develop a comprehensive model for the ERCC. Chapter six deals with the proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC. Chapter seven reflects on the tested comprehensive proposed model by critically analyzing the recent example of bereavement counselling undertaken in ERCC Bukuru.

Chapter eight brings the study to a conclusion and provides a summary of the major points discussed in each chapter. It also highlights the conclusions drawn from the study and ends with recommendations and suggestions on the way forward as well as the need for further research on other related areas not covered by this study.

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<sup>8</sup> Masquerades are masked performers during the Eggon traditional funeral dance. These costumes provide both functional symbolism as well as a source of visual aesthetics in the Eggon theatre.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

In chapter one I have set the foundation for the thesis by embarking on an intensive preliminary discussion. This covers issues such as the purpose of the study, the research questions and objectives, their significance, the methodology used in conducting the study and the definition of key concepts. I also attempted a detailed discussion about the methods of and tools for data collection. These discussions concerned the methodology, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and the reasons for such choices, as well as the processes for the recruitment of participants, the collection and analysis of data. Finally the limitations and ethical considerations involved in this study were outlined. Having discussed the research methodology used in this study, I now move to chapter two of the study where I focus on the theories related to the existing literature within the context of this study in general in order to gain a better understanding on the chapters that follow, which are concerned with locating the literature in our own context.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Pastoral Care and Counselling, Bereavement, Inculturation and Community**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the general background of the study was introduced and discussed. The motivation for the study was given alongside with the central research question, sub-questions and the objectives. The significance of the study, research design and methodology and definition of key concepts were considered. The overview of the thesis was also presented.

In this current chapter I will critically explore existing literature on the concept of pastoral care and counselling, pastoral counselling within the discipline of pastoral care and the meaning of pastoral care and counselling. It will also deal with the concept of bereavement counselling alongside its meaning, and the different perspectives of bereavement counselling mainly from Western and African points of view. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework, with the theory of inculturation as the main frame, complemented by the theory of incorporation of Emmanuel Lartey and the community theory of Maitland Evans.

#### **2.2 The concept of pastoral care and counselling**

This section will examine the differences between pastoral care and counselling and their roles in nurturing and empowering vulnerable individuals in the face of trials and challenges.

##### **2.2.1 Pastoral counselling within the discipline of pastoral care**

Pastoral care and counselling can be categorised as the two major activities in the pastoral ministry of the church. These activities include preaching, teaching, leading worship, congregational leadership and administration, and lay enabling (TEE College Caring in Faith Workbook 1 of 3 2012:2.2). Pastoral counselling is generally seen by scholars as a specific discipline within the larger discipline of pastoral care (see Hulme 1970:10; Wise 1966:67). Clinebell affirms the above assertion when he says, “Pastoral care is the broad, inclusive ministry of mutual healing and growth within the congregation and its community, through the life cycle” (1984:26). Clinebell further states that pastoral counselling is “one dimension of pastoral care which is the utilization of a variety of healing methods to help people handle their problems and crises more fully and thus experience healing of their brokenness”



(1984:26). Pastoral care can also be described as a “total range of helping contacts between church members, including such activities as visiting the sick, attending to the dying, comforting the bereaved, and the administering of the sacraments” (TEE College Caring in Faith Workbook 1 of 3 2012:2.2). This is what is referred to in biblical history as the ministry that involves all believers in an attempt to help carry one another’s burdens (Romans 15:1-2; Galatians 6:2).

### **2.2.2 The meaning of pastoral care and counselling**

Pastoral care in this study is referred to as the sum total of the ministry of the church in terms of catering for the needs of its members and the community at large. According to Clebsch and Jaekle, pastoral care is also known as the “ministry of the cure of soul” (1975:1). Oden holds that pastoral care is the practical aspect of pastoral theology “because it focuses on the practice of ministry, with particular attention to the systematic definition of the pastoral office and its function” (1983:x). Pastoral care is an on-going, life-long relationship. It is the aspect of ministry that demonstrates helping acts that include, but are not limited to, counselling, preaching, teaching and visitation. As Clebsch and Jaekle, put it, pastoral care does not belong properly to that specific ministry. On many occasions, the works of charity, of welfare, of education, of binding up wounds, of giving ethical counsel, and so forth are all inclusive (1975:7). Ross defines pastoral care as “the activities of an individual or a group acting (as an expression of their religious beliefs) in a way that helps others, from outside as well as from within their own faith community” (2003:3). Clinebell notes that “pastoral care is a response to the need that everyone has for warmth, nurture, support and caring” (1984:46). Oyedele defines pastoral care as, “all pastoral activities involving teaching, preaching, leading worship, congregational leadership, administration, visiting, supporting and comforting which aim at spiritual healing and growth” (2011:4). Hunter contends that pastoral care involves “all the pastoral work concerned with the support and nurturance of persons and inter-person relationships, including everyday expressions of care and concern that may occur in the midst of various pastoring activities and relationship” (1990:845). Pastoral care according to Clebsch and Jackle “consists of helping acts, done by representative Christian persons or organizations, directed toward the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns” (1964:4). In some African Independent Churches today, “healing is a strong focus; this scenario seems to witness growth over the years in the mainline churches,

while sustaining continues to be an important area though mostly on a personal level. Guidance has been almost taken over by the secular professions of educative counselling and other crisis related disciplines” (TEE College Caring in Faith Workbook 1 of 3 2012:1.10). Hulme defines pastoral care as a “supportive ministry to people and those close to them who are experiencing the familiar trials that characterize life in this world such as illness, surgery, incapacitation, death and bereavement” (1981:9). In this study, pastoral care is defined as a process of providing mutual support, encouragement and nurturing to people with the sole aim to improve their lives so as to experience their full potential (wholeness). This form of wholeness can be realized through pastoral counselling. The question this study will attempt to answer in the next section is, ‘how is pastoral counselling different from the discourses of pastoral care’ above?

The practice of pastoral counselling in this study is understood to be such a conscious moment where the care giver and the client(s) agree on a specific time and venue in an attempt to solve a problem. As Hunter puts it “Pastoral Counselling refers to caring ministry that is more structured and focused on specifically articulated need or concern. Counselling always involves some degree of ‘contract’ in which a request for help is articulated and specific arrangements are agreed upon concerning time and place of meeting...” (1990:845). Drawing from the above insight Berner argues that ‘PC’<sup>9</sup> is the “establishment of a time limited relationship that is structured to provide comfort for troubled persons by enhancing their awareness of God’s grace and faithful presence and thereby increasing their ability to live their lives more fully in the light of these realizations” (1992:32). Berner further states that the aim is to “bring their wounds, struggles and anxieties into dynamic healing contact with God the wonderful counsellor” (1992:32). In his view, Hunter opines that this “implies extended conversation focused on the needs and concerns of the one seeking help” (1990:845). This conversation, according to Oyedele, involves “consultation, discussion, deliberation, exchange of ideas, advice or process of decision making” (2011:7). Makinde posits that the whole process of PC is a form of “service designed to help an individual analyze himself by relating his capabilities, achievements, interests, and mode of adjustment to what new decision he/she has made or has to make” (1984:44). According to Berner, this kind of counselling can be “classified as a crisis intervention ministry” (1992:15). This therefore suggests that PC only comes into play when individuals or groups are faced with

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<sup>9</sup> In this study PC refers to Pastoral Counseling, as shall be seen in the subsequent discussions.

crises that threaten to jeopardize their growth. PC is mostly seen as the activity of pastoral care which tends to deal with particular problems identified by the congregants. In this case, the whole process of PC ceases to exist when the identified problem(s) is (are) solved. This is unlike pastoral care which is an on-going life-long relationship of a local church. It is not just limited to counselling, preaching, teaching and visitation but includes every helping act, done by representative Christian persons with the aim to provide healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of the persons in trouble. For the purpose of this study, pastoral counselling is referred to as a caring action that is usually directed at individuals, families and groups who are confronted with the loss of someone significant (see TEE College Caring in Faith Workbook 1 of 3 2012:2.2). We shall now turn to the concept of bereavement counselling especially as related to the loss of a loved one.

### **2.3 The concept of bereavement counselling**

The English word *bereavement* comes from an ancient Germanic root word meaning “to rob” or “to seize by violence”.<sup>10</sup> Stroebe, Hansson, Schut and Stroebe, assert that the “term bereavement is often used to denote the objective situation of having lost someone significant through death” (2011:4). They further argue that someone significant could refer to “personal losses experienced across the life span: the deaths of parents, children, siblings, partners, and friends” (2011:5). Switzer argues that “bereavement is a major type in the general class of traumatic frustration-situation” (1978:23). Bereavement can be referred to as “the period of mourning and or grieving following the death of a beloved person”.<sup>11</sup> In a broader sense, Christ, Bonnano, Malkinson and Rubin define bereavement as “the entire experience of family members and friends in the anticipation, death, and subsequent adjustment to living following the death of a loved one” (2003:554). Bereavement is “a feeling of deep, unexplainable loss brought on by the passing on of a family member, friend, or loved one. It is a moment of such great emotional loss that the pain may or may not be outwardly expressed at all”.<sup>12</sup> Bereavement is part of “a natural process that occurs when someone loses a family member or close friend”.<sup>13</sup> According to Hornby, bereavement is “the state of having lost a relative or close friend because they have died” (2010:124). In this study, bereavement

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<sup>10</sup><http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Bereavement> (Accessed 19th February, 2014).

<sup>11</sup><http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Bereavement> (Accessed 19th February, 2014).

<sup>12</sup>Psychology Dictionary: <http://psychologydictionary.org/bereavement/#ixzz2tkd74AXK> (Accessed 19th February, 2014).

<sup>13</sup><http://www.helpptoheal.co.uk/help/bereavement-counselling> (Accessed 17th February, 2014).

refers to the overall experiences of the family members, relatives, or friends following the death of a loved one, and the successive adjustment to life.

Kastenbaum argues that bereavement is a highly individual as well as a complex experience. It is increasingly recognized that individual experiences and expressions of grief associated with the death of a loved one are not uniform (2011:71). People's reactions to a death are influenced by such factors as "ethnic or religious traditions; personal beliefs about life after death; the type of relationship ended by death (spouse, parents, child, relative, friend, colleague, etc.); the cause of death; the person's age at death; whether the death was sudden or expected; and many others" (Archer 2011:51; Payne, Horn and Relf 1999:22; Tedeschi and Colhoun 2004:71). The reactions, according to Stroebe, Hansson, Schut and Stroebe, often incorporate diverse psychological (cognitive, social-behavioural) and physical (physiological-somatic) manifestations (2011:5). Stroebe, Hansson, Schut and Stroebe further opine that "one person's grief may be dominated by intense feelings of loneliness, another's by anger at being abandoned by the loved one. One may show few signs of grief early on but intense reactions later, whereas another person may manifest the opposite duration-related effects" (2011:5).

Scholars affirm that "the loss of a loved one is one of the most intense and painful experiences any human being can suffer or go through. It is a moment that an individual experiences a painful frame of mind and the loss of interest in the outside world and one's usual activities (see Stroebe, Hansson, Schut and Stroebe 2011:5; Switzer 1978:29; Payne, Horn and Relf 1999:22; Tedeschi and Colhoun 2004:71; Parkes, Laungani and Young 1997; Dewi 1997:107). It is due to this kind of confusion and instability of the state of mind of those who have suffered loss of their loved ones that bereavement counselling is highly recommended so as to understand and try to relieve the suffering of bereaved people. Having seen what bereavement means in the context of this study, I shall briefly discuss what bereavement counselling is and how it is done.

Morrisey asserts that bereavement counselling is a "specialised type of counselling that involves supporting individuals who have experienced the loss of a loved one" (2012:1). Morrisey further argues that this counselling "helps them [bereaved] work through their grief

as well as perhaps learn coping mechanisms to help them when they are on their own (2012:1). The next question that arises therefore is ‘How is bereavement counselling done?’

Bereavement counselling can be:

one-on-one with a private counsellor or in a group setting, but the aim is to help an individual explore his or her emotions. At the first meeting, the bereaved will likely be asked about his or her loss, about his or her relationship to the deceased, and about his or her own life now that (s)he has lost a loved one. Answering these questions often means tapping into sadness or anger, so emotional outbursts should not be censored. Crying and yelling may come naturally during bereavement counselling.<sup>14</sup>

Allowing an individual to explore his or her emotions without guilt or censure is often what appeals most about bereavement counselling. In bereavement counselling in “group settings, the outbursts of crying will not be surprising, though obviously the time spent with each group member will be more limited than in a one-to-one session as seen above. The length of time for which bereavement counselling will continue will most likely be decided between the counsellor and the bereaved, and will likely be discussed as counselling progresses”.<sup>15</sup> Schulz, Boerner and Hebert remark that “in some instances the decision concerning the length will depend also on the nature or the situation surrounding the death or loss. For instance, the death of a loved one who had passed through the experiences of terminal illness and or chronic conditions such as heart disease, cancer, stroke or respiratory diseases will often be looked at even by the relatives as an end to the patient’s suffering as well as an end to the demanding care giving tasks” (2011:268). Schulz, Boerner, and Hebert further assert that “the counsellor’s task of supporting such a bereaved person is less since s/he also has the feelings of relief from overload and work strain during the care giving processes. Secondly, the fact that the death was anticipated or expected due to the nature of the illness means that the relatives might have already grieved prior to the time the death occurs, as well as pragmatically might have prepared for the death and its aftermath” (2011:268). In a situation of sudden death, especially one related to the bread winner of the family or even the only child of a couple in their old age, this counselling session is likely to take a longer time than the case mentioned above. Drawing from the above insight, Murphy affirms that “when a young person dies violently, the suddenness of the death leaves parents feeling devastated, particularly when harm to the child was intentional, when mutilation occurred, and when parents perceived the death as preventable” (2011:376). McIlwraith argues that “the death of a child is especially brutal because it’s untimely in that it upsets the concept of a ‘natural’

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<sup>14</sup><http://www.helptoheal.co.uk/help/bereavement-counselling> (Accessed 17th February, 2014).

<sup>15</sup><http://www.helptoheal.co.uk/help/bereavement-counselling> (Accessed 17th February, 2014).

order of life and death wherein parents die before their children” (2001:16). McIlwraith further asserts that “while the loss of a child throws up unique issues whatever the child’s age, there do appear to be special problems associated with the death of a child during pregnancy, or soon after birth. If your child died a very early death it’s likely that your feelings of being somehow at fault are intense. This may be because parents are parents, and the duty of parents is to be able to provide for their children” (2001:17).

As mentioned earlier, the counsellor in such a critical situation needs to take time to help the surviving parent(s) cope with the loss. Murphy contends that “the risk factors that sometimes predict parent outcomes include: parents’ gender, age, and marital status; self esteem, coping skills, religiosity, social support, concurrent negative life events, and ability to find meaning in the death; and characteristics of the deceased child, including age, gender, and mode of death” (2011:376). For the counsellor to be effective in providing care for such an individual, deliberate efforts must be taken to assess the emotional and psychological status of the parent in question.

### **2.3.1 Perspectives of bereavement counselling**

In the Western approach to bereavement counselling, Spiegel argues that immediately after deaths occur, usually the funeral director who is the care giver agent will be alerted followed by the minister (1973:137). Though counselling in most cases is the responsibility of the minister, he/she is restricted to a short visit in the mourners’ house to make plans concerning the forthcoming funeral and its performance (see Spiegel 1973:138; Warren 1988:93). Switzer observes that in the western perspective “the pastor in most cases is seen as a representative figure of the church or Christian faith” (1986:246). This therefore, means that the pastor’s presence in the mourners’ home signifies the presence of other Christian brothers and sisters in solidarity with the members who are bereaved. Kreis and Pattie assert that in “the Western culture, mourners often remain lonely in their homes during their moment of bereavement” (1969:74). The tragedy as observed by Kreis and Pattie is that “none of them have the opportunity to express their feelings openly because nobody was around for them to turn to. Sometimes, when friends make attempts to see them, they will not be ready and when they are ready; they might have gone back to their homes or places of work” (1969:74). Olasinde argues that in the western perspectives, “funeral following death is a private family

affair, and bereavement counselling is done by professionals”.<sup>16</sup> Jackson argues that this kind of approach to funerals “reveals a limited understanding of the function of the funeral and the need for group relationships that are healing” (1971:44). Jackson further states that “the private ceremony denies the basic nature and purpose of Christian worship by limiting the chance of therapeutic communication. The immediate family which feels the major impact of the event needs an ongoing expression rather than an in growing emotional state that tends to amplify itself” (1971:44). Oates affirms that most of the time the counselling is done through different ways of communication, either by means of casual contact on the street or the shopping complex, and sometimes through written messages, phone calls or emails (1976:61). Stroebe, Van Der Houwen and Schut note that “Experts predict that internet use will increase further, becoming even more deeply integrated into physical and social environments” (2011:551). Affirming the above assertion, Feigelman et al observe that “in recent years another new form of peer-helping has emerged: Internet support groups”.<sup>17</sup> Detailed studies also revealed that many people who seek health information and support now use the internet, and this was a source of comfort and reassurance for many them.<sup>18</sup> I agree with Stroebe, Houwen and Schut when they say the “internet offers ways of providing bereavement support especially in the area of fostering interactions between bereaved people, sharing practical information and understanding bereavement-related activities such as memorialisation on the Web etc” (2011:551). Though the internet has great potential for helping people, it is a ‘mixed blessing’ especially with the issue of internet bullying.<sup>19</sup> Supporting the above view, Kreis and Pattie observed that reaching the bereaved person through the internet or other technology in general is not enough; instead,

as soon as one receives the news that one’s friend is in grief, the following should be done: Get to him/her as quickly as you can. Do not ask him/her what you must do, ask a member of his/her family. Once there be alert. Does he/she need someone to answer the phone; someone to make calls; send wires; brew coffee, or just sit beside him? Offer a physical contact, especially to a woman. Hold her hand, and if, when you greet her, she clings, do not be afraid even if you are a happily married man. To her, in shock, you are just a comforting shoulder, no more. Usually in early grief a person acts out of habit much as he did before the death. Therefore, if he/she wants to talk, no matter what the subject, listen (1969:122).

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<sup>16</sup> T. A. Olasinde. (2012). “Religious and Cultural Issues Surrounding Death and Bereavement in Nigeria” in *Online Journal of African Affairs, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 1-3*

<http://onlineresearchjournals.org/OJAA/pdf/2012/oct/Olasinde.pdf> (Accessed 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2013)

<sup>17</sup> William Feigelman., Bernard S. Gorman., Karyl Chastain Beal, John R. Jordan (2008). “Internet Support Groups for Suicide Survivors: A New Mode for Gaining Bereavement Assistance” in *Omega, Vol. 57(3) 217-243*, <http://www3.ncc.edu/faculty/soc/feiglb/internetsupportgroup.pdf> (Accessed 2nd September, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Help and information through the internet <http://healthtalkonline.org/peoples-experiences/dying-bereavement/bereavement-due-suicide/help-and-information-through-internet> (Accessed 2nd September, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Help and information through the internet <http://healthtalkonline.org/peoples-experiences/dying-bereavement/bereavement-due-suicide/help-and-information-through-internet> (Accessed 2nd September, 2014).

The comment of Kreis and Pattie makes sense to some extent, though we cannot undermine the advantages of technology in facilitating communication in contemporary society. However, we need not totally rely upon it especially in the area of providing care and support to those who are bereaved as it does not take into account the significance of the ministry of physical presence and silence in the bereaved home. First, it is in the course of staying and interacting with the bereaved that they will receive support that will reorient them towards their own actions and subsequent adjustment to life, which is not very possible in communication through emails or text messages. Second, sometimes it will be much more fruitful and rewarding if the care giver can remain silent, depending on the psychological disposition or circumstances surrounding the bereaved family, and this can be possible only when the caregiver is physically present with the mourners. Scott and Lydia, who lost their six-year-old son Theo in an accident, recall: “We needed family and friends for support. They came in the middle of the night, straight to the hospital.” What did these friends say? “At that moment, we did not need words. Their presence said everything—they cared”.<sup>20</sup> Sometimes the mourners may be experiencing complicated grief and it is only through one-on-one interaction that the counsellor or caregiver may be able to pick up an underlying feeling, which is of course, one aspect of sensitivity which requires continued commitment to developing self awareness (Lendrum and Syme 1992:134). Lendrum and Syme further stress that “a decision to use such awareness in counselling often grows over a period and arises out of a series of interactions” (1992:134).

Another potential weakness in using bereavement internet forums is a situation where the web sites do not have skilled moderators who can respond to postings as well as delete potentially harmful messages that are sent with the aim of providing support to the bereaved, but end up increasing sorrow and even hurting the bereaved due to the fact that the content is not appropriate. Second, Msomi also observes that the shift from the social dimension to a focus on the individual and on therapy is a weakness of these internet and other technological methods, especially when applied in a cross-cultural context (2008:211). Msomi further argues that such a shift tends to “lead to the danger of becoming overly individualistic and thus fail to counteract narcissistic tendencies and attitudes” (2008:211). Msomi also notes that “in Africa one continually emphasizes that the good life is not in isolation, but is life in a

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<sup>20</sup>Comfort the Bereaved, as Jesus Did  
<http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2010806?q=grief+and+comfort&p=par> (Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2014)



community” (2008:211). We shall now turn to see African perspectives of bereavement counselling.

Nwoye maintains that African bereavement counselling can be defined as “the patterned ways invented in traditional communities for the successful healing of the psychological wounds and pain of bereaved persons” (2005:148). It is a healing system grounded in “ecologically sound rituals and ceremonies that facilitate experiential healing” (2005:148). Nwoye further argues that “its target clients are any members of the community burdened by the painful loss of a loved one” (2005:148). For any meaningful and effective counselling to take place in the African context, Masamba argues that “it must seek to embrace the biblical and theological traditions as well as the African worldview and religious thought” (1985:27). Louw affirms that the African worldview or culture “implies that healing does not circle around an individual but is concerned with a group, the family, or neighbours from the community. The healing process in this case is a communal task” (2011:162). Shutte argues that the “African worldview of care comprises of values, attitudes, feelings, relationship and respect for each other” (2004:51). To a large extent, the African concept of care, according to Shutte, begins with the attitudes one has towards the other. It is based on the idea that ‘everyone matters’. This is an African insight into communal nature which implies “persons depend on persons to be persons”. It has to do with seeing the other as “one among us” (2004:51). Boff also notes that “care is more than an act; it is a moment of awareness, a moment of zeal, and a moment of devotion” (2008:14). Boff further argues that “this is all about an attitude of activity, an attitude of showing concern towards another person, an attitude of showing commitment or responsibility and to be deeply involved in providing support to another person. This involves giving attention and showing concern to another person in its various dimensions” (2008:14).

Jackson opines that “the coming of death to one close to you is usually difficult in that it tends to bring all the causes for emotional crisis at one time” (1971:43). That is, “a tumult of external changes and the feeling of injuring from the inside” (1971:43). It is during such a difficult moment, says Jackson, that “the bereaved person feels the value and the healing power of the redemptive community. As you come to them with your needs and they in turn give you the support, understanding, and insight on how to overcome the pain and the discomfort” (1971:43). The encountering of the bereaved family with the members of the community who might have experienced similar loss one time will be the best way of

handling their confusions, difficulties and the disorientation that occurs as a result of the loss (Davidson 1984:85). As Davidson puts it, the ‘fellow mourners’ - past or present experience can serve as models for reorientation and problem solving (1984:85). This therefore means that in the course of staying and interacting, the bereaved will be provided with cues or ways that will reorient his/her own actions and subsequent adjustment to life (Davidson 1984:85). The family in this sense becomes the primary group for close and healing relationships. I concur with Jackson when he says, “the family is the most continuous reality through the life of the mourner and its relationship has deep emotional roots due to family knowledge about the mourner” (1971:43). I think this forms part of the reason why whenever someone dies among the Eggon people, both the nuclear and the extended family are expected to respond by going to the deceased’s house immediately, followed by the neighbours and members of the community upon hearing the wailing (crying/weeping) by the family members and relatives (see Manga 2012:55; Dugga 1996:60; Estermann 1976:85).

Another remarkable aspect of bereavement counselling among Africans is the communal participation during the funeral service. The funeral offers a “great deal of encouragement that enables a healthy mourning process as it confirms the painful reality of the loss and offers the bereaved the opportunity to accept group support”.<sup>21</sup> It also provides the community with a “fitting chance to express its support of the grief-stricken in ways that can be readily accepted and understood”.<sup>22</sup> Jackson argues that the funeral gives the community the opportunity to come to terms with their own mortal natures with honesty, and to do anticipatory grief work that will strengthen each to cope with death, and to aid in doing whatever unfinished work of mourning that may be left over from a past loss experience (1971:32). Nwoye further notes that the goal of African bereavement counselling is to “prevent the bereaved person’s deep sorrow from degenerating into chronic negativity. Its healing emphasis is therefore fundamentally proactive, creative and elaborative rather than medical and analytic” (2005:148). The potential weakness in the communal model of bereavement counselling is a situation where untrained or inexperienced individuals, in an attempt to render support to the bereaved persons, may end up aggravating the emotional situation of the mourners as a result of using certain words. From oral tradition, there are

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<sup>21</sup> Why have a funeral? <http://www.meaningfulfunerals.com/meaningful-funerals/why-have-a-funeral/> (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

<sup>22</sup> Why have a funeral? <http://www.meaningfulfunerals.com/meaningful-funerals/why-have-a-funeral/> (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

instances where the sympathizers have mentioned certain words either during their expressing of sorrow during wailing or as a way of consoling the bereaved during their interaction, but they tended to increase the bereaved person's mental distress. For instance, often when people come to console a grieving person whose loved one has died after a prolonged illness or terminal disease, they will say, "*Ajo o okpo ewu dga ewu*" meaning 'your effort was fruitless'. Sometimes, such statements will remind the bereaved person to consider several losses (especially in terms of economic aspects) associated with the death of the loved one. Having discussed the perspectives of bereavement counselling with its merits and demerits, we shall now consider the three theories underpinning this study.

## **2.4 Principal theories underpinning the study**

### **2.4.1 The framework of inculturation**

Historically, scholars are not very certain as regards to the origin of the word 'inculturation' as it functions in the theological community (see Ukpong 2013:531; King 2000:3). However, Ukpong notes that the term "inculturation" first arose within the Roman Catholic circle (2013:532). Ukpong further argues that the word was used to express the process of rooting the church in a culture, and that the term appears in the phrase: "a church indigenous and inculturated" in the final statement of the first plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Catholic Bishops' Conference in 1974. The term was also introduced as an alternative to "adaptation" at the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Congregation of the Jesuits at the 4<sup>th</sup> General Synod of Catholic Bishops in Rome in 1977 (2013:532). The term was first inserted into Papal Documents by John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis on October 1979 (see Shorter 1988:10; King 2000:3; Odozor 2008:583; Anthony 2012:237). Ukpong defines inculturation as, "a dynamic on-going process of conscious and critical and mutual interaction between the Christian faith and the religion and secular aspects of the cultures. Such that the Christian reality becomes appropriated from within the perspectives and with the resources of these cultures to challenge and transform society and bring about a re-interpretation of faith; it seeks to open up new understandings of faith and lead to recreating culture and society" (2013:531).

Waliggo sees inculturation as "the insertion of new values into one's heritage and world-view" (1991:506). This process according to Waliggo "applies to all dimensions of life and development" (1991:506). Inculturation can also be seen as the "incarnation of Christian life

and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation” (see Arrupe 1978:72; Shorter 1988:11). Shorter opines that “inculturation implies that the Christian message transforms a culture; it is also the case that Christianity is transformed by culture, not in a way that falsifies the message, but in the way in which the message is formulated and interpreted anew” (1988:14). Waliggo argues that inculturation “is the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought patterns of each people. It is the conviction that Christ and his good news are even dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people; it is the continuous endeavour to make Christianity truly ‘feel at home’ in the culture of each people” (1991:506). King observes that “a more dynamic view of inculturation is advanced by Justin Ukpogon in describing the African theologian’s task as consists of re-thinking and re-expressing the original Christian message in an African cultural milieu...” so as to integrate faith and culture to form “a new theological expression that is African and Christian” (2000:3). Hewitt remarks that “the process of inculturation constitutes the first step in communicating the Gospel into the meaning system of the culture” (2012:17). For Hewitt, “Christianity and its accompanying Gospel message needs cultural expression in order for it to be communicated to a people” (2012:17). Waliggo affirms that “inculturation asserts the right of all people to enjoy and develop their own culture, the right to be different and live as authentic Christians, while remaining truly themselves at the same time” (1991:506). Waliggo further asserts that inculturation “makes Christianity at home in the culture of each person, thus reflecting its universality thereby proclaiming the liberty of all peoples to serve God within their own basic worldview, thus eliminating the constant danger of dualism or dichotomy in their lives” (1991:506). This framework is relevant to this study in the sense that it will help Eggon Christians to value and appreciate their Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management, which was and is still assumed to be alienated and despised due to the Western individualistic lifestyle. To achieve this, first this document will be made available in the Eggon community’s archives. Second, efforts will be made to present papers on such related issues during the Eggon Cultural Development Associations’ (ECDA) special events.

#### **2.4.2 The theory of incorporation by Emmanuel Lartey**

According to the researcher's opinion, the theory of incorporation can be defined as a systematic way of consciously seeking or employing the services of another person(s) to assist in a particular assignment so as to make it more effective and efficient. To narrow it to the ERCC context, it will be a systematic way whereby a pastoral counsellor seeks the services of laity or other professionals to help him/her in rendering effective pastoral care and counselling to those in crisis situations. Lartey argues that no single person can really provide the necessary support or assistance required by the individuals or groups in a crisis situation to regain their wholeness unless other personalities are incorporated (2003:27). Lartey further states that "many people testify that those who have been of greatest pastoral relevance for them have not been the most obvious or recognized" (2003:27). To support the above assertion, Howard Clinebell gives an example of a pastor who felt the need to use widows and widowers in his congregation for bereavement counselling. After giving them some basic training for six weeks, they assisted in sharing the responsibilities of pastoral care (1984:228). Clinebell notes that, "When someone dies, the pastor selects from this group and introduces him/her to the bereaved. This grief minister commits him or herself to minister to the bereaved person or family for a year, making regular contact that complements the pastor's ministry" (1984:228). This approach, according to Clinebell, has helped the participant (lay caregiver) to also finish his/her own grief work. It also enables the training of lay crisis and grief teams who will learn how to help other grieving persons even in the absence of the minister (1984:228). Cunningham recognizes the significance of "pastoral counsellors who will collaborate with other care-givers not only in crisis intervention or counselling to restore stability, but also in the development of preventive programs" (1993:166). Cunningham further argues that sometimes the counsellor may find it helpful to seek the assistance of a specialist to help assess the counselee in order to find the most effective way to render the assistance (1993:164). Sometimes, the counsellor may find it helpful to even contact a specialist for him/herself who will guide or give him/her more enlightenment concerning a particular situation the counselee is experiencing, so that he/she will be in a better position to assist. This theory will enable the researcher to critically and objectively interrogate the kind of training ERCC pastors are receiving as to whether or not they have realized and see the need to seek assistance from other professionals or lay caregivers during their bereavement counselling processes, with the idea to make these more

effective and efficient. Or better still, to refer the client to another professional for further therapy based on the needs noticed.

### **2.4.3 The community theory by Maitland Evans**

Evans defines community counselling as “the engagement of community members in a change process that aims at meaningful and measureable movement from a lower to a higher pattern of functioning” (2009:128). Evans further argues that the aim is to help the members of the community and move them “towards a greater level of wholeness, wellness as well as a sense of personal and communal empowerment” (2009:128-129). The researcher looks at Community Theory as a principle by which every member of the community participates in the task of providing coping mechanisms to the persons or family in a crisis situation. Kinoti opines that, this community system of caring is “based on African values and morality” (2002:34). Masango argues that “the African concept of caring involves all the members of the village or community, family, relatives and tribe” (2005:916). Masango further opines that “in the African community, life is lived with others in a group, tribe or clan. There is no individualism or privacy accepted in the village” (2005:916). Supporting the above assertion, Meiring argues that “the African worldview emphasises the importance of the community more than most, and this is summed up in the well-known concept of *Ubuntu*: I am because we are. While students of the Enlightenment would say “I think, therefore I am”, Africans say: “I belong, therefore I am” (2008:735). According to Meiring, an African is a “being in-community” and “this belief in the community often contradicts Western notions of individuality” (2008:733-735). It is however disheartening today that due to the influences of westernization, urbanization, globalization, internet and other technology in general, some African indigenous people tend to appreciate the individualistic pattern of lifestyle more than the African worldview of communal living. Some of the communities in Africa do nonetheless maintain that it is the responsibility of the whole village to care for life, especially of the young and old, and it is a communal task to help them towards the restoration of the wholeness (see Getui & Theuri 2002:176; Masango 2005:916). Evans opines that the counselling modality in the African context seeks to identify with those who make the case that meaningful therapeutic processes obtain beyond the professional counselling setting (2009:128). Lartey puts the argument further by saying that the “categories and practice of pastoral care in the Black Church tradition emerges as overwhelmingly about preparing, strengthening and attempting ‘to change those conditions

which prevent persons from choosing healthy crisis–coping patterns’ within a framework which is communal and supportive” (2003:24). Lartey further observes that the “communal framework is very crucial because the success of pastoral care, especially in the African context, has to do with mobilizing the resources of the total community in caring for the needs of individuals and groups” (2003:24). This theory relates to my study in the sense that it will enable me to explore the nature of the Eggon Indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management and see how it can be integrated into the current ERCC model of bereavement counselling for sustainable and effective healing processes to be established.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This study argues that bereavement is a moment of great emotional loss and that the pain may or may not be outwardly expressed. It is the overall experiences of family members endured in the anticipation, death and subsequent adjustment to living. The discussion has also shown that bereavement is a highly individualistic as well as a complex experience. Hence, people respond differently to the losses associated with the death of a loved one. The study further identified some factors that influence the reactions of people towards death, namely, ethnic or religious traditions, personal beliefs about life after death, and the relationship with the deceased that ended in death.

This chapter indicates that the loss of a loved one is one of the most intense and painful experiences any person can go through. Sometimes the individual involved can lose interest in the outside world or even in one’s usual activities. Because of this, mourners need to be supported to work through their grief as well as perhaps learn coping mechanisms.

The study argues that during this moment, the individual must be allowed to explore his/her emotions freely. From the analysis on the perspectives of bereavement counselling, it is clear that from the Western point of view, mourners often remain lonely in their homes during their moment of bereavement. Hence, they lack the opportunity to fully express their emotions and feelings. Additionally, funerals seem to be private family affairs, the overall bereavement counselling is done by professionals, and friends and neighbours primarily render their support through written messages, phone calls or emails. Mourners are not able to receive the maximum support needed in terms of expressing their emotions since no one is around to listen to what they have to say, or to guide in ways that will reorient them towards their

actions and subsequent adjustment to life. It is impossible to do this through emails or telephone conversations since the care giver cannot ascertain the psychological disposition of the bereaved person through these means.

This chapter also indicates that in the African perspective, emphasis is placed on community involvement during the counselling procedures. This study noted that due to the feelings of injury from the inside, the bereaved person will be better helped if he/she feels the values and the healing power of the community. More importantly, those within the community who might have suffered similar loss can serve as models for reorientation and problem solving as they seek to render support, understanding and insight on how to overcome the pain and discomfort caused by the death.

A discussion on the theories underpinning this study has shown the need for the church to take the culture of the parishioners seriously, given that failure to acknowledge the parishioner's cultural beliefs can be perceived as disrespect - which in turn limits the therapist's ability to render help. The theory of inculturation therefore argues for a dialogue between the Christian faith and the indigenous culture. Further, the theories of incorporation and the community both emphasise the need for the church to develop a lay-counsellors' grief-recovery ministry within the church that will participate alongside the pastor and church elders in the overall counselling process.

Chapters three and four are concerned with locating the study within our own context. In these two chapters, particular attention is given to both written and oral sources so that the information obtained will complement and interrogate each other.



## Chapter Three

### Historical background of the Eggon people, understanding death and the Eggon model of bereavement management

#### 3.1 Introduction

In chapter two it was argued that bereavement is a complex experience and no two individuals respond to it in the same way. But in either case, the mourners need to be supported to work through their grief and also to learn coping mechanisms. The discussion in chapter two also revealed that mourners from Western contexts often remain lonely in their homes during their moment of bereavement. And this has the tendency to deny them the opportunity to fully express their emotional feelings since no one is around for them to turn to. The African perspective emphasises communal involvement, a situation where the mourner turns to the community with his/her problems and in turn receives possible help from members of the community who might have suffered the same loss as they strive to provide support, understanding and insight on how to overcome the traumatic experience caused by death. It was also argued from the theoretical point of view, that there is the need for the church to understand and take the culture of the parishioners seriously as its acknowledgment can affect the care giver's ability to help.

This chapter consists of three parts. Part one will discuss the historical overview of the Eggon people. Part two will examine the concept of death and bereavement as well as the meaning of *Awhiku* as Eggon traditional ways of helping the bereaved. Part three will highlight the Eggon indigenous methods of bereavement management by examining the merits of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* model, as well identifying the weaknesses of their approach. This will then lead us to engage in dialogue with the ERCC model of bereavement counselling in chapter five in order to formulate the proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling in chapter six.

#### 3.2 A historical overview of the Eggon People

The Eggon land lies to the South of the Southern division of the former plateau province of central Nigeria. The area has savannah type vegetation with occasional rain forest type vegetation found mostly in the river banks of Mada and Arikya Rivers. The area falls within the larger geographical location formerly called plateau province, which forms part of what is today called Nasarawa state. The Nasarawa area is approximately 2, 906 square kilometers

(Ombugunawu 1984:1; Kigbu 1996:1). The area is bounded to the north by the Mada and Rindre ethnic groups, to the east and south by the Lafia Chiefdom, and to the west by Keffi Chiefdom. One of the special features of the area is the Eggon hills, rising in a block from the surrounding plains to form the centre of the area. The hills form the watershed between the basins of the Mada River to the west and Arikya River to the east. Both rivers flow in a general southerly direction, the former meeting the Benue River west of Makurdi and the latter west of Ibi. The Arikya River forms the Eggon-Wamba boundary and its innumerable tributaries flow from the hills to the east areas. The area lies within the savannah zone, although occasional patches of rain forest type of vegetation are formed in close vicinity to the rivers, especially in the southern part of the plain. The hills and the plateau are at present almost deforested, doubtless due to intensive cultivation. The hills still present one of the most picturesque features of the area (Shaw 1935:19-24).

The rainy season begins in March and ends in November each year. Other prominent landmarks include the south-eastern line of the Nigerian railway which runs through the western part of the land. In the north and east part, a trunk road from Jos passes through Akwanga, Nasarawa-Eggon, Lafia and finally to Makurdi in Benue state.

The people of Eggon are “one of the largest ethnic groups in the former plateau state. The Eggon ethnic group had a majority population of about 47 percent of the entire Nasarawa state”.<sup>23</sup> Manga affirms that “the Eggon people are found in almost all the local government areas of the state but densely in places like Nasarawa-Eggon, Lafia, Obi, Akwanga and Doma respectively” (2012:12). According to Ombugunawu, colonial officials stressed the importance of Eggon people “in terms of their population in the area based on the 1934 census when the Eggon area came under the plateau province after the administrative restructuring as far back as 1922” (1984:3). Ombugunawu further asserts that “a great deal of the Eggon people lives outside of what they refer to as *Obein Egnjo* Eggon land now. This is due to population explosion. Many among the Eggon people went off to other places in search of fertile soil being mainly agriculturalists. The Eggon indigenous people especially men are well built, tall and black with prominent checks and the women are sturdy, averagely tall and hard working” (1984:3).

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<sup>23</sup> Sunday SUN: Voice of the Nations of June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013, Vol. 10 No. 528. P. 7 See Ombugunawu 1984:3.

### 3.2.1 Origin of the Eggon people

The origin of the Eggon people, being an oral tradition, has different and conflicting accounts. The accounts, which are verbally transmitted from one generation to another, may suffer serious distortions and in the end may present an entirely different version from the original versions. To this Kigbu argues that “the accounts collected relating to the origin of the people are not only divergent, but are also conflicting” (1996:12). Ombugunawu postulates that “the Eggon history of origin began outside their present *Obein Egno* Eggon land. Thus, it suggests that migration forms part of their early history before they could finally settle in their present land” (1984:4). Below are some of the oral traditions.

Ombugunawu observes that “one of the versions says the Eggon people migrated from Egypt during the exodus of the Israelites. They then came and settled at Ngazargamu, an area in the defunct Kanen Bornu kingdom before proceeding to the present land” (1984:4). Another version of the tradition, according to Kigbu, says:

The *Angbashum* ancestors of the Eggon people migrated from the South-East to their present abode together with Abro-Agbi, who is said to have been created by Ahogbre or Arugban the elder God. At that time Abro-Agbi was accompanied by two brothers called Jade-Oka and Ubina. They migrated in search of an independent home land as well as to escape an unsettled condition that arose as a result of frequent wars. On reaching River Arikya the two brothers wished to cross it and so they continued in much the same direction, but Abro-Agbi decided he was not going to cross the river any more. Turning west he followed its Southern bank and founded the town of Angro. Latter he moved from there to a place called Agbabadan where he gave birth to many children including Abe, Anzo, and Affro. Abro later became the father of one of the principal clans of the Eggon ethnic group called Egoj Anzo (1996:12-13).

Kigbu argues that “the tradition further reported that one day Abro found a boy digging wild yams in a river bank, and pitying him Abro brought him to his own house where he brought him up with his children. When he grew up, the adopted son was given a bow and a wife” (1996:13). Kigbu holds that “the boy could not speak Abro’s language and was named Eholo which means a river” (1996:13). According to Kigbu, the tradition further claims in this version that when Abro was old and nearly blind he called his sons and warned them that if they were not careful Eholo would dominate them and that they should prevent him from getting the sacred objects of leadership of the group which included Acha seed and his (Abro’s) bow, and that Eholo should be left to farm only Guine corn, the inferior seed. It was reported that Eholo overheard the conversation and decided on a strategy. After his foster brothers had gone out from their father’s house, he pretended to be one of them, entered into Abro’s room and deceived him to give him the sacred objects. His deceitful plan was discovered but apparently nothing was done to him. Later again he tried to deceive Abro into

letting him have the right to control rain. This time his plans failed, hence, he was very furious and shot Abro with the very bow that was given to him when he was found on the river bank and joined the family. Though mortally wounded, Abro then told his sons about what Eholo planned to do and warned them never to compromise with him but to maintain a state of perpetual hostility with Abro and his descendents (1996:13-14).

Kigbu further revealed that Eholo later planned and escaped with his wife with the stolen Acha seed and eventually settled at a place known as Lizi, a place named probably after his first son Lizilizi which later became known as Wana (1996:14). Another tradition, according to Kigbu, explains that “the Eggon migrated from unknown land in the South east under the leadership of one Abro, born of Arugban, the sky god. One day when Abro Agbi went on hunting he saw a child crying at the river bank. He took the boy home and named him Eholo, meaning river” (1996:14). The version further stressed that “Eholo when he grew up was given wives in marriage that bore him many children in Abro’s house. But Abro was struck with blindness at his old age. Eholo then used it as an opportunity and often sought to deprive his foster brothers, Anzo, Abe and Affro, of their birth right and attempted to take over the leadership, but when his plans were discovered he fled to Wana and became the founder of the Eholo clan. But Anzo and Abe remained together for some time and later they fell apart. As a result two sub-clans came into being namely Anzo and Egon Ero (Kigbu 1996:14-15; Ombugunawu 1984:5-6). Ombugunawu further argues that “these accounts lead to events of a more complicated nature, which are said to be the genesis of certain ugly conditions prevailing among the Eggon people till today” (1984:5-6).

Casting a critical eye over the traditions or versions of the origin of the Eggon people above, Kigbu opines that “these traditions relating to the origin of the Eggon are as conflicting as they are also vague and generalized” (1996:16). This is because “no concrete meaning or understanding can be ascertained as to how the Eggon people came to occupy their present Eggon land” (1996:16). Generally speaking, the tradition or versions concerning the origin of Eggon can be said to be largely a mystery or a legend which is commonly found among many Nigerian tribes regarding their origin. As Kigbu puts it “the traditions concerning the origin of the Eggon people show that the father of Eggon ethnic group was one *Abro* but later portrays that one of the Eggon major clans Eholo did not migrate together with other clans

from the South-East, but sprang up only when a lost boy was found along the river bed and was brought up by *Abro*” (1996:16-17).

Another possible impression that could be deducted from the traditions, according to Kigbu, is that “this boy that was found may not even be an Eggon boy; the reason is because the lost boy could not speak *Abro*’s language but was only named *Eholo* which means river. This therefore suggests that the founder of *Eholo* clan is not an Eggon; hence, the entire clan cannot even claim Eggon origin” (1996:17). Kigbu argues that the scenario here “is a common type of African tradition of origin, with three brothers, as in other traditions coming from the ‘East’. But with Eggon’s case in one respect is very instructive and this could be a new field for fresh research. The fact that *Eholo* was ‘found’ by *Abro* who was lost in the bush, suggests that *Eholo* might have been in the area before *Abro*’s arrival. This further implies that there were some settlements at the site before the coming of *Abro*. And these settlements might not necessarily be Eggon settlements; since the tradition claims that *Eholo* could not speak *Abro*’s language” (1996:17).

Second, the origin and parentage of both *Abro* and *Eholo*, as Kigbu further reiterates, are shrouded in mystery. This is because *Abro* was said to be created by an Elder God called *Arugba*, while at the same time the tradition pointed out that *Abro* migrated from the ‘South-East’. Similarly, we do not know anything about the origin and parentage of *Eholo* since the tradition only asserted that he was ‘found’ by *Abro* (1996:17-18).

Third, Kigbu observes that “the contest between *Eholo* and *Abro* could be a contest for leadership and supremacy over farmland and hunting. Indeed the bow in Eggon land signifies hunting while *Acha* was the most respected food crop as not many people possessed it because it was not common and its possession in those days signified wealth and authority” (1996:18).

Fourth, one may even boldly point out, as Kigbu remarks, that “the Eggon as we know them today might not have been the same some centuries back. This is because *Abro* could not understand *Eholo*’s language and yet, we are told, the two became the founding fathers of the two major clans of the Eggon ethnic group. Two deductions could be made here. First, what is now known as Eggon ethnic group could have just been a coalescence of other smaller

ethnic groups in the area, who mutually came together for aggressive reasons such as the formation of large hunting/fishing bands. It could be even for protective reasons against the menace of wild beasts, or even their immediate neighbours such as the Rindre, Yargam, Ankwei, Alago, Gwandara, but even more so against the Hausa-Fulani slave raiders of the 18<sup>th</sup>/ 19<sup>th</sup> centuries” (1996:18).

Kigbu further states that “these ethnic groups might have coalesced together by the forceful imposition of one stronger ethnic group over and above other ethnic groups and thereby exerting power and leadership over them. Additionally he says, the legend of the lost boy (Eholo) seems to suggest the integration or coalition of two separate ethnic groups which later came to share the same language of what is now Eggon. This could have been the case when Abro brought Eholo under his control. Remember, Abro and Eholo may not be individuals as such but representatives of certain ethnic or interest groups. And as noted earlier, Eholo rebelled at a later period by not only regaining his independence, but by killing his erstwhile master” (1996:18-19).

From the above analysis of the oral traditions, it is highly possible that the only tradition that claims Bornoan descent, according to Kigbu, is “to a large extent a mere concoction, a concoction that was either created or influenced as a result of their associations with the Beri-Beri migrants of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. And this was possibly reinforced in the minds of the palace chiefs particularly during the reign of Bashayi from 1922 to 1927. Bashayi was the half caste chief from keffi who was appointed by the British colonialists as Jakada (representative) in Eggon land and whose closest allies were the Beri-Beri of Lafia” (1996:19). Bashayi tradition, as argued by Kigbu, served the interest of political actors of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Eggon land because: first, it was fashionable for any ethnic group to claim descent from the great Kanem-Borno Empire and therefore from Yamen, possibly just for the fancy of it or just to be regarded great and respected and second, it enhanced the position of the alien chief (Bashayi) in the eyes of the British colonialists and also that of the Natives. This is because the claim acted as a counter-action point against any opposition to the imposition of this alien chief from Keffi by merely explaining that ‘...after all we are all brothers from the same place...’ (1996:19-20). Some of the anecdotes were the outcomes of other influences. Ombugunawu observes that “when the resident of Plateau province wrote about the origin of Eggon people he acknowledged the help he received from

the then missionary Rev. I. D. Hepburn who happened to be the first missionary in Eggon land and the claim was just because he himself speaks the Eggon language” (1984:7). This, according to Ombugunawu, implies that many people depended on the white missionaries for information instead of the natives partly because the natives were illiterate and unable to recall or trace the route of their migration. For instance, the claim that they had come from Ngazargamu might be due to Kanuri influences. The Kanuris of Lafia came from Borno and some of their facial marks are almost similar to some of the clans among the Eggon people, and they are said to have taken shelter on the hills with the Eggon people before they proceeded to their present settlement (1984:7-8).

The Eggon is made up of the three major clans, namely: Egoŋ Anzo, Egoŋ Eholo and Egoŋ Ero. The Egoŋ Anzo occupied the south-east, the Eholo clan inhabited the mountainous north-west part of the Eggon region, and the Egoŋ Ero occupied the eastern half of the Eggon hills (see Kigbu 1996:10; Anzaku 2007:53-54). These three major clans, according to Seibert, “are conventionally divided into twenty-five mutually comprehensible dialects and a twenty-sixth, Madantara, is said to be impossible to understand without special learning” (2000:1). Seibert’s work was limited in the sense that he could not unfold the different dialects as stated above, but Ombugunawu was able to enumerate the different dialects that constitute the three major clans among the Eggon people - Anzo, Eholo and Egoŋ Ero. These are as follows: Ginda, Alushi, Arikpa Anzo, Wangibi, Wakama, Ende, Wana, Ogbagi, Odzi, Wolon, Aizene, Galle, Umme, Lambaga, Arugbadu, Ekpon, Ogba, Alizaga, Ikka, Ungwasheru, Bakyonno and Agyunji (1984:1).

Ombugunawu’s work suggests that the different Eggon dialects are twenty-two and not twenty-six as claimed by Seibert, though he was not able to figure out the different dialects according to their respective clans. This therefore suggests that Seibert’s analysis - which stated that the three Egoŋ clans are divided into twenty-five mutually comprehensible dialects and a twenty-sixth, Madantara - is not accurate. The reason is that the Madantara, which is also known as the Egoŋ Ero clan, has several dialects and not just one as Seibert seems to suggest. Manga listed some of the sub-clans within the Egoŋ Ero clan (Madantata) to include: “Arugbadu, Umme, Bakyano, Arikya and Akura among others. Though, all the different dialects that fall under the Egoŋ Ero clan (Madantata) cannot be easily comprehended as those that belong to the other two clans: the Anzo and the Eholo clans” (2012:13). The

dialectal differences can be identified with the slight differences in pronunciation. For example, the Anzo and Eholo clans call head, 'Ishi' while the Egon Ero clan adds an L-sound to it thereby making it 'Lishi'(see Kigbu 1996:11; Anzaku 2007:54; Manga 2012:24).

The Eggon people have a distinctive social structure. According to Manga, each clan or family is patriarchal (tracing their origin through the male ancestors), and so with inheritance. The Eggon believe and practice an "extended family system", a situation where "the parents, their children and grandchildren live together in one house unit" and also include cousins of anyone in the nuclear family or other relatives who are not members of the nuclear family; it is a network of relationships which bind various relatives together for mutual fellowship and support (2012:16).

### **3.2.2 Social structure of the Eggon people**

The Eggon (Eggon), as mentioned earlier, had three major clans, namely Eggon Anzo, Eggon Eholo and the Eggon Ero. As mentioned above, the Eggon people believe in and practice an extended family system (see Manga 2012:16; Ombugunawu 1984:16). Bitrus argues that the extended family "is a system in which the parents, their children and their children's children live together in one house unit" also with cousins of anyone in the nuclear family or other relatives who are not members of the nuclear family" (2000:27). Manga holds that "the responsibility of child upbringing rests squarely on every member of the system" (2012:16). Ombugunawu also argues that "the custom of naming children was to place the father's name immediately after the child's own. The head of the family which is the man in most cases would look after the interest of the family to the best of his ability" (1984:17).

Marriage in the traditional Eggon society, as observed by Manga, is contracted by the father who looks for a bride for his son. Sometimes the negotiation for the marriage partner for their children was done even before the girl was born; this they do in good faith. In some of the clans, courtship begins when a woman was noticed to be pregnant. The older member of the family with a male child would go to the house of the pregnant woman and tie a string around her wrist (provided no one was there before him for the same purpose), saying 'what is in your womb, if it is a girl, she is my wife, but if a boy, he is my friend'. He would from thenceforth keep his eyes and ears open for the news of her safe delivery. If a baby girl was born, the old man would be immediately informed and on hearing the news, he would go to



greet the woman taking along a log of wood and a corn stalk. This is a proof of his initial visit. The log of wood was to produce fire to warm the baby's bathing water while the corn stalk served as a lamp to light the room. This marked the beginning of the courtship and a new relationship between the two families. Other gifts would continue to be sent to the parents of the girl. As the boy and the girl come of age their parents would formally inform them of the marriage arrangement" (2012:35-36).

Manga further argues that, "as both the boy and girl matured, further arrangements would be made and things like maize (corn), sorghum, rice, 'acca' and so forth would be sent to her and the parents as gifts. The son-in-law would at the appropriate time invite his friends, relations and others in the community to assist his father-in-law on his farm" (2012:37). This was community work which no one dared refuse to participate in due to the communal support network they provided for each other. This would continue almost yearly until the marriage took place (2012:37).

Apart from the gift of items mentioned above, Manga notes that it was the tradition that a number of basins of white cooked beans 'ebiekpmre' were given. This is special specie of beans which serves as the bedrock of every marriage dowry. The presentation of this beans itself was an occasion which would bring members of both the immediate and extended families together and it spilled over to the community (2012:37). It is important to note that the validity of every marriage depended greatly on presenting the traditional food *Ebiekpmre* to the family of the girl. The number of basins for the quantity of food, according to Manga, differs from clan to clan. However, a number of factors were considered before they ventured into the negotiation to ensure that their children were married into and from families which are well spoken of; families that had evidence of being hardworking, honest, just and decent etc (2012:37).

It is important to note that among the Eggon people, there are basically three accepted and recognized ways or methods of contracting marriages. The first is *ubro la awyeshe* elope type of marriage. This is a system of marriage that used to take place when there was not previous arrangement. Usually, the boy and the girl make an arrangement to run away secretly to the house of the relative of the boy who lives in a distant village. As soon as that happened, the parents of the boy sent a message to the girl's parents notifying them not to search for their

daughter because their daughter is with them. This information marked the commencement of the formalized process of the payment of dowry (Manga 2012:39).

The second form of marriage is *Vugbu* which literally means kidnapping. This form of marriage, according to Manga, usually happens when the marriage gifts and dowry have been paid but the girl is not willing to marry the intended husband. The friends of the boy, in some cases, will collaborate with the girl's parents on the appropriate time to carry her to the boy's house. This usually happens either in the market, or when she is alone or on an errand deliberately arranged by her parents for the purpose of kidnapping, without her knowledge. As soon as she gets to the boy's house, the women who have been waiting for her arrival will shout *ayi ri* in jubilation followed by organized dancing and singing by the community. The girl from that moment will be monitored so she does not go back to her parents' house immediately, but if she does, she will be considered as a married woman and no longer as a girl. However, if at the time she arrives at the boy's house and for whatever reason(s) there is not any official form of jubilation by the community to mark her arrival, then she will be received back to her parent's house as a girl (2012:39-40).

The third form of accepted, recognized and approved ways of contracting marriage in Eggon land is where the parents and the relatives are fully and duly informed. This informing usually takes place after all the necessary arrangements for the payment of the dowry is agreed upon by the two families. This then is followed by an agreed fixed date for the girl's parents to formally hand over their daughter to the boy's parents or family. Though the ceremonies for this form of marriage differ from clan to clan as well as family to family, there are certain things in common between all the clans and the families. In any case, an elaborate arrangement is made prior to the time as both parents are fully prepared for it. Both the immediate and extended family members are informed and required to attend the ceremony. The relatives of the girl would come prepared with whatever they could afford such as pots, calabashes, and corn, among other items, to bid their daughter farewell. On the day of the ceremony, food and drinks are provided in abundance for both members of the families, community members and other guests. This is followed by singing of songs which are most often composed for the occasion and different styles of dances are displayed. For the friends and members of the boy's family, it is a moment of great joy to receive their new bride, while, for the friends of the bride and in some instances her immediate parents and

siblings, it is the darkest moment and a night of sorrow as they lament for the departure of their daughter, sister and friend. Painful still is the moment the bride in the company of her friends goes and bids her parents farewell amidst sobbing, as she departs for the house of *Arikpu* or *Shekpu* intermediary. Sometimes the parents, especially the mother will break down in weeping as she leaves (see Manga 2012:40-41).

Subsequently, the friends and the relatives of the groom would be singing and dancing in jubilation as they escort the bride to the house of the *Shekpu* intermediary. The moment the bride enters the *Shekpu* house, the *Shekpu* and his wife assume the responsibility of parenting, guiding, advising and instructing her for a day or two alongside other elderly and experienced married women. They are women who can testify as to how to achieve a decent marital life and how she should behave in her matrimonial home; that is, how she should treat her husband, her parents-in-laws, the immediate and extended family members, and how she should receive visitors. She will be warned never to do anything that will tarnish the name of her biological parents, never to be stingy but to be generous and never to engage in extra-marital affairs. During the orientation she would also be informed of the fact that marriage is not child's play but requires seriousness and maturity because in it there are both joyful and difficult moments, and that she should be prepared to see them as part of life experiences. However, if she cannot contend with anything negative either from her husband or relatives, she should notify the *Shekpu* or his wife instead of her biological parents. The idea is to promote the integrity of her marriage and to safeguard the marriage against any possible conflict or misunderstanding that may arise between the two sets of parents.

From the moment the *Shekpu* releases her to the groom's house; it is another great moment of joy and merry making. Manga argues that "the most highly valued moment of every marriage in the entire Eggon land is when the bride is discovered to have kept her virginity. To verify that on the first night of the marriage, in bride official room, on the *Gbudu* bed *Ala-akyle* a white bed sheet would be spread on and during the morning the *Ala-akyle* would be examined by two elderly women of both families to ascertain the virginity of the girl. When there are stains of blood in it, it is then a proof that the girl was a virgin" (2012:42-43). The elderly women from amongst the girl's relatives would shout '*a gli li i*'. This is an "expression of joy at either marriage, birth or the extermination of a big animal or the coming of rain" as explained by Enna (1996:139). Other female relatives would join her in jubilation for the

fact that their daughter had made them proud for keeping her virginity. This information according to Manga would then be passed to the community elders who would confirm the observation after which praise would be shown to the bride, her parents and her entire family. The community at large would be happy because it has a trustworthy daughter. The girl would be respected by everyone and various gifts would be presented to her as mark of respect for keeping herself undefiled (2012:43). Virginity is highly valued throughout the Eggo land. However, as Manga explains, if the bride is discovered to have defiled herself before marriage, it would be a moment of shame and disgrace to the girl, her parents and to the members of her entire family. The parents would then be accused of negligence in the upbringing of their daughter. In most communities, this act is not considered lightly and often divorce is the end result. In some cases, the girl's parents would be required to pay a fine of a goat to appease the gods and the ancestors who might be angry as a result of the girl's defilement (2012:43).

The majority of Eggon people are farmers and family is considered to be the most important unit of production among them. For everything the men do on the farm, women are always around to assist. This could be the possible reason(s) polygamy was highly encouraged within the pre-colonial period. In order to cultivate large plots of farmland, a man had many wives and children (see Ombugunawu 2012:19; Kigbu 1996:41).

There are many other social institutions in the Eggon land, such as moonlight play, *Ewa*, folktales, *Ara* dancing and a host of others. During the dry season, when all harvests have been completed, one will experience dancing and drinking in almost every community. Wrestling contests between villages are means through which the communities derive entertainment and fun. There are exceptions to these kind of social activities during the rainy season, especially when marriages are contracted, or there is the death of a decent elderly man, or there are any other religious anniversaries.

### **3.2.3 Political structures of the Eggon people**

Politically, Ombugunawu argues that “the Eggon people did not have kingship or centralized chieftaincy institution in the pre-colonial era” (1984:13). Prior to the colonial period, the Eggon had no central chief controlling the affairs of the entire community though they had their own measure of political authority; every clan constituted itself into a semi-independent

unit with its own administrative machinery with political authority revolving around the *Adaṅ Ashum* chief priest who headed the *Moa-Andakpo Ashim* Council of elders. The chief of the *Ashum* cult who sits in council with the council of elders had religious, political and judicial powers. Apart from his religious functions, his main political duties included settling disputes with outside enemies and even with some other clans. The chief priest in conjunction with the council of elders could declare war and mobilize warriors to fight such a war (see Anzaku 2007:58; Kigbu 1996:27).

The chief priest, according to Kigbu, was so powerful that members of Eggon society were forced to conform to the decision taken by the *Adaṅ Ashum* and his executive council of the *Moa Andakpo Ashum* and severe penalties were given to ensure conformity. Apart from the *Adaṅ Ashum*, chief priest, and the *Moa Andakpo Ashum*, the council elders, the final authority in any political unit in Eggon land lay within the office of the *Adaṅ Obiṅ*, father of the land. He was regarded by every member of the clan as the number one man whose powers and functions superseded that of the *Adaṅ Ashum*, chief priest. In fact, all that the chief priest and his council of elders did were said to be on the instructions of the father of the land. The father of the land was so powerful that he was regarded as God's representative here on earth. He is the only person that could stop an ongoing war (1996:27-28).

The semi-independent clan units as noted above, according to Kigbu, were further subdivided by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus within a clan we have what is known as *ugu*, sub-clan, this was also sub-divided into *Kpazhi*, comprising of all the extended members from the patrilineage group. In both of them, mini *Adaṅ Ashum* were appointed to solve immediate problems of their members, but none have the *Adaṅ Obiṅ* because there was only one *Adaṅ Obiṅ* for the whole clan (1996:31).

### **3.2.4 The economic life of the Eggon people**

The Eggon people in the pre-colonial period were not great traders nor a well-known people group like the Hausa of the north, Yoruba of the west and the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria (see Manga 2012:23; Dugga 1996:49). These three tribes travelled the length and breadth of the country for trading purposes. However, this does not mean that the Eggon people were not actively involved in business activities. Kigbu affirms that amongst the Eggon people, in addition to every village having its own market, there were other markets that were attended

by different Eggon clans. Such markets include: the Ezga market of Wana people, the Endazan market of Alushi people, Akpata market of Wakama people, Agidi market of Angbashuru people, Arugba market of Ogba people, Alga market of Wangibi people and Angybi market of Agunji people amongst others (1996:38). These markets were prominent and prosperous even before the colonial period. The early colonialists were impressed by the organization of these markets and the type of commodities sold therein (2001:38). Kigbu quotes Mr. Clarke, the then Colonial Assistant District Officer as saying: “Every large town had a market of its own and all sorts of agricultural products were exchanged like maize, Acha, Guinea corn, rice, palm oil, locust beans etc, including goats and sheep” (1996:38-39). At the initial stage, most of their transactions, according to Manga, were trade by barter. And it was mainly women who conveyed trading articles to market centers at Alizaga because men were afraid of being attacked by the neighboring hostile clans, or foreign invaders. The articles of trade then include blankets, smoking pipes, pots etc.

The women exchanged these articles also with the Alago neighbors who produced salt. Blacksmithing and hunting were other major economic activities. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the Eggon people were and are still farmers; land for them was and still is a commodity that is greatly valued. Hence, the Eggon man will go to any legitimate length to secure a piece of land and from it he creates wealth in various forms, such as abundant harvest, swine, and keeping of livestock such as sheep, goats, chickens etc. The women were not left out in the economic struggle. Apart from helping their husbands in the farms alongside their children, they were also involved in the production of items such as baskets, clay pots, hats, mats, cotton thread and many others to earn extra income for the upkeep of the family. Some of them even owned private farms for growing various crops with which to assist their husbands when their barns ran out. Since each family owned a substantial number of fields to produce enough food stuff, this necessitated that the man employ more hands. To meet this, some men married as many wives as they could afford to help on the farm as well as to have many children who would assist in taking care of the livestock and other farm activities (2012:23-24).

Despite the prosperous nature of the Eggon market system; there were some setbacks prior to the coming of the Colonial Administration. It was not possible for the Eggon people especially the male folks to travel far due to security reasons. Ombugunawu corroborates that

“economic activities were limited during the pre-colonial time” (1984:19). Due to the aforementioned factors, Kigbu states that the Eggon people were determined to keep out traders who came from Keffi and Lafia with goods for exchange because the traders were regarded as *Moa ηan enesla*, brothers of the Whiteman, or plunderers and cheats, and to some extent accomplices of slave-raiders. Thus most often traders were harassed by the Eggons and sometimes had their goods confiscated or received cruel beatings (1996:39). Kigbu further observes that “the last quarters of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was openly declared as *Omba moa ab’ga eb’ga* the era of killings” (1996:39). The absence of modern technological tools such as modern farm implements, storage facilities, and lack of access roads to transport their farm products remain the major setback in their economic empowerment.

### **3.2.5 The Eggon traditional religious belief**

Eggon people believe in the Supreme Being called *Ahogbre*, the creator of all things. Manga argues that the Eggon people believe that *Ahogbre* is real and great. He is known by both personal and descriptive names. There is a legend among the Eggon people that says *Ahogbre*, God, used to get involved in the activities of men but one day, a woman who was pounding yam carelessly lifted her pestle so high that it hit *Ahogbre* on the forehead which made him to withdraw. Ever since then, men began to approach him through intermediaries and deities such as *Angbashum*, ancestors, who are senior members of their respective living families. The Eggon people held ancestors in great respect because they believed that the ancestors were an integral part of the society and often played vital roles in all their social activities. They also had the power to bless or to curse their living members who might have offended them (2012:20-21). Therefore, ancestral veneration was a hallmark of religious belief which dominated all others in their life as they held that the ancestors were the custodians of all moral standards of the community. It is worth noting that some clans among the Eggon people still practice the traditional religion and worship deities through their family’s ancestral shrines (2012:21).

Prayers can be offered to God directly and on serious occasions, such prayers are accompanied by sacrifices. Despite the absence of an organized form of worship, in every village or home there are various deities who are peculiar to them. Most often the villagers or the community leaders will first consult the ancestors before venturing into important projects

or before taking any decision, such as in the case of an outbreak of disease. The consultation always begins by offering sacrifices to the ancestors; the sacrifices mostly involving food stuff and animals. Manga argues that the people strongly believe that life is a continuous cycle which stretches from birth to death, finally joining the ancestors. Apart from their belief in the *Angbashum*, ancestor, they also believe in the *Amu*, spirit, which some clans amongst the Eggon also call *abili*. To them, the *Amu* or *Abili* is the one that makes the human body to function and on departure from the body it automatically becomes *Angbashum*, ancestor (2012:21).

Dugga argues that morality amongst the Eggons is akin to righteousness and purity which is the state of the righteous. It is on this that a reputation of every Eggon person is built. For them, a righteous person is someone who does not steal another person's property, does not sleep with another man's wife, is not a witch or rumored to be involved in witchcraft but is known to be hard working. These criteria have evolved and are maintained for practical communal living which enhances harmony and cohesion. According to them, the unrighteousness of one man can destroy the peace and even the health of the entire community (1996:55). Dugga further maintains that this explains the popularity and publicity with which exorcists are received in Eggon land. And as soon as a man or woman exhibits the spiritual or magical ability to detect and extra-importantly, remove the ornaments of witchcraft, many families gather themselves together and head for the trial by ordeal. All, in a bid to refine the character of family members who could cause harm to befall them. It is however, sad that despite the popularity and feasts performed by various exorcists over the years, ranging from Mailaga, Yari, Maryamu, Dabam, and one might add the current rave Baba Lakyo (Aliga Agu), the Eggon people have yet to see the end of witchcraft, even though they hold a firm belief that it can be eradicated and that humanity can live a stainless life (1996:56).

The Eggon person also believes in medicine men and magicians who are available in every community and are consulted in times of outbreaks of disease or when calamity befalls the community. Amongst these categories, we have rainmakers who can either make the rain to fall or can cause drought for various reasons. Magicians and Sorcerers use supernatural forces such as charms, amulets, spells and rituals to control events, while the Diviners are those who use occultic means to discover the unknown. All the the categories of the people mentioned



above work under the control of the chief priest, who gives directives and instructions on how rituals and sacrifices should take place, especially those that involve the entire community. The medicine men and magicians mentioned above can perform their functions when the problem has to do with individual person or family. Just as in the Old Testament when a person who was afflicted with a condition that might have rendered him or her unclean was brought to the priests who examined the condition and pronounced the person clean or unclean (Lev. 13-15), it is only the *Adaŋ Ashum* chief priest that can declare a person spiritually unclean and perform all cleansing rituals.

### **3.3 Death and bereavement among the Eggon people**

Death is a universal event that cuts across cultures, races and ethnic nationalities; however, people's reaction to death and the accompanying ceremonies differ from culture to culture. This section seeks to discuss issues related to death, including such issues as the name of death, causes of death, means of communication when death occurs, and reaction to death.

#### **3.3.1 Name of death**

Death among the Eggon people is known as '*Ekū*', which means the cessation of all the vital functions that are required to keep an organism alive. The Eggon people consider death as a phenomenon that no one becomes familiar with despite its regular occurrence. Dugga postulates that *Ekū* refers to those rites of transition that accompany death (1996:59).

#### **3.3.2 Causes of death**

Raum argues that "African peoples have their theories as to the causes of death. These theories move on two levels. On the first level are accidents, such as deaths in war, through execution, lightning, drowning, and poisoning, and the cessation of life through old age, sickness, famine, thirst and complications in childbirth. There is the second, the mystical level which deals with the question of why rather than how; and settles on influences of sorcery, witchcraft and divine or ancestral intervention as ultimate causes" (1969:57). Dugga observes that there are two types of deaths in the Eggon worldview. The first is the death of the aged members of the society, while the second is that of younger persons - those ranging from babies to the middle aged, especially those yet to have second generation offspring. The former death is considered 'natural' and therefore celebrated, while the latter is looked upon with suspicion, often times with accusing fingers pointing to some people, whether rightly or

wrongly, as being responsible. Accusations are not uncommon as someone must be held responsible for the 'unnatural' deaths and these are confirmed or dispelled by inquests, *Eha* (1996:59-60). Manga argues that an Eggon person believes that "every unnatural death had its origin and was always caused by a force or power. It was therefore necessary that whenever it occurred, these agents must be known and proper steps should be taken or found to forestall its re-occurrence" (2012:51).

From oral tradition, these agents were said to be many and were usually manipulated by the forces of darkness. Manga remarks that "behind the biting of a mosquito, every touch of a fly, the stare or unusual cry of a cat particularly at midnight, there was always a reason which was often associated with these agents. It was always presumed that the agents were sent by an enemy to hurt, harm, impair, kill or destroy anyone who was suspected to be against the sender" (2012:52). Manga further stresses that, "when a snake bit someone, the biting was always seen as the hand work of an enemy whom the victim might have had misunderstanding with over an issue in the past. It is therefore very common for the Eggon person to pursue for instance, a flying cockroach which touched him/her and ensure that he/she did not only kill it but slashed off its head to be absolutely sure that it is dead. When he/she succeeded in destroying the said agent, it means that he/she has sent back a message to whosoever that sent it that he/she, the son or daughter of so and so, refused to succumb to the plan and therefore returned the agent to the sender" (2012:52).

Manga also notes that one of the common agents through which death strikes is sickness. Sickness to every Eggon person is believed to have been caused by an enemy. Each time sickness strikes, it is reasonable for them to employ the services of specialists, medicine men and diviners, so as to find out the root cause or causes of the sickness and where possible those who were involved (2012:52). From oral tradition, this singular attitude has led to separation of many extended families among the different Eggon clans. Sometimes, the immediate family of the deceased will accuse one elderly member of the extended family and this will often result in conflict between the immediate family members of the deceased and those of the accused. The end result will be to divide the extended family so that each of them will be on their own. This attitude has a negative impact on the communal lifestyle as it creates unnecessary tension and hatred between the two families. Manga asserts that at the initial stage of the sickness, only the wife or wives and children of the sick man might be

aware but when the sickness persists for more than a day or two, or as it becomes more severe, a male adult of the extended family would be informed. It is at this stage that some major steps would be taken to bring healing. Some of these steps include bringing of the medicinal herbs, shrubs, roots, leaves and bark of medicinal trees. But if it still persists they will begin to think of employing the services of exorcists, medicine men, otherwise known as traditional “doctors”, diviners and priests to help (2012:5-6). Manga further argues that these specialists are persons who were called into the work in various ways: some of them acquired the technical knowhow when they were still young and unmarried while others inherited the work from their parents or even through dreams and / or visions. The significant thing with all these categories of people is that the community expects them to be trustworthy, and exhibit a high sense of morality and readiness to serve. But if the situation still does not change, the male adult of the community or family will consult the *Moa Akha*, maternal uncles, or relations, who in Eggon custom are believed to be answerable to the Deity for the well-being of their sister’s offspring (2012:5-6). The maternal relations are believed to reserve the right to grant or object to their relation being killed by anyone. Manga further stresses that the primary objective of the call at this stage is to solicit their prayers for the sick relation. Usually when they come, the request is placed before them with a live goat. This is in line with the common belief that no matter what happens, one does not die except with the full consent and approval of his/her maternal uncles. For the case of women among the Eggon people, the situation is even more complex. This is because every married woman belongs to three categories of people: her parents, her maternal relations and her husband (if he had paid the bride price). According to the common belief among Eggon people, none of these three has exclusive power over her as far as health is concerned. So for her to die all these three categories of persons have to agree (2012:53).

Sometimes, when the sickness lingers on, some male adults among the relations of the sick man together with some from among his maternal uncles will be delegated to go and consult specialist to prescribe the right and appropriate preventive or curative measures for healing and to ward off any evil forces that might be responsible. Once that is done then the attention of a traditional priest will be sought to come and perform the sacrifice as prescribed by the diviner on behalf of the sick man. Usually the prescription is a goat or a dog. The sacrifice is then offered to either appease the gods and ancestors who might be angry with the sick man for some reasons or as a means to solicit for the gods’ intervention and to heal the sick

person. The said animal would then be killed as directed and specified by the specialist, and the blood and the local brew wine *Agyaga* poured out as a libation for the gods and ancestors. The meat of the sacrificed animal would then be eaten by the priest, their associates and members of the *Ashum* cult. But if the sickness still persists after all these necessary prescribed sacrifices have been done, the *Ashum* Masquerade will be invited to bathe the sick man ritually. The bathing usually takes place either in running water, a shrine, or a road junction during the night or early hours of the morning. Manga further remarks that this forms the last attempt to save the life of the sick man and if still there is no sign of recovery, it is resigned into the hands of the gods and the ancestors (2012:54).

### **3.3.3 Ways of disseminating information when death occurs**

Through the oral tradition, when someone dies the community is immediately alerted through wailing by the family members and the neighbours. And usually verbal messages are also sent across to members of the community and other surrounding villages. However, if the deceased is a member of *Ashum* cult, the announcement of the death will first be made to the *Moa Andak'po Ashum*, council of elders. At this point, nobody is expected to cry until all the necessary traditional or ritual proceedings are observed, including bathing, and the installation of someone who will take over the leadership of *Ashum* cult if the deceased is the *Adaŋ Ashum*, chief priest. Sometimes the proceedings take a day or two. After they finish everything, the chief priest then informs the family members officially and the entire community is alerted immediately through the wailing (crying/weeping) by the family members and relatives. But for those that have not been fully initiated into the *Ashum* cult, the procedure of bathing could be done by any other person - usually of the same sex - and while the bathing is still taking place, wailing will also be going on. Dugga argues that in a typical instance, *Egbaru*, local trumpet, would be sounded, one of the rare occasions when it is used to notify the neighbouring villages of the demise of an important person (1996:60). Dugga further asserts that verbal messages would also be sent to the *Moa kha* (deceased's maternal relations), who in Eggon custom are believed to be answerable to the Deity for the well-being of their sister's offspring (1996:60; Manga 2012:55). Their invitation, according to Dugga, is to ensure that no family shields the crime of murder committed whether in the physical sense or through witchcraft, as the maternal relations are believed to reserve the right to grant or object to their relation being killed by anyone (1996:60). Manga argues that

as the message goes round; *Ashishum* masquerades from the world of the dead would emerge to announce the elevation of the deceased and his home coming (2012:55).

### 3.3.4 Reaction to death

Every culture has its own worldview that is a core set of beliefs that describe how the world works and people's roles in the world. Similarly, everyone experiences grief and a sense of loss following the death of a loved one, but the way these feelings are experienced and expressed differs across cultures.<sup>24</sup> Culture is made up of the beliefs, values, behaviors, traditions, and rituals that are shared by the members of a cultural group. Each culture has its own rituals and practices that influence the expression of grief. Carrying out these familiar rituals and customs offers a sense of stability and security and helps people who are dying and their loved ones cope with loss.<sup>25</sup>

In each culture, death is surrounded by rituals and customs that help people grieve and mourn. Rituals offer people ways to express their grief and provide opportunities for community members to support the bereaved. Death creates chaos and confusion, and rituals provide a sense of predictability and normalcy for both the bereaved and the wider community.<sup>26</sup> Rituals and customs provide a set of directions that help structure the time surrounding death and prescribe people's roles during this time. Rituals and customs also help in addressing the following issues:

- “How the dying person should be cared for as he or she approaches death, including who should be present and what ceremonies should be performed at the moments before and after death
- How the body should be handled after death, including how the body should be cleansed and dressed, who should handle the body, and whether the body should be buried or cremated
- Whether grief should be expressed quietly and privately or loudly and publicly, including whether public crying or wailing is appropriate
- Whether people of different genders or ages should grieve differently

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<sup>24</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

<sup>25</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

<sup>26</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

- What ceremonies and rituals should be performed and who should participate, including children, community members, and friends
- How long family members are expected to grieve and how they are expected to dress and behave during the mourning period
- How the deceased should be remembered over the lifetime of the family, including ongoing rituals to celebrate or communicate with the deceased
- What new roles family members are expected to take on, including whether a widow is expected to remarry or whether an oldest son is expected to become the family leader”.<sup>27</sup>

The people of Eggon, just like any other ethnic group, react to the issue of death differently. There are factors responsible for their different reactions when death occurs ranging from sudden death, the age at which the person died, the cause of the death, and the role the deceased played while he/she was alive among others. Dugga argues that when younger persons, especially the youth or middle aged have died, the reaction is often very tense as it is looked upon with suspicion, and with accusing fingers pointing to some people as responsible. This often creates a great deal of commotion within the extended and nuclear family, and sometimes with the suspected individuals within the community at large. But when an aged member of the society dies, his/her death assumes significance and celebration in the life of the community, especially when the deceased is considered to be an important personality who held significant status in society.

Generally speaking, among the Eggon people, showing grief includes wailing and it is often expected of the mourners’, especially the female counterparts, to show public display of wailing immediately the death is confirmed; this is to indicate that the person was loved. It is usually considered abnormal if women - either wives or daughters of deceased - are not seen in demonstrative weeping. Sometimes people say that the person knew something about the cause of the death, suggesting that the person may be responsible for the death. In most Eggon clans, it may be appropriate for women to wail, but men are not expected to show overt emotion as it is seen as a sign of weakness. This cultural norm that subjects only women to wailing whenever death occurs seems to be insensitive to the issue of gender inequality by promoting the idea of masculinity. Second, the belief tends to cause

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<sup>27</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

complicated grief and/or an unhealthy grieving process among many men in Eggon culture since they (men) are not allowed to express their emotional feelings in public. What the Eggon culture fails to understand is the fact that no two individual persons express their feelings of grief in the same way. Someone who is overwhelmed by the loss of a loved one, according to Kastenbaum, may have frequent episodes of sobbing and weeping while another keeps tight control over emotional expressions (2011:71; Parkes 2001). As a result of this, the Eggon people must learn to respect every personality, irrespective of the way they choose to express their emotions during the grieving process, and encourage them to grieve in a way that is best for them, if that will help them to experience a healthier grieving process. In this sense, women and men should be allowed to express their emotions and feelings publicly should they choose to do so, depending on their psychological dispositions.

Today, many Eggon people have adapted certain beliefs and values, due to the influences of their religious background, to meet their unique needs, based on their past experiences and current situation. As a result, the grief reaction even within the three Eggon major clans varies; the same applies within the same family unit, as well as from person to person. In some instances, a person's experiences of grief may be at odds with cultural expectations. For example, someone who is usually quiet and reserved may not feel comfortable publicly crying as might be expected. Another person may experience a level of despair that feels out of step with his or her cultural or religious belief in life after death. Despite cultural norms and expectations, people need to grieve in ways that feel right for them.<sup>28</sup>

### **3.4 The meaning of the word *Awhiku* as Eggon traditional ways of helping the bereaved**

The respondents were asked to state their understanding of the meaning of *Awhiku*. The table below shows the respondents' understanding of the meaning of *Awhiku*.

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<sup>28</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

**Table 3.4 Respondents' understanding of the meaning of *Awhiku***

<b>Meaning of <i>Awhiku</i></b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Coming to sit and discuss with the bereaved when death occurs	16	47%
The moment of coming together to sympathize and encourage the family over the loss of their loved one	9	26.5%
Interacting with someone that had experienced a misfortune	5	14.7%
Other	4	11.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100%</b>

The responses of 16 (47%) respondents indicated that they understood the meaning of *Awhiku* as the coming of the community to sit and discuss when death occurs, to sum up the meaning of the word *Awhiku* in terms of the Eggon traditional way(s) of helping the bereaved. The researcher argues that the word *Awhiku* is a compound name comprised of 'Awhi' meaning sitting and or discussion, while 'Eku' simply means death. The word *Awhiku* literally denotes the act of coming together to sit and interact or discuss when death or any misfortune occurs.

### **3.5 The Eggon indigenous model of bereavement management**

This section seeks to present the richness inherent in the Eggon *Awhiku* model of bereavement management, first by highlighting its different aspects, steps and meaning-making and how healing is obtained.

#### **3.5.1 *Okuy eku* wailing and the coming of the people to the deceased's residence**

Among the Eggon people, death is seen as a community problem and is never viewed as something that concerns only the immediate family. One example of the profound support the Eggon people give to each other when death occurs can be seen in their act of coming together to the deceased's residence upon hearing the wailing of the family members, to share in the pain of the loss as well as provide care for the bereaved. As Koka explains "people are brought together, as members of the corporate society, to share in the pain of loss and to care



for the bereaved. There is always an undercurrent feeling of ‘your loss is my loss; my loss is your loss’ for our interests and human experiences are intertwined” (2002:50). As mentioned earlier, wailing among the Eggon people is both an expression of sorrow and also a way of informing the neighbours and members of the community that their loved one is dead. In a typical instance, as Dugga explains, “*Egbaru* local trumpet would be sounded, one of the rare occasions when it is used to notify the neighbouring villages of the demise of an important person. Verbal messages would also be sent to the *Moa kha* (deceased’s maternal relations), who in Eggon custom are believed to be answerable to the Deity for the well-being of their sister’s offspring. Their invitation ensures that no family shields the crime of murder committed as the maternal relations are believed to reserve the right to grant or object to their relation being killed by anyone” (1996:60; Manga 2012:55). However, as one of the respondents explains “whenever someone died, if a member is of *Ashum* cult or an aged woman, the announcement of the death will first be made to the *Moa Andak’po Ashum* Council of elders. After they had finished all the necessary traditional rituals, the *Adan Ashum* chief priest will inform the family members officially and the community would then be alerted immediately through *Okun eku* wailing (crying/weeping) by the family members, relatives and members of the community”.<sup>29</sup> A respondent further observes that “in those days (during the pre-colonial era) when a man dies, an elderly person who serves as a town crier in the community will go to a strategic location in the community and speak the following words; *Egno Egon* (words used to draw people’s attention), ‘Mr. so and so who was sick is not able to drink water<sup>30</sup> today again’.<sup>31</sup> This is another way of telling the community that Mr. so and so is dead. As soon as the community and members of the surrounding villages are alerted through wailing (crying), they will immediately suspend whatever they are doing and rush to the compound where the death occurred. As Manga explains, “as the message goes round, *Ashishum* masquerades from the world of the dead would emerge to announce the elevation of the deceased and his home coming” (2012:55).

In some of the Eggon rural settlements, when death occurs - irrespective of the time, whether day or night - some young men will be assigned to go from house to house to inform the

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<sup>29</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon woman from Eholo clan in Ubbe in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Water to an Eggon person is believed to be the commodity that everyone is expected to have access to irrespective of the person’s background because it is seen as a basic necessity of life that every person needs in order to survive as well as obtain good health.

<sup>31</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon man from Eholo clan in Nasarawa-Eggon Town on the 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

people of the calamity that has befallen them. It is required that all men who are above the age of twenty years to gather in the deceased's residence. This is to show and / or promote the spirit of solidarity and communalism among themselves. One of the widows interviewed shared the above view thus: "when my husband died before we could arrive at our family house in the village, I saw many people in our compound, each trying to say or do something, all to show solidarity, care and concern over the loss".<sup>32</sup> Koka observes that "the generated communal concern motivates the sense of care and the process of caring becomes a shared phenomenon where members of the family, community, clan or tribe participate in the burial" (2002:50). The next stage of bereavement management among the Eggon people is the bathing of the corpse, dressing it and the lying-in-state.

### **3.5.2 Onglo okmo bathing the corpse, Owu okmo anzho dressing of the corpse, and Sai okmo zga etsakpa the lying-in-state**

Dugga asserts that immediately after the death is confirmed, the corpse itself begins to undergo special treatment (bathing) by some experienced elderly persons within the community; the essence is to prepare the deceased for the onward journey to the ancestral world (1996:61). Kigbu describes the bathing ritual at this stage as being similar to the type "it receives at birth" which needs sensitivity. Second, "all its joints are twisted" so as to minimize the stiffness which otherwise could hinder its easy laying in the grave. Third, it is "dressed in the best attire, scented and powdered" (1986:44-46). There are a few instances where such practice is limited for the sake of health, especially when the deceased was diagnosed as having a communicable disease. In such a scenario, the corpse is placed in an isolated place away from people pending the period of the burial. This is mostly done by the *Moa Andak'po Ashum*, council of elders, who would be well fortified before performing the burial ceremonies.

From oral tradition, it is clear that after the bathing of the corpse, it is dressed and seated on a wood and hand-woven cloth and placed in the *Etsakpa*<sup>33</sup>. The corpse is then propped up in a

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<sup>32</sup>Responses from Widows and Widowers focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwa Kpandom in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Etsakpa in the Eggon traditional building structure serves different purposes, first, as a sitting room. It is a place where most decisions concerning the progress of the family and or misunderstanding among members of the family are addressed. Second, it is a place where visitors and community elders usually come for consultations and other matters related to the development of the community. Third, it is in most cases the main entrance to the house.

sitting position on the chair by tying its headgear to the seat's headrest and placing the hands in a comfortable sitting posture on the armrest<sup>34</sup>. Below is a typical example.



**Figure 3.5.2 A typical example of the lying-in-state of the corpse**

As Dugga explains, “this is a ritual where the deceased is given noble treatment, and the deceased is prepared as if still alive and getting ready to receive his/her distant kinsmen who would start arriving to bid him/her farewell to the world beyond” (1996:61). Dugga further argues that, “All guests arriving at this stage will walk straight into the *Etsakpa* to behold what death had done; elders would recite oral poems to the corpse on the themes of life’s futility and man’s temporal nature, reminding the corpse that they have only been sidetracked and not forgotten” (1996:63).

The significance of dressing the corpse with the new clothes is linked with the people’s beliefs about life after death. From oral tradition, a typical Eggon person viewed death not as an end but as a change of status, a transition from the land of the living to the world of the

<sup>34</sup> The practice of lying-in-state of the corpse is however limited to only those deaths that occurred and would be buried the same day. Any corpse that is taken to the mortuary does not follow this procedure.

<sup>35</sup> Before taking the picture of the dead person above and those seated beside the body, the consent of the close relatives was sought and they gave full permission for it to be used for this purpose.

dead as one journeys to the spirit world known as *Oloko* to join his/her ancestors. The idea behind putting the new clothes is that it is believed the deceased will be warmly received from the world of the dead, *Oloko*. Phiri, drawing from the above insight, explains that “in African culture, a person must be given a proper burial and all the funeral rites must be performed in order for a proper transfer to the spiritual world to take place. When a person dies, the person joins other relatives who have already gone before” (2002:58).

From oral history, during the period of lying-in-state, the deceased’s personal belongings such as his dance costumes, pottery, hunting instruments and other favourite apparel are displayed publicly by hanging them on the roof of the *Etsakpa*. These belongings, according to Dugga, are “displayed to mark the end of an era and are usually removed after the funeral festivities are over” (1996:62). These belongings, according to Manga, are “displayed for people to see and acknowledge how well-to-do the deceased was in his life time” (2012:62). Apparently before the corpse would finally be buried, some of his personal belongings would be placed before it. The idea is that the deceased will remember to take them along when he/she is going to *Oloko* to join the ancestors (see Manga 2012:62).

Dugga further explains that inside the *Etsakpa* and beside the corpse, many activities are carried out simultaneously as “close female relations ranging from the sisters, daughters and wives sit beside the corpse, holding a one way ‘dialogue’, actually a soliloquy, in which they voice out what they presume would have been the deceased’s reply if he was alive” (1996:62). This one way conversation as Dugga explains is a style of mourning which is popular and emotion laden since this is the last place such physical contact with the deceased is possible. Through this, the mourners would recount the good qualities of the deceased. This often brings floods of memory and sympathy and a few more tears are elicited from the small gathering (1996:62). Dugga further observes that during this moment, “songs are composed and sang extemporaneously and rendered in old familiar tunes which are easy to follow, mocking or praising, honouring and bidding the deceased farewell. The dance steps accompanying these songs are soft and slow, executed on one spot to the sound of the drums, a gloomy, monotonous but definitely melancholic rhythm which is only played at funerals” (1996:62-63).

### 3.5.3 *K'pa engu* grave digging and *ngybi okmo* burial rites

Another strong area of bereavement management among the Eggon people is the area of communal digging of the grave. The nature of the grave is the same for the rich, poor, young and old (see Manga 2012:56; Dugga 1996:64-65). Across the three major Eggon clans, as Dugga observes, the deceased's relations, either the maternal or paternal, are never allowed to participate in the digging of the grave. It is left for the members of the community, in-laws<sup>36</sup> and friends of the deceased from other neighbouring communities or villages to perform the task (1996:63-64). This is simply an expression of mutual support and deep concern. The oral tradition tells us that it has always been considered a great honour on the side of the in-laws to ensure that their wives' relations are properly buried. Hence, immediately they receive the news that one of their in-laws is dead, they will go to the deceased's residence to assist in the preparations for the burial ceremony.

Among the Eggon people, whenever death occurs the community will gather to behold what death has done to them after they had expressed their shock over the demise of the person. The elders in the community will seek the consent of the family members concerning the site to dig the grave. Manga argues that the spokesman in the family will come out and say 'no human, when life is no more, remains outside the mother earth'; this statement marks the beginning of *K'pa Engu*, digging the grave (2012:55). While men are digging the grave, the women will be participating in keeping the household clean. In most cases, especially in a typical Eggon settlement, digging of the grave is compulsory for every male child that is above twenty years in the community. And anyone who refuses to participate or fails to come to the deceased's compound when death occurs without any genuine reason(s) will face disciplinary measures. The disciplinary action is to promote the spirit of solidarity or communalism among the Eggon people. A respondent shared the above view thus:

I remember some years back a young man in my village who was discovered to be showing a nonchalant attitude when deaths occurred in the community. When his father died, the elders decided on some measures to be taken; some of them suggested that the man should be allowed to dig the grave alone, while others said he should pay a certain amount. But finally the elders agreed that instead of putting the corpse on the chair as usual, the young man should be allowed to carry the corpse. The elders called the attention of the young man and ask him to sit down and hold the corpse. After the experience, the young man regretted his nonchalant attitude and promised never to repeat it.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>The in-laws in this sense do not necessarily mean only those who married the biological daughters of the deceased but the husbands of the daughters of the extended family are included. Most often those participating in digging the grave are relations of those men who married women from the deceased's extended family.

<sup>37</sup>Responses from bereaved family focus group discussion in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

Though the disciplinary action here seems unethical and dehumanizing, I think their aim at that time was to correct the wrong course of action taken by the member of the community and to prevent its reoccurrence. However, considering the sensitivity and the psychological and emotional effect of the nature of the discipline administered, it would have been better if a different disciplinary action was considered.

Dugga asserts that there are two types of *Engu* graves in Eggon society. The first is the custom-built grave which the Eggons believe is traditional to them, while the second is the popular six-foot valley type of grave which came probably with the introduction of coffins during the colonial era. Graves of traditional design are most difficult to dig because they require “scientific” knowledge of soils and accuracy of measurement, which are acquired over the years with practice and experience (1996:64). The traditional type of grave, according to Dugga, “is dug first by digging a shallow grave then burrowing a tunnel of about two feet in diameter into the ground at the centre of the shallow grave and from that point enlarging the opening to create a large space as an interior chamber or underground bunker and which has laying room to the east and west” (1996:64). One of the respondents observed that “Due to the technicality involved in the digging of the grave, not every person is allowed to enter the inner chambers but those who were specially trained and demonstrated to be rigorous in the digging skills”.<sup>38</sup> The large room inside the grave, as argued by Dugga, is created with the aim to “provide accommodation for more than one corpse, each buried after an interval of at least three years, by which time the previous corpse would have decayed and left behind parts of the skeleton” (1996:65). Manga argues that inside the traditional grave there are various segments or apartments for different purposes just like the physical human home. This is because of their belief that in the world of the dead (*Oloko*), people live again as when they were alive. Hence, some of the segments are deliberately made, first, to accommodate other members of the family, and second, for the deceased to store grains and other items such as hoes, pots, firewood etc. Inside the grave a pen for livestock, goats, pigs, chickens and above all, a sitting room known as *Etsakpa*, would be provided where the deceased would receive the visitors and elders who come for consultations and other matters related to the development of the community (2012:56).

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<sup>38</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon man from Eholo clan in Alushi Medical Center in Aku Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

The introduction of the modern casket however has automatically replaced the Eggon traditional way of grave digging to a six-foot type, given that the modern type is easier and consumes less time and energy. Hence, many youth prefer the six-foot type. There are a few instances where the traditional type is still maintained especially if the deceased is a member of the *Ashum* cult. In the traditional burial ritual, the corpse is usually laid on *Ohlu*, a traditional woven mat, the modern-day casket. The Eggon traditions and customs demand that the in-laws<sup>39</sup> are responsible to make the provision. During the burial rites one of the *Moa Adaj Ashum* council of elders will enter the “inner chamber” by stretching himself into it, feet first and hands outstretched upward. Once he is inside, the corpse is “pushed” in like manner into the inner chamber. The *Adaj Ashum* elder underneath receives the body and lays it properly in a ‘sleeping’ posture, men facing the east and women facing the west (see Dugga 1996:64-65; Manga 2012:56). The rationale behind the differences in the positioning of the male and female corpse inside the grave, according to Manga, is due to “the Eggon common belief and philosophy” (2012:61). Manga further explains the rationale thus: women facing the west were because women always watched keenly for the setting of the sun which was the time to prepare evening meals for their families since there were no clocks or watches. It was a well-known fact that a woman who was a habitual late cook often invited and suffered the displeasure of her husband, family and ancestors who would not like to be disturbed in the evening when they should be taking rest after the hard day’s work. To avoid this, a woman watched closely the movement of the sun. And for the men, facing east was due to the belief that the deceased will be watching to see who would take his place in the world of the living. Second, he watched closely for the rising of the sun to begin the day’s work of tethering his goats and eventually to work on the farm while the day is still young, fresh and cool (2012:61).

As mentioned earlier, a singular traditional grave can accommodate more than one corpse. Dugga argues that where the grave needed to be re-opened, the uncertainty of what lies within the grave makes it the exclusive responsibility of the *Moa Adaj Ashum* council of elders from the *Ashum* cult to undertake the burial. Ordinary persons who are not fully initiated into the *Ashum* cult are not allowed near the edges of the grave. The *Adaj Ashum* chief priest who would go down to perform the unpleasant task is usually “fortified” through

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<sup>39</sup> This requirement is exclusively for the elderly or aged members of the family. In many instances today, the provisions are made in monetary terms.

a rigorous ritual to be able to confront the unexpected, and usually goes down with protective herbs in his mouth. He will first re-arrange the bones of the family member that was earlier laid before calling out to receive the corpse. The last stage is the ritual of cleansing of the *Adaŋ Ashum* chief priest who laid the corpse, and the bathing or the general cleansing by the *Moa la k'pa Engu* grave diggers, using ordinary clean water (1996:65-66).

### **3.5.4 *Bih manga* drumming, *fuboŋ* singing of songs, *zhga ara* dancing**

From oral history, when an elderly person died, it was expected that different masquerades and people from other communities would come and celebrate the life of such person by dancing. Dugga argues that “this is the final phase of the funeral which is celebrative in nature accompanied by drumming, dance, songs, masks, costumes and pantomime” (1996:66). Dugga further asserts that there are two types of theatrical performances in the celebrative phase and which may go on simultaneously; the *Knye Eku*, which literally means “Death Run” and the *Ara Eku* or general funeral dance. The *knye eku* features a mobile performance inside the village and around the main performance arena, which is usually the frontage of the deceased’s house. During this dance, only men and the few women who have reached menopausal age and are kinsmen of the deceased are allowed to participate in the act (1996:66; Manga 2012:61).

The performance is taken to the road at intervals with the arrival of each new band of the extended family members at the funeral ceremony. The performers arm themselves with walking sticks, machetes, Dane guns, bows and arrows and similar paraphernalia which they raise skywards thrusting up and down as they execute hop step dances away from the arena only to make a U-turn and go back to the arena. While this is going on, songs, which are not dirges but of mock victory in lyrics and rhythm, are rendered. Often presenting the community’s worldview of death, this performance gives psychological relief to the deceased’s relations (see Dugga 1996:66-67; Manga 2012:61). Kigbu describes songs in this kind of performance as follows: “...a call and response pattern, allowing for a sole voice to state the subject matter after which there is a confirmation of the situation by the entire group taking the strain up in repeat performance” (1986:44-46). This interaction, according to Dugga, provides for collective and individual consolation as well as providing entertainment for the audience by the creation of a spectacle. After a performance, all the participants melt back into the general dance where they remain until the arrival of another batch of friends and



relations of the deceased which will invite another round of *Kyen Eku* performance. Such sporadic performance continues until there are no more 'new arrivals' to the funeral ceremony (1996:67).

The second type of dance, which is the general funeral dance, is central to post-burial activities and is an enlargement of the initial dance around the corpse. During this general funeral dance all masquerades from among the Eggon neighbouring communities and villages are expected to appear. This is the only occasion where this is possible in the life of the people. And not all deaths attract such funeral ceremonies; the glamour of the funeral ceremonies depends also on the personality of the deceased. Oral tradition has it that there are two categories of personalities that attract masquerades during the post-funeral activities: first, any person who lived such a decent long life that hardly any of his mates could still be alive. Dugga observes that, "if the deceased had lived long enough to have great grandchildren, upon his death, his maternal relations would bring the most prestigious masquerade in the land called *Umbriyaya* to the funeral appropriately costumed in predominant red (colourful) attire. Upon its arrival, the deceased's children are expected to place *Ogli* a traditional ladder to the roof of the *etsakpa* sitting room usually where the corpse is seated. The elite masquerade *Umbriyaya* will then climb to the roof and dance vigorously on top of the roof until a chicken is brought and paraded before it by way of waving. This then is the "bailing" sum which now appeals to the *Umbriyaya* to climb down" (1996:68). Dugga further remarks that "once *Umbriyaya* climbs down, his role in the entire funeral is finished; he will return to his home community while the deceased's children prepare to send a live goat after it, with which they would thank their maternal relations for 'blessing' the funeral with their presence" (1996:68). A respondent observes that, "the reason for the masquerade's climbing of the roof was to inform the deceased family that they were able to fulfil the role of protecting the life of their sister's offspring since they were believed to reserve the right to grant or object to their relation being killed by anyone. And the presentation of the live goat by the deceased's children was both for honouring the funeral with the prestigious masquerade and to also show appreciation for protecting and preserving their father or mother up to such an age".<sup>40</sup> After the *Umbriyaya* had performed and left, other *ashishum* masquerades will take over.

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<sup>40</sup>Response from interview with an elderly Eggon woman from Eholo clan in Ubbe in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

The second type of personalities that attract many masquerades during the funeral dance is someone who seemed to trouble other neighbouring communities when he/she was alive. Kigbu affirms the above assertion in the following words, “the encroachment on a piece of land belonging to a different clan or seizure of one’s wife by a member of another clan remained the major source of conflict among the Eggon people which may result into war if all other means to resolve the matter prove abortive” (1996:32). The oral tradition makes us aware that when the issue of land encroachment arises, the elderly persons within the clans will have to take oaths in the *Ashum* Cult in order to claim the legitimate ownership of the piece of land in question. A respondent affirms the above thus, “we used to have an elderly man in our clan who was well fortified and sometimes he can take an oath concerning land dispute falsely, but at the end, the other person who took the oaths alongside will die even though he is the legitimate owner of the land”<sup>41</sup>. The respondent further stressed that “the day he died a lot of masquerades from other clans came and spoke mocking words during the funeral ceremonies”.<sup>42</sup> Usually the masquerades will come and interact with the deceased through his possessions and environment. The content of their performance, according to Dugga, is “high mockery of the deceased and his relatives ranging from verbal insults on the deceased’s personality and imitation of his vocation and actions in life and sometimes the masquerades will attempt to even disfigure his environment. For instance, for a man who was a tobacco farmer, sacks of worthless leaves were plucked from the bush only to be mock-traded and dumped in the frontage of the deceased’s house” (1996:72). In other instances, according to Dugga, the masquerades, under the pretext of dancing, would trample on the deceased’s farm destroying the crops around the spot where they stand. Some other masquerades in a frenzy will cut down branches of *Maka* (a shade tree) or *Elgi*, a palm tree used to produce palm oil also known as red oil in Nigeria (1996:72). When such happens, the relations of the deceased would draw the attention of an elder from such a masquerade’s clan to the act committed, to serve as an acknowledgement or reference point for retaliatory action that will follow whenever a death occurs in their clan. From oral history, among the Eggon people, no one dares fight or infringe on the rights of the masquerade in such a performance. Hence, when deaths occur in the rival clan, the funeral ceremony becomes a target for vengeance. Dugga further notes that sometimes the avenging clan may decide to go as far as

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<sup>41</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon man from Anzo clan in Ogba village in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon man from Anzo clan in Ogba village in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

cutting down economic tree<sup>43</sup> (s) from the stem in the deceased's compound. This will then become a cycle of rising crescendo until a ritual is performed between both clans where they will have to take oaths to stop further destruction (1996:72). With the assertion above, the question that needs to be answered is: In what way(s) do these mocking words, and the actions of trampling upon the deceased's crops or even cutting down the economic trees by the masquerades from other clans, help the mourners to cope with the loss? This question will be fully explored in the section on dialogue between the Eggon and the ERCC models of bereavement counselling in chapter five.

The masquerades during the post-funeral dance usually come in many shapes, sizes and colours depicting different characters within the people's ancestry. Manga observes that "the masquerades that do feature prominently are *Angbye* with its bright red feathers, *Orum* with its blacks, *Egbiyi* with black and white spotted body, *Ogbako* with long bushy hair from the crown of the head to toes. The appearances were all signs of honour and respect for the departed who has joined the ancestors" (2012:58). Dugga argues that "no paternal relation partakes in masquerading at the death of a member of the *Ugu* clan; it is instead left to the neighbouring clans" (1996:68). These masquerades, as observed by Dugga, "though performing in the central dance do not mingle with the crowd. They separate themselves to one side of the arena and maintain that spatial position throughout the duration of the performance, however, when they move to the other positions inhabited by other dancers the audience will scatter and immediately reform in the manner of the initial pattern" (1996:68).

This, as Dugga explains, "happens because the crowd which is the audience forms a large circle around the arena; with only men standing in the part of the circle closest to the masquerades. The women because they are not allowed to come closer to the masquerades are therefore put on the alert and flee each time they are confronted by a masquerade whether deliberately or not" (1996:68). This therefore provides an extra spectacle, with the audience disintegrating anytime one masquerade falls out of place or steps out of position and advances towards the part of the circle densely populated by women (1996:69). A respondent stresses that "the masquerades would continue the performance for about three to four days from morning to dusk. This was only applicable to the aged male or female in the community. Though in some cases women would not enjoy the recognition accorded to men

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<sup>43</sup> Economic tree here refers to the trees that were planted with the aim to raise money, example of such trees are, mangoes, oranges, palm tree and so forth

because they were considered inferior”.<sup>44</sup> This is one of the major weaknesses in their system as they were not very sensitive to the issue of gender inequality. Phiri, drawing from the above insight, argues that “African women theologians have also questioned the funeral rituals that dehumanize women” (2002:59).

It is vital to note here that the musicians during the general funeral performance provide rich sounds from some of the following instruments: An *Adhu*, a big wooden bass drum, *Manga*, two smaller rhythm drums, *Shishi*, two (hour-glass) talking drums, *Mada*, a wooden lead flute, *Egbaru*, two large membraphonic trumpets and *Jhagu*, iron gongs. It is from these sounds that every segment of the performance takes its rhythm and cues (see Dugga 1996:70). According to Dugga, “the masquerades that personify artistry in costuming, dancing and spectacle, are focal points of interest to the audience; while the performance is on, the masquerades interact and relate with fellow un-masked performers in the audience and even the deceased person through space and the environment” (1996:70). Dugga observes that “there are two spectacular characters amongst the masquerades that create fun and heighten interaction with the audience namely: *Atra-Akpu* and *Awhinshe Ashum*. The *Atra-Akpu* is a fun maker whose costume is not very elaborate except for its mask. It is talkative and usually found in the company of women, chasing them all about the arena while the *Awhinshe Ashum* is *Atra-Akpu*’s partner masquerades chastising the women audience for “flirting” with “her” partner” (1996:70). Even though both may be performing at a funeral, they express themselves in comedy thereby creating comic relief. They also perform functional roles at this occasion as members of the *Ashum* cult. When the performing masquerades wish to take a rest, the *Atra-Akpu* is sent to mobilize the women among the audience into the arena by chasing and coercing them. This is to avoid inactivity during the performance (1996:68-70). The occasion of death generally brings with it a time of social activities and relationship amongst the various neighbouring clans. From oral tradition it is believed that during the dance performance, some men who are exceptionally good in the dancing art could be attractive to women around which may eventually result in formal marriage.

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<sup>44</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon man from Eholo clan in Wowyen village in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC Nasarawa-Eggon on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

### 3.5.5 *Ashum eku* bringing of foodstuff, drinks, cash donations and other materials condolences

Another method of bereavement management among the Eggon people is seen in the area of bringing of foodstuff, drinks, cash donations and other material condolences to the mourners. From oral tradition, the Eggon people hold strongly that one person would not be able to feed the multitude that comes to sympathize with those who have suffered the loss of a significant person. A respondent during the focus group discussion recalled an instance and expressed it thus: “there was a time when a man lost his child and as he was crying, moving from one corner of his house to another; when he turned behind the house he would cry and say hmm... *Eku hi sha e vu me olo mbo, me si eshi eda moare he ari!* It is not only this death that disturbs me but how can I feed this multitude of people that are coming”.<sup>45</sup> I think it is due to the kind of distress accompanying the death of a loved one that many extended families during the pre-colonial era agreed to support each other with foodstuff whenever death occurred with any of its members. A respondent affirms the above view thus, “In our clan, whenever death occurs every member of the *Odne* descendants from one great grandfather will bring the agreed amount of food stuff known as *gbazhe ugru*, bunch of grain, to the deceased’s immediate family”.<sup>46</sup> Another respondent notes that, “in our village when death occurs every house is expected to contribute foodstuffs which will be gathered collectively and sent to the deceased’s family as a contribution from the entire community. Individual family will still bring food and drinks of different types to the relatives of the deceased, to enable them feed the multitude of sympathizers that may come from far and near”.<sup>47</sup>

Among the Eggon people, the mourning rituals take place for about seven days following the death. During this period, the family of the deceased mourns at home and the in-laws, neighbours, members of the community and visitors bring foodstuff, drinks and sometimes even cash donations to them (see Walsh-Burke 2006:65). In an interview, a widow shared her experience of the above: “When my husband died, it took me about one month or so to cook, this is because, many people kept on bringing food and drinks to our house”.<sup>48</sup> Another

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<sup>45</sup> Response from individual interview with the ERCC Minister in Nasarawa-Eggon Town on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>46</sup>Response from interview with an elderly Eggon woman from Anzo clan in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Responses from Bereaved family focus group discussion in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>48</sup>Responses from Widows and Widowers focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwa Kpandom in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

widow commenting on the aspect of bringing foodstuff said, “When my husband died I cannot really remember the numbers of the bags of rice that people brought to our house and many other things, and there were several months without going to the market to buy foodstuff”.<sup>49</sup>

It is customary among the Eggon people that whenever death occurs the in-laws are expected to bring foodstuff and drinks to help the relatives of the wife to feed the sympathizers. In some clans, the nature and the quantity of the food to be brought will be given while in other clans or family, the in-laws are given the freedom to decide on what they can afford to bring. Another respondent said, “an in-law that is generous and caring when difficulties befall the relatives of his wife even if he did not finish paying the dowry (bride price), the elders in that family will never allow members of the family to trouble such a person as they will always say, ‘*eka ban akpo ta-la agi sha ambo atsema kun aka ahre olgokyen mbombo*’ meaning the way he is caring for them during misfortune is enough even if he did not pay the bride price”.<sup>50</sup> It is worthy of note that among some of the clans in Eggon land, no matter how wealthy the intended in-law may be (the husband), the woman’s relatives will not allow him to finish the payment of the bride price (dowry). The reason is because the remaining part is to be used to assist them when they are faced with any difficult situation such as sickness, disaster, and death, among others.

The bringing of the food and drinks also depends greatly on how best the mourners have responded to others during their mourning period. For those that always bring food and drinks to others, when death occurs in their family people will also make an effort to bring food and drinks to them. There are instances where in some families, particularly if the deceased is polygamous, sometimes some wives of the deceased will receive plenty of foodstuff and drinks from friends and neighbours while others who do not care to do same to those who are bereaved will not receiving anything except the general *Amin eku* brought by the in-laws. Thus, during the mourning period, whenever someone has brought something for the family, some close relatives or friends will inform the mourner that ‘so and so brought...

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<sup>49</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon woman from Egon Ero clan in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>50</sup> Response from individual interview with the ERCC Minister in ERCC Ekpom in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

kind of food or drinks'. The idea is to help the mourner keep it at the back of his/her mind that when similar things happen to such a person he/she needs to do same.

Today in some instances people also bring cash donations to support the bereaved in place of foodstuff. A widow said, "In our tribal women's association we used to gather grains whenever misfortune such as death or any related case happened to anyone, but now we bring it in monetary terms and this is very helpful especially to settle any outstanding bills incurred during the treatment in the hospital or to even pay children's school fees".<sup>51</sup> Another respondent said, "When my father died, we (children) were worried how we will go about with the funeral plans and arrangements but it was my greatest surprise as to the way the whole thing went; many friends were calling me to give them my account number and that is how we were able to face the challenges of funeral preparations and other needs without much stress".<sup>52</sup> Sometimes, the cash donation as mentioned earlier will help the deceased's immediate family to settle any debts that might have been incurred as a result of the hospital bills and other funeral preparations. It is worth noting from oral history that in most of the Eggon rural settlements, whenever someone has died and the people are stranded in respect to the materials to be used in covering the grave such as wood or stone, sometimes individuals donate a tree to be used to produce planks that could be used to cover the *ongybi*, modern six-foot grave. A respondent also noted that, "in some of the Eggon rural settlements, when someone has died and the community discovers that the immediate family are not strong enough financially to provide the necessary material such as *ala-akyle*, white clothes, usually used in wrapping the corpse before it is layed in *ohlu*, traditional woven mat, for the burial, the members of the community will amongst themselves raise money and send someone to go and buy it without any formal consultation with the deceased's immediate family members".<sup>53</sup> This is one of the many reasons that communalism is highly encouraged among the traditional Eggon communities because the Eggon people believe that no person is so rich that they do not need the assistance of other fellows, hence, the need to maintain this bond of relationship among the community members, first for the security of each other, and second, for the case of any contingency.

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<sup>51</sup> Responses from Widows and Widowers focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwa Kpandom in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Responses from Bereaved family focus group discussion in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Response from individual interview with the ERCC Minister in Sabo Wakama in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 2nd August, 2014.

### 3.5.6 *Ozhu awhi eku* staying with the bereaved family during the post-funeral activities

Manga asserts that when death befalls a family, the female relatives come and stay with the mourners during the mourning period to mourn as well as to celebrate the elevation of the deceased to ancestorship (2012:62-63). One of the respondents said, “In the case of an aged man or woman who has hardly any mates who could still be alive, usually after the interment, all the male adult members of the family who lived within the area would retire to their various homes accompanied by those who came from far, to spend the night but to return every morning during the mourning period to spend the whole day, *Ozhu Awhi Eku*, in the deceased’s house as a mark of respect and sympathy. But all the *Moa Ndbo*, female relatives, would remain in the house throughout the period to mourn as well as to celebrate the elevation of the deceased to ancestorship”.<sup>54</sup> This is also such moment where the *Ugu* sub-clan, *Kpazhi*, extended family, and *odne*, nuclear family - that is, descendants of one great grandfather - meet to restore broken relationships and take decisions on the way forward for the progress of each of the categories mentioned above. It is also a moment in which the female relatives present their individual reports concerning the progress or challenges between them and their husbands or with the relations of their husbands after which advice will be given on how to resolve the problems. They will be encouraged to maintain good relationships with their husbands and their in-laws in general. But those who are reported as disrespecting their husbands or parents-in-law will be rebuked to go and change for the better. Does this time also bring challenges in regard to cases of stealing property since there is no privacy because the entire crowds sometimes sleep in the same room? What happens to those female relatives who are civil servants? Is there any special consideration for them as to the numbers of days they can stay? Or is it mandatory for them to fulfil the stipulated days required based on the tradition of the family?

It is generally believed that it can take several years to establish a new sense of normalcy after the death of a loved one, though the processes differ for everyone and every situation. Each day the bereaved person is confronted, in small or large ways, with the absence of the loved one, such as someone to go lunch with, to call in the evening, to celebrate holidays with or even to help in doing other tasks at home.<sup>55</sup> I think it is due to such an understanding that among most Eggon people, after the stipulated period of mourning is over, a few relatives

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<sup>54</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon woman from Egon Eron clan in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/NYCU/grief.pdf> (Accessed 18th June, 2014)



will always stay behind to provide moral and psychological support to the bereaved family, such as assisting them with the preparation of food, caring for the children, helping with any other domestic work and even assisting the bereaved in farm activities. They help in doing whatever else needs to be done that the bereaved person may not do because of their unstable mind. And if the death occurs during the raining season, female relatives and other members of the community will organize themselves and help the mourners with some farm work. One respondent said, “When deaths occur it is both a moment of sad experience and a blessing in a way for the family of the deceased. Sometimes the female relatives will assist in doing one thing or the other for the family in the farm such as cultivating a piece of land, harvesting crops from the farm as well as fetching firewood for the family etc”.<sup>56</sup> Another widow said, “Hmm...when my husband died, I was confused and unstable because I never expected or thought such a thing could happen to me but as relatives and friends came around and stayed with me for some time, I was really comforted and sometimes I even forget that something has happened to me because people were always around me doing one thing or the other in the house”.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the significance of staying with the mourners during the post-funeral activities to further render support to each other, there are a few instances where the people will not want to stay, either because the deceased’s immediate family is not economically strong enough to provide food for the crowd or they are not willing to release the food or drink that has been brought by friends and the community for the people, especially the extended members of the family to eat. A respondent said, “it is very common for people to stay even longer than the stipulated period of time especially if the deceased’s family is wealthy and generous, but there are instances where the people give excuses even when they initially intended to stay for some days. But because the deceased’s family are either incapacitated in providing food for the people or they are not willing to accommodate or share freely with those who came to sympathize with them, as a result, some people will tactfully say they have forgotten something at home or that they left only small children at home and no one to take care of them”.<sup>58</sup> From my personal experience, in situations where the immediate family is not able

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<sup>56</sup>Responses from interview with an elderly Eggon man from Anzo clan in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2014

<sup>57</sup> Responses from Widows and Widowers focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwa Kpandom in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon woman from Anzo clan in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

to provide enough for the mourners, female relatives will sometimes organize themselves and make a collective contribution to provide whatever food items that are needed.

### **3.6 The advantages and disadvantages of the Eggon model of bereavement management**

This section will demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of the Eggon model of bereavement management. The aim is to highlight those key themes or concepts that need to be considered in the process of developing the comprehensive models for the church in the subsequent chapter because they add values to the overall bereavement counselling procedure.

#### **3.6.1 The advantages of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* model of bereavement management**

In this section I examine the strengths of the Eggon indigenous model of bereavement management as discussed above, with the aim to deduce the kind of values it can add in the development of the comprehensive model in chapter six.

##### **3.6.1.1 The coming of the relatives, community members and friends to the deceased's residence when death occurs.**

All the nine elderly Eggon persons interviewed and participants during both the individual interviews and focus group discussion with the bereaved family agreed that the coming of the relatives, members of the community and friends to the deceased's compound when death occurs should be encouraged. A respondent said, "I remember the day my father died, Hmm... it was so devastating and at that moment I was confused, unstable, and filled with fear and lack of knowing what to do especially because it was in the night. But when people started coming to our house at that hour of the night it encouraged me and enabled me to be calm to some extent".<sup>59</sup> Another respondent said, "I remember last time when a family of five died as a result of a motor accident. When I visited the house, I saw the survivors, especially the grandmother, screaming and shouting with a lot of anxiety and despair but when I entered I decided to sit close to the old woman and held her hand for some moments and after a while

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<sup>59</sup>Response from individual interview with the bereaved family in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

she became calm”.<sup>60</sup> The death of a loved one is so devastating and if care is not taken the survivor can hurt him/herself in the process. With the presence of others, however, the burden is minimized due to the coping mechanism they will provide. Second, when death occurs, the bereaved is unable to help him/herself. It is those who come around that will help the mourners with some of the domestic activities. Koka explains that “right through the week (or any days before burial) comforters flow in - each person having something to say or items to offer” (2002:56).

### **3.6.1.2 Communal digging of the grave and other funeral preparations**

Out of the nine people interviewed, seven mentioned the need to encourage the communal support in digging the grave and other funeral preparations. As mentioned earlier, among the Eggon clans when death occurs, the immediate family members of the deceased were not allowed to participate in the grave digging. There are exceptions in a few instances; for example, where members of that family, especially the father, show no concern when death occurs with other families or persons, especially in the cities. The people, as a way of punishment, may sometimes allow him to start digging the grave alone, essentially to correct the abnormality. The communal participation in digging the grave and other funeral preparations is a tremendous help in lightening the burdens on the side of the bereaved. As mentioned earlier, sometimes the community organizes themselves even without the consent of the bereaved person to make the necessary provisions, especially the aspect of providing materials to be used for the burial ceremony such as making the coffin. Koka, drawing from this insight, recognises the important of communalism when death occurs as “people come to clean the home, wash the deceased’s clothes, slaughter what is to be slaughtered, help dig the grave, cook and serve meals, contribute tea, sugar, mealie-meal, vegetables and so on” (2002:56).

### **3.6.1.3 Bringing of foodstuff, drinks, cash donations and condolence materials**

Out of the nine Eggon persons interviewed, all agreed that bringing food stuff and drinks to the mourners is very vital and needs to be encouraged. A respondent said, “Unless other people render support, it will be very difficult for just one person to feed the entire multitude

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<sup>60</sup> Response from individual interview with ERCC Minister in Alushi, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

that came to sympathize with them”.<sup>61</sup> The respondent further shared, “how I wish that the entire Eggon land can still observe the kind of practice that was common in the pre-colonial era; in those days each clan agreed on a certain amount of grain that should be contributed to any family that suffered the loss of a loved one, but today under the pretence of civilization, many people do not see the need to assist one another, even among the same extended family members as each one always turns to their respective immediate family, which is very bad”.<sup>62</sup> As mentioned earlier, cash donations during the grieving moment are very vital and helpful in the sense that these help the deceased’s immediate family to take care of the funeral preparations and also to settle any other debts that might have been incurred as a result of hospitalization. As a result of long time illness, there are cases where many families had to sell assets such as land, houses and so on to settle the medical bills. However, with this kind of assistance, the burden is reduced to a minimum. In a detailed discussion, Koka recalled similar experience among the ‘Afrikaans’ community in South Africa, where “right from the moment of the announcement of the death of a member, families, friends and relatives rush to the house of the painful news to offer their condolences, help and comfort. They bring material support in the form of food; mealie-meal, vegetables, firewood, cans of water, even money, goat or sheep to share with the bereaved” (2002:56). The significance of this communal support network cannot be overemphasised as Koka explains that “the bereaved are no more alone but with a ‘village’ to help them carry the burden of the painful loss” (2002:56). In this sense the bereaved, according to Koka, have “a ‘shoulder’ to lean on, and a ‘hand’ to wipe away their tears and to anoint their ‘wounded’ souls with soothing ‘oil’ of words and actions as the number of co-mourners’ increases to swell the home of the deceased” (2002:56). Bereavement in this context, as observed by Koka, “is no more a ‘solo’ experience, but a communal occasion and the pain of bereavement becomes bearable because of the communal sense of concern, sharing and caring” (2002:56).

#### **3.6.1.4 Staying with the mourners during the post-funeral activities.**

All the nine Eggon elderly people interviewed and participants during the bereaved family’s focus group discussion emphasized the significant of staying with the mourners especially during the post-funeral period. A respondent affirms that “the staying of the people with the

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<sup>61</sup> Response from individual interview with Eggon elderly man from Wowyen in Akun Development Area in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC. on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>62</sup>Response from individual interview with Eggon elderly man from Wowyen in Akun Development Area in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC. on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

deceased's family during the grieving moment has emotional, spiritual and psycho-social support".<sup>63</sup> This confirmed the statement made by a widow elsewhere in this thesis that the presence of many people in their house during that period made her to sometimes forget that something had happened to her. Indeed many bereaved families interviewed agreed that the presence of the people around them facilitated a healthy grieving or healing process.<sup>64</sup> Clinebell explains that "it is crucial that caring support of the family continue during the weeks and months following the funeral" (1984:223). Despite these huge advantages, there are other aspects that need caution if the mourners are to experience a healthy healing process. We shall now turn to discuss briefly the disadvantages of the Eggon models of bereavement management.

### **3.6.2 The disadvantages of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* model of bereavement management**

This section is concerned with those aspects of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* model of bereavement management that tend to hinder an effective grieving process during the mourning period.

#### **3.6.2.1 Subjecting women to overt public display of emotions when death occurs**

As noted from our discourse on the Eggon models of bereavement management above, one of the areas that came up is the aspect of the culture that mandates every female counterpart to show overt expression of emotions and feelings in public. This approach does not take into account individual differences in the area of responding to emotional feelings. As observed by Kastenbaum, "individual experiences and expressions of grief are not uniform"; while one may find it appropriate to freely express "sobbing and weeping" in public, "another keeps tight control over emotional expression" (2011:71). Males on other hand are completely discouraged from showing their emotional expression of grief in public even if they feel they need to do so. This has resulted in cases of complicated grief among many men among the Eggon indigenous people. People need to be freed to choose appropriate ways of expressing their emotions without guilt or censure. This is because experience of grief may be at odds with cultural expectations. For instance, someone who is usually quiet and reserved may not

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<sup>63</sup> Response from individual interview with Eggon elderly man from Alushi in Akun Development Area in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC. on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Responses from Bereaved family focus group discussion in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

feel comfortable publicly crying as might be expected.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, subjecting women to overt displays of emotional feelings in public is a violation of their fundamental human rights and is discrimination against women. This must be discouraged because it is not gender sensitive. I am aware of the ongoing debate on the issue of equality. As Oduyoye explains, “it has also been suggested that equality as a concept cannot be applied to African culture, since the role differentiations in Africa are clear and are not meant to be valued hierarchically” (1992:10). The fact still remains, as Nwachuku observes, that the “African widow is still generally badly treated in the (funeral) rituals” (1992:61).

### **3.6.2.2 Speaking mocking words and other unhealthy actions during the funeral dance**

The funeral dance among the Eggon people is a sign of celebrating someone who has lived a long and decent life such that hardly any of his/her mates could still be alive. From oral tradition, it is viewed as a mark of great honour to the deceased person if the funeral dance witnesses different kinds of masquerades from different communities among the Eggon sub-clans. But the area that is alarming is a situation where individuals and masquerades from the neighbouring clans come and mock the deceased’s relatives for the kind of difficulties the deceased might have given them, especially on issues related to land disputes or seizure of one’s wife as discussed above. The content of their performance, according to Dugga, is high mockery of the deceased and his relatives, ranging from verbal insults about the deceased’s personality and imitation of his vocation and actions. Sometimes the masquerades, under the pretext of dancing, would trample on the deceased’s farm destroying the crops around the spot where they stand. Some other masquerades, in a frenzy, will cut down branches of shade trees within the deceased’s compound or even economically productive trees such as palm trees used to produce red oil (also known as palm oil in Nigeria) (1996:72).

### **3.6.2.3 Inheritance of widows**

From the perspective of Eggon traditional and cultural practices, they claim that the idea of widow inheritance is to protect the widow’s vulnerability in terms of food security and other needs as a result of the death of her husband. It is also with the notion of furthering the interests of the deceased, especially if, before his death, the deceased had no child to bear his name. But this argument seems to lose weight in light of the consequences that follow if the widow does not consent to the idea to be inherited, as she often stands the chance of losing

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<sup>65</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context>(Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

virtually everything belonging to her late husband. Phiri recalls the kind of traumatic experience widows go through in Malawi, explaining that “the period of mourning is particularly traumatic because of the practice of property grabbing. Especially in the urban context it has become common practice that soon after the death of a husband, the relatives move in to take possession of the property, including the share that belonged to the wife and the children. If the widow is aware of her rights or has relatives who help her, the legal system is used to provide protection. Payment of death benefits can take up to a year and often the extended family does not provide much support for the widow. If she returns to the village, there is pressure on her to re-marry” (2002:64-65).

#### **3.6.2.4 Minimal or lack of control in the community’s participation during bereavement management**

Everyone has the liberty to discuss and talk with the mourners during the grieving period with the aim of helping to provide coping mechanisms. The potential weakness in this kind of approach is that sometimes a person, consciously or unconsciously, says or expresses certain words that may end up aggravating the grieving person either during one-on-one conversations with the mourners or through wailing in public.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter we show how the Eggon as a tribe came into being. We started first by identifying the geographical location of the Eggon people and then attempting to trace its origin, including its socio-political structures, and their economic and religious life. Then we looked at the general understanding about issues related to death and bereavement, and the meaning of *Awhiku* as a traditional way of helping the bereaved. We concluded the chapter by looking at the Eggon methods of bereavement management in the context of *Awhiku*.

The discussion in this chapter has shown that the Eggon people see death as a universal phenomenon. However, they hold strongly that there is no natural death and believe that every death had its origin and is always caused by a force or power. Their reactions to death are influenced by factors such as the circumstances surrounding the death - that is, the nature of the death, whether sudden or anticipated, the age at which the person died, the cause of the death, and the role the deceased played while he/she was alive, among others.

In terms of methods of bereavement management, we saw that once death occurs, the community will be alerted through wailing which is both an expression of sorrow as well as a way of informing the neighbours and members of the community that their loved one is dead. Once the community is alerted through wailing, they will suspend whatever they are doing and rush to the deceased's residence. There and then they will continue to provide coping mechanisms to the mourners through bathing and dressing the corpse, digging the grave, carrying out the subsequent burial rituals, singing and dancing, providing foodstuff and drinks, and staying with the mourners during the post-funeral activities. It is important to note that the Eggon indigenous model has weaknesses as well as strengths in their approach to bereavement management. We need to learn from both if we are to build a more comprehensive model of bereavement counselling. My main task in this study is to formulate a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC. To do this I will draw from the insights that have been raised from the discussion on the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* model together with those that will emanate from chapter four which deals with the ERCC model and the dialogue between the two contexts in chapter five. Combining these approaches will enable us to draw on emerging insights and will assist in developing the comprehensive model which will be discussed in chapter six.



## **Chapter Four**

### **The historical development of the ERCC and its pastoral model of bereavement counselling among the Eggon people**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter three provided the historical overview of the Eggon people. It explored issues related to death and bereavement, the meaning of the word *Awhiku* and the Eggon indigenous concept of bereavement management.

The objectives of this current chapter are: to present a concise history of the development of the ERCC, including its theology and beliefs system, vision and mission statement as well as its policies and practices, especially those related to the issue of bereavement care and counselling.

The chapter also handles the aspect of the advent of Christianity (ERCC) on Eggon land, the reaction of the Eggon people towards the gospel and the influences of the gospel and other technology on the Eggon traditional and cultural practices. Finally, the chapter attempts to examine the merits of the ERCC model of bereavement counselling and then move on to analyzing the weaknesses of their approach. This will then lead us to engage in dialogue with the Eggon indigenous model of bereavement management in the next chapter, which will then provide us with insight in developing, in chapter six, the comprehensive model of bereavement counselling that this study seeks to create.

#### **4.2 The historical development of the ERCC**

ERCC, with its headquarters in Alushi, Nasarawa state, Nigeria, was established through the effort of Dr. Hermann Karl Wilhelm Kumm, a German who was set ablaze for mission in October 1895 through a speech delivered by Mr. J.J. Edward about the need for mission work in North Africa (see Maxwell 1954:21). Maxwell argued that Kumm was particularly challenged by Edward's emphasising that there are hundreds of traditional worshippers who had not heard about Christ and "were in danger of being won over to Mohammedanism". Hence, Kumm offered himself to bring the gospel to Africa (1954:21). Because of Kumm's passion and zeal for mission work in Sudan, he left England for Cairo on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1898 to begin an Arabic course in preparation for the work. It was during this period that he came

under the mentorship of H. Grattan Guinness<sup>66</sup> an evangelical leader in Britain with experience of the nature of work in Sudan (see Maxwell 1954:21; Boer 1979:113). A few months later after his marriage to Lucy Guinness in Cairo, they moved to England where they began to speak to a number of people, soliciting their support for the mission work in Sudan. The response was positive. Hence, began the formation of German Sudan Pioneer Mission (GSPM) in 1901 with its headquarters at Eisenach the birth place of Martin Luther, the great reformer. Later the name was changed to Sudan Pioneer Mission (SPM) and then its present name, Sudan United Mission, on 15 June 1904. During this period there was tremendous support from personalities from various denominations (Maxwell 1954:24-26). In 1904, there was a comprehensive resolution signed by the secretaries of some of the principal missionary societies in the SUM Lightbearer. It reads as follows:

In view of the present crisis in West Central Sudan, where, unless the gospel of Christ be brought within the next few years to Northern Nigeria, the million numbered pagan peoples of that new British Protectorate (a country as large as one third of India) will go over to Islam, and in view of the fact that none of the Missionary Societies of the Baptist, Congregational, Methodist or Presbyterian Churches of Great Britain or Ireland feels itself at present able to go to do anything for the evangelization of the Sudan, we should rejoice if the Lord should enable the free Churches of the Country in a United Sudan Mission; and while we do not pledge our churches, or societies, to the support of such a Mission, we should be glad to see it taken up by all the churches which are at present doing nothing for the evangelization of the Sudan (1923:51).

According to Maxwell, the mission received cordial co-operation from many friends in the Church of England, the Church of Ireland and the Church of Scotland. Thereafter, the mission appointed the first board of directors which later met and appointed the executive committee and other sub-committees to oversee the work of the mission and to recruit missionaries for Sudan (1954:26). The first batch of four missionaries<sup>67</sup> sailed to Sudan on 23 July 1904, and arrived at Lokoja, the town at the confluence of Niger and Benue rivers, on 10 August 1904 (1954:35-38). Kumm consulted with Lord Lugard in Zungeru, the then capital of the protectorate, who suggested that he commence the SUM work at Wase. Based on the advice of the High Commissioner, the four missionaries moved into the hinterland and finally arrived at Ibi, a town along the bank of River Benue, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1904. Ibi therefore became the first headquarters of this new Mission Organization in Nigeria. In 1905, Kumm went back to England and began extensive travels to many places to secure the much

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<sup>66</sup> Guinness was the author of a monthly magazine titled, "Sudan and the Region Beyond". The magazine was aimed at stirring evangelical interest in Sudan and beyond. Guinness later became the father-in-law of Dr. Kumm through his marriage to Lucy his daughter in 1900 see Maxwell, *Half A Century of Grace*, pp.21-24.

<sup>67</sup> The first four pioneer missionaries recruited by SUM to Sudan in 1904 were: Dr. Karl Wilhelm Kumm; Dr. Ambrose H. Bateman; Mr. John. G. Burt and Mr. J. Lowry Maxwell.

needed manpower for the work in the Sudan. He went to places like United States (1906), South Africa (1907) and many others. Kumm's visit to South Africa in 1907 was historic in the sense that it marked the birth of the 'Sudan United Mission (SUM) South Africa Branch' that was inaugurated in 1909 (Wood 1966:6; Manga 2007:7; ERCC Constitution 2009:1).

During Kumm's visit to South Africa, he advised that a committee be set up representing all leading denominations in the country; his advice was accepted by the denominational leaders. Thereafter, a committee was put in place. They were given the responsibility to recruit and send missionaries to the Sudan and to also raise funds to support those missionaries. The committee recruited two missionaries: Reverend J. George Botha of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) Eastern Cape and Mr. Vincent Henry Hosking of the Observatory Methodist Church (OMC) Cape Town. The two missionaries arrived Nigeria in 1909. Coincidentally, it was when Dr. Kumm was in the country to attend a conference of the Mission which was held at Ibi. It was in this meeting that a decision was taken that the two missionaries from the South Africa branch should be assigned a district in which to work. On 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1909, the South Africa Branch began their work formally at Borrong in Mbula District (Maxwell 1954:14). Though from different denominational backgrounds, they worked together in the same field as a united mission from South Africa until 1915 when the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) made a formal request in the field conference that "the work among the Tiv should be given over formally as special work for her" (Maxwell 1954:123). During the field committee meet held in Salatu in 1915, Mr. Arthur Judd who joined the South Africa Mission branch in 1911, was then appointed to direct the affairs of the non-Reformed missionaries. Judd went out to search for a new area for their work. The missionaries desired to commence work among the Eggon and Mada ethnic groups, each with large populations, because the district was regarded as "unsettled" for both Missionaries and Miners due to security challenges. The assistant resident of Nasarawa Province, with headquarters at Kafanchan in Jema'a Division, advised the non-reformed South Africa missionaries to commence their work in Keana, former Lafia Division. The non-reformed missionaries then began their work (birth of ERCC) in Keana on 1 July 1916 among the Alago people. Mr. Vincent Henry Hosking began the translation of the Gospel of Mark into Alago language that same year. In 1917 new workers from the South Africa branch joined the Missionaries in Keana and on 4 September 1917, Mr. Hosking died of yellow fever and was buried in Keana. But the missionaries that arrived that year (Mr. and Mrs. W. Brailsford and Miss Janet Mary

Ayliff) worked hard to complete the translation work of the Gospel of Mark which Mr. Hosking began before his death (see Wood 1966:7; Manga et al 1991:12; ERCC Constitution 2009:1; Manga 2007:11).

In 1920, Mr. Judd, the leader of the mission, opened a station in the town of Randa among the Ninzom. Randa became the headquarters of the Mission for many years. In that same year, a school for Christian Religious Instruction (C.R.I) was established in Randa. Pastor Mamma Audu and Pastor Ambi were two of the products of this school. In December 1922, the Lord's Supper was celebrated at Randa for the first time, with three members partaking. In March 1924 the missionaries in Randa spent a week of prayer and fasting seeking where they would open the new work. It was after this, in 1926, that Rev. Ivan Hepburn and Mr. J. Dawson visited Lezzin Lafia, which is now known as Wana among the Eggons. By 1927 there were two worship centres with 45 attendees. As mentioned above, after the prayer seeking the sense of direction from God to take gospel to other ethnic groups in the region, opportunities were opened for the spread of the gospel. Hence, in 1937 the gospel was taken to Ancho among the Mada, and similarly Gwagi in 1939 among the Rindre (see Leisle 1966:9-10; Palmer 1996:64)

The church became autonomous in the 1950s. And in May 1956 the church was registered with the government as 'Ekklessiyar Krista a Sudan, Lardin Dutsen Mada', which is Hausa for 'EKAS Mada Hills'. From there the name of the church went through changes over the years to: Ekklesiyyar Kristi a Nigeria (EKAN) Mada Hills; then in 1981, to Church of Christ in Central Nigeria (CCCN); and then to Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) from 1991 to date (Emmah 2011:257-261; Manga et al 1991:26; ERCC Constitution 2009:1). Smith and Machunga assert that by 1957 there were 171 worship centres, with church attendance put at 10,000. During this period the numbers of communicant members were 1,121 and the total number of pastors then was seven (1997:11). In the course of time, the number of communicant members, church attendance, pastors, worship centres, schools and health centres continued to increase.

The establishment of the medical centres was for the sole aim of catering for the health needs of the people. Affiku groups various dispensaries and their years of establishment in the following order: Randa Dispensary and Ancho Dispensary (1930-1940). Kagbu Dispensary,

Kango Dispensary and Alushi Dispensary (1941-1950). Murya Dispensary, Kanje Dispensary, Agwatashi Dispensary, Keffin-Wambai Dispensary and Anjida Dispensary (1951-1960). Daddare Dispensary, Rukubi Dispensary, Gwantu Dispensary, Konvah Dispensary and Ungwan Ibrahim Dispensary (1961-1970). Karmo Dispensary, Gidan Mai Akuya Dispensary, Jibiyel Dispensary, Akwanga Dispensary, Agamati Dispensary, Keffi Dispensary, Uggah Dispensary and Ungwan Pa Dispensary 1980-1990 (Affiku 2007:36-37)

According to the reports of the ERCC education directorate, the schools that were opened included both theological and secular. The first Bible school that was opened in ERCC is CBTS Kango in 1940, followed by CBTS Anchor, CBC Murya and Obi Bible School, now Obi Pastors College, between 1950-1960. Ayu Bible Institute, now ERCC Theological Seminary, ERCC School of Health and Mada Hill Secondary School were established between 1961 and 1970. And between 1981 and 1990, the following schools were added: CBC Akassa, CBTS Agwatashi, CBTS Arugbadu, and CBTS Ninga. ERCC Secondary School Azuba and ERCC Secondary School Fadan Karshi were established between 1991 and 2000. ERCC Secondary School Obi, ERCC Shalom Secondary School Agyaragu, ERCC Secondary School Assakio, ERCC Secondary School Bukan Sidi, ERCC Secondary School Duglu and ERCC Secondary School Karmo were established between 2001 and 2010. From 2011 to date, there has been the establishment of the ERCC Secondary School Uggah and many ERCC Nursery/Primary schools, as well as ERCC Women's Vocational Training Centre Alushi specifically to help widows acquire basic skills on entrepreneurship, and ERCC School for the Deaf Akwanga (ERCC Education Directorate Report 2012:3-5).

As at July 2014, the report of the ERCC General Secretary revealed that in addition to Nasarawa state, the church has congregations in places such as: Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Bauchi, Niger, Kogi, Lagos, Ogun, Port-Harcourt, Delta, Owerri, Anambra, Abuja and Niger Republic (2013:5). The church has ten Conferences namely: Murya Conference, Assakio Conference, Lafia Conference, Nasarawa Eggon Conference, Akwanga Conference, Abuja Conference, Randa Conference, Gimi Conference, Kango Conference and Keana Conference (ERCC Constitution 2014:4). The minutes of GCC Meeting held in November 2013 revealed that ERCC Membership could be approximated at about 1.640, 093 million (2013:13). The minutes of the EC meeting held in February 2014 show that ERCC had about 383 Local Church Councils (LCCs), many Missionaries, Evangelists, trained Pastors and a total number

of 532 ordained ministers (2014:7). Taking a critical look at the history above, one can deduce that the growth was not very explosive. The reason advanced for it is the attitude of the Christian missionaries that brought the gospel to the region. For instance, we were told that the gospel first came to Keana among the Alago people in 1916. But after a decade it was recorded that there were only two worship centres with 45 church attendees. One is therefore left with the question as to why people were reluctant to give their lives to this new faith? Manga argues that, “Missionaries on arrival to the Eggon land were so overwhelmed by the opportunity to evangelize that they did not take time to study the nature, customs and traditions of the people” (2012:3). Manga further explains that the Missionaries’ anxiety and ignorance made them undermine the people’s traditions which if properly utilized could have been to the advantage of the gospel. The above assertion was evidenced in former missionary Ivan D. Hepburn’s article titled, “Mohammedans and Pagans at Keana”. Hepburn claimed that the indigenous Alago people<sup>68</sup> “follow the ways of their fathers” (1922:154). Similarly, Farrant’s (SUM mission secretary) report shared the above ideas thus:

The gospel has come to this people bringing the news of the “Unknown God”. So far none has left his idols to accept Him, but the assault does seem to have shaken faith in the old things...when are we to see these people made bold by the Holy Spirit, renounce their idols and accept Christ the Saviour? (1923:48).

Looking at this report, it is clear that for about seven years (from 1916-1923) the missionaries seemed to engage in a fruitless effort in the region as no single soul was brought to Christ. One of the reasons put forward by Emmah from the perspectives of the indigenous people of Keana was that “the missionaries were not consistent in what they taught” (2011:118). The reason for the indigenous Alago people’s argument, as Emmah explains, was the fact that in 1917, Mr. and Mrs. W. Brailsford went on their furlough and returned with a new missionary, Miss Janet Ayliff. Hence, the local people concluded that he had married two wives whereas the local people were taught to have only one wife. Second, the indigenous people blamed Brailsford for the death of Hosking on the grounds that he wanted to take over his belongings (2011:118). W. F. Graffin affirms this when he wrote on the accusation of polygamy and witchcraft against the missionaries thus:

The efforts of the missionaries became more difficult when word was spread that Mr. Brailsford came with two wives while the native Christians were only allowed one and that Mr. Hosking’s death had been contrived in order to take over his belongings (1961:4).

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<sup>68</sup> Alago people were the first ethnic group that Sudan Unity Mission (SUM) South Africa Branch brought the gospel to in their region (Keana) in Nasarawa state, Nigeria in July 1916, after the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) made a formal request in the field conference in 1915 that the work among the Tiv should be given over formally as its special work.

Emmah further describes the actions of the indigenous people of Keana in the following words:

The indigenous people's misconception of the missionaries perhaps was influenced by their cultural beliefs. The Alago and indeed many African peoples practice polygamy and the family inheritance system. One could use diabolical means to eliminate his brother in order to possess his belongings. With the death of Hosking ten days after the arrival of Brailsford with Ayliff, the Alago people suspected foul play. Therefore, the rumours spread among the Alago and undermined their preaching to marry only one wife and abstain from witchcraft. Whatever the reasons, the mission work did not progress at Keana. By 1925, the mission reduced Keana Station to an outstation and visited the station regularly from Randa and Wana. Alaku Achuku, one-time cook to a number of missionaries, assisted in taking care of Keana station (2011:118-119).

#### **4.2.1 ERCC vision and mission statement**

The goal of the ERCC shall be to adore and revere God. This shall be achieved through the following objectives:

- To teach converts the word of God, in order to build the Body of Christ, for the development of church worship through Jesus Christ.
- To develop the church through these activities: Evangelism, education, media and social services. The ERCC shall further achieve these objectives through prints, electronic media like radio and television, and the internet, and any other means that does not violate the objectives and teaching of the church.
- To feed the hungry, clothe the poor, help the needy, to also uplift the spiritually and physically challenged
- To implement all or any of the above mentioned, under the leadership of her trustees or agents/representatives or through joint effort of a sister Church or company (ERCC Constitution 2014: 6-7).

#### **4.2.2 ERCC theology and beliefs**

The Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) as mentioned earlier, is a missionary founded church under the umbrella of Sudan United Mission (SUM) South Africa Branch. The motto of the church is "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). And its logo for the purpose of identification is the globe (world map) with equator, latitude and longitude with a red cross stretching from the north to the south with an open Bible and green colour in the background (ERCC Constitution 2014:5). And the following are its theology and belief system as related to the issue of pastoral care for the needy:

1. The Church believes that the word of God (Holy Bible) is a divine inspiration with infallibility, which is without mistake, containing the complete revelation of God's intentions, as pertains the salvation of mankind. It is living and active and is final (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21; I Corinthians 2:13). This means that the Bible contains every word human beings need in terms of good and difficult moments; it is through the word that Christians will receive their nourishment to grow in faith in spite of the many difficult challenges facing them in this fallen world.
2. The Church believes that there is only one God, the Creator of all things, all powerful, eternal and everlasting, existing in three persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, all in one (Deuteronomy 6:4; Hebrews 1:1-13, Colossians 1:15-19).
3. The Church believes that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings about spiritual birth (that is, the Holy Spirit gives new life to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. John 14:16-17; Romans 8:9-11, 15; I Corinthians 6:19). The Holy Spirit baptizes, that is, brings a true believer into relationship with Jesus Christ, thus, making a believer united in the body of Jesus Christ through the spirit (I Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-4). The Holy Spirit put its stamps on a believer who has become God's possession forever (Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30). The Holy Spirit fills the believer (that is, lives and empowers those believers who have committed themselves to walk with and work for Him (II Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:6, 22-25; Colossians 3:17). The work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify God in the life of believers. The Holy Spirit leads, teaches, and empowers them, by bestowing on them diverse gifts to do the work especially those related to caring for the downtrodden, depressed, hopeless, and less privileged (service to humanity) (John 3:3-6; I Corinthians 6:19, 12:13; Ephesians 5:18; Acts 1:8).
4. The Church believes that human beings are created for good works (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8). Faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Therefore a Christian is called into the life of holiness to proclaim this, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and also, the ministry of spreading the gospel to the whole world. The Holy Spirit gives



diverse spiritual gifts as it pleases, to Christians to strengthen them in the ministry for the glorification of God. At the judgement throne of Jesus Christ believers will give account of their stewardship (I Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Romans 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11).

5. The Church also believes that these gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, to believers as pleases, without any respect to persons. It is for the edification of the body of Christ, and effective ministry to God. God gives in addition as: faith, prayer, service, pastoral gift, teaching, preaching of the gospel, officiating, knowledge, wisdom (Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11). Other gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in the word of God are: gift of tongues, healing and so forth. These gifts are signs of the power of God and ERCC recognizes them to be used in an orderly manner (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 14:1-40) (ERCC Constitution 2014: 8-14).

While, as noted above, the church believes that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given with no regards to gender or persons, the ERCC only ordains men. They use some of the gifts, especially those pertaining to officiating at holy sacraments such as funerals, baptisms and so on and pastoral care and nurturing individuals who are in need, alongside a number of elders.

#### **4.2.3 ERCC policies and practices**

The church encourages the pastoral care and nurturing of its members through visitations and counselling, done mostly by the ministers and church elders, fervent teaching and preaching of God's word, and administering the holy sacraments, such as carrying out funerals, baptism and weddings (ERCC Service Handbook pp. 56-60; ERCC Constitution 2009:42-43).

#### **4.3 The advent of Christianity (ERCC) to Eggon land**

Historically, it was not very easy for the Christian missionaries to penetrate through Eggon land despite the earlier arrival of the Christian missionaries to their neighbouring communities around 1916 by the Sudan United Mission (SUM) South Africa branch. Ombugunawu noted the earlier attempts made by the British to visit Eggon land since 1907 (1984:24). The same applied to Jihadists under Usman Dan-Fodio who also made several attempts with incorporate Eggon people to their neighbours at the Keffi and Lafia emirates, but it was a futile effort (1984:24). Kutsa affirms that the Eggon people were determined to

avoid colonial rule. Hence, they tried all available means to prevent any contact with the British at first. In order to achieve this, they enacted a law that anytime the whiteman comes to Eggon land, nobody should go out to welcome them. Some people were assigned to keep watch on the roads to raise alarms whenever whitemen were in sight (1981:1). No wonder, Leisle notes, that from 1920-1922 no missionary was allowed to step into Eggon land. They could only cross through the land in their vehicles. This was until in 1922 when the District Officer residing in Akwanga discussed the possibilities of investigating Eggon land with Reverend Ivan Hepburn, a young missionary (1966:8). Leisle further asserts that “the colonial administration may have concluded that the Christian gospel that preaches love, peace and obedience to God and authority would pacify the Eggon people and make them manageable”; hence, in 1924, Reverend Ivan Hepburn was granted the permission to enter Eggon land with the gospel (1966:8). In the Annual Report of the SUM of the year ending December 1924 Farrant notes thus: “permission to occupy the plot at Lezzin Lafia in Mada district of Nasarawa province was given. The area remained officially as ‘unsettled’, but a permit had been granted by the Governor allowing any member of South African Branch of the Mission to travel in the area” (1925:64).

Leisle asserts that between 1924 and 1925, the young missionary Reverend Ivan Hepburn visited the Eggon Hills twice following the permission of the District Officer: first, with Gilbert Danson a missionary from the British branch in 1924 and second, with H. G. Farrant, the SUM Field Secretary in 1925 (1966:9). Envuladu affirms that during the first visit, they made surveys and selected a place called Agbro on top of the Wana Hills as the first site of the mission station in Eggon. And in the second visit Reverend Hepburn and Mr. Farrant built the first mission station in Agbro where he also planted assorted fruits, which are still used today (1983:2). His house was built at Lezzi<sup>69</sup> Lafia. Hepburn travelled to many towns and villages in Eggon land pleading with the sub-clan leaders/chiefs to send a child each to be trained in school; he also persuaded other community members to bring their children for the training (1983:2).

One of the remarkable things that challenged the Christian faith but also served as the source of the breakthrough that enabled the rapid spread of the Christian gospel in Eggon land according to Envuladu was, first, during Sunday services new converts would be arrested and

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<sup>69</sup> The name Lezzi Lafia was derived from the name of the people of “Izzi”, while Lafia was the only nearest town of recognition. But later the name Lezzi Lafia was changed to Wana.

taken to the chief's palace where they would be questioned. One of the questions included, "Do you love your parents or Jesus?" and anyone who says he loves his/her parents would be allowed to go free but would be warned never to attend a Christian gathering again; but those who said they love Jesus would be severely beaten. As a result, many women returned back to the traditional religion (1983:10-11). Second, on another occasion, while the Christians were coming back from the Sunday service, the traditional priests from *Izzi* and *Anmebweashenta* came and spread *Alafu Ashum*, the sacred leaves or rather concoctions of the traditional priests, on the footpaths in a place called *Eklū* with the intention that any Christians who ventured to march or walk on them would die. On hearing this, the Christians summoned courage and started singing songs of praise to their God and marched through the concoctions and nothing happened to any of them, instead the curse befell the traditional priests and many of them died. When the traditional worshippers consulted the diviners and sorcerers, they were told that it was due to what they had planned for the Christians and that the killings would not stop until sacrifices were made with the he-goat (1983:10-11). As Envuladu explains "this marked the end of persecution for the Christians as fear engulfed many people and the word of the Lord spread greatly in many Eggon towns and villages" (1983:11). This singular incident later brought many changes to the Eggon cultural and traditional practices. This was coupled with the ideology of some Christian missionaries who tended to see nothing good in the indigenous traditional practices but rather viewed it as demonic or something associated with witchcraft related activities. Drawing from the above insight, Oduyoye argues that "the approaches of Christian and Muslim missionaries, and the efforts of Western colonial governments and their successors among the followers of African traditional religions, have all been generally ineffective, primarily because most Westerners lack an understanding of the importance of African religion as an integral part of African culture and life" (1992:9). We shall now turn to the section on the reaction of the Eggon people to the gospel.

#### **4.3.1 The reaction of the Eggon people to the Christian gospel**

As mentioned earlier, the reason that Hepburn gained the confidence of both the chiefs and the indigenous people in Eggon land was due to his friendly appearance as well as his associating with the people without any sign of discrimination. Although when permission was given to Hepburn in 1924 to enter the Eggon land with the message of the gospel the region remained officially unsettled, due to his passion and zeal, he gathered courage and

made up his mind to go. Leisle notes instances where Hepburn trekked long distances around Eggon land appealing to parents to bring their children to be trained in school. With the help of his friend, Mr. A. V. Finch, a miner who donated a motorcycle to him in 1929, he was able to travel extensively across Eggon land (1966:11). Envuladu affirms that the assistance of the motorcycle to Hepburn really encouraged him to propagate the gospel in Eggon land. By 1931 he was able to establish worship centres in many different places. He also translated many songs and books into Eggon language. A few years later, about sixty-two persons from the different Eggon sub-clans gave their lives to Christ (1983:8-9). Out of the sixty-two persons that gave their lives to Christ, fifty-four were men while eight of them were women. Envuladu observes that one of the reasons that led to this massive explosion of the number of those who gave their lives to Christ was the attitude displayed by Hepburn during one of his visits among the Eggon people by sleeping in a hut with the indigenous people. This attitude further demonstrated his true love for the people (1983:8-9).

Leisle stresses that by 1932 there seemed to be a “mass movement to Christianity”. The numbers of Christians among the Eggon indigenous people grew unexpectedly to about five hundred, and there was high commitment and zeal for the work and progress of the gospel within the people (1966:13). Hepburn described the commitment and zeal of the Eggon Christians thus:

On Sundays quite early in the morning the people start coming into Wana for services. Some walk ten miles from the farms on the plains to the south; others come from far as twelve miles from villages to the north. The people from a village on the rocky hill called Wakupu are usually here first, and are very regular. At the end of 1931, Mr. Sanderson held a series of evangelistic meetings at Wakupu and Ogbagi, and there was a mass movement spread. Some men of strong character and wide influence who were leaders in the ill-famed Bori movement were won. From Wakupu the movement spread to Wagi, where there are now a number of earnest Christians, and to Wagibi. At Ogbagi one of the most prominent Christians is the old chief. He is a very spiritually-minded man, and his voice is often heard in services in prayer and exhortation (1934:9).

Sunday Andak’ko Emmah argues that Hepburn’s description definitely indicates that the Eggon Christians were very enthusiastic not only in attending regular Sunday services but also in sharing the Gospel message with their Eggon counterparts which resulted in the massive conversion experience of the 1932. Consequently, the conversion of some key leaders of the Eggon traditional *Ashum* cult, the Bori, which predicted the future and what would happen in Eggon land, was a breakthrough for Christianity. Since the chiefs themselves professed faith in Jesus Christ, their subjects, out of respect, might have been influenced to Christianity (2011:139). Sanderson acknowledged the contribution of the Eggon Christians that resulted in enormous conversion of the people. Akolo Embugushiki,

one of the Eggon converts in the village of Ekpom in 1932, made several attempts at sharing the gospel message with his fellow kinsmen. Sanderson wrote the following words about him:

...presently he {Akolo} became bolder and started praying with some of the young men of his compound; Sometimes he would open his New Testament and read to them, and so the word of God spread...His desire to work for the Lord grew and grew until now... (1932:8).

Hepburn worked among the Eggon people during this period and had remarkable achievements considering the few years he spent there before his glorious exit on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 1937 (see Envuladu 1983:13; Leisle 1966:17). Despite Hepburn's early death, the seed of the gospel he planted continued to grow as from a mustard seed and today the gospel message has spread to every nook and corner of the Eggon land. Let's briefly examine aspects of the impact of the gospel among the people of Eggon.

#### **4.3.2 The influences of the Gospel and technology on the Eggon traditional practices**

Eggon land had witnessed both positive and negative influences over the centuries as a result of the coming of the Christian gospel that was accompanied by westernization in addition to urbanization, globalization, multi-cultural associations and technology in general. As mentioned earlier, after the death of Mr. Hepburn in 1937, Mr. Graham took over the work among the Eggon people. During this period, there was the need for more workers; hence, in April 1938 the South African branch of the SUM sent other new missionaries to continue the work among the Eggon people alongside Mr. Graham. Mr. Judd came alongside two missionaries, Miss E. Sheasby and Mr. Douglas to Wana through Mada Station axis (see Envuladu 1983:14; Leisle 1966:17). On their arrival, Mr. Judd noticed changes among the Eggon Christians as a result of the "mass movement". The first change was related to tobacco-smoking. Judd wrote, "In my early contact with the tribe, I looked on the people as great tobacco smokers. It was quite common for small boys to carry their pipes. Today among the Christians, I never see a pipe, nor do I smell tobacco". The second significant change noted by Judd was their adoption of traditional hymns by giving them Christian wording (Notes on Wana, p.1). Envuladu further affirms that as a result of joyous songs sang in the indigenous tunes by the Eggon Christians, the adherents of the traditional religion were very angry because they saw the adaption of the tune as desecration, hence, they reported three Eggon Christians namely: Ega Angbasa, Aliyu Tsauazi and Angbase Anmre to the British Administration, which led to their imprisonment (1983:10). Judd describes the situation thus:

I have been struck by the way in which words sung to Native tunes have become a part of the Christian life of these people. So much so that the British Administration looks on the singing of hymns near a shrine as a desecration of the shrine. Three men are in prison as I write this for having been accused of such desecration. If the expression of the Christian life in song were stopped, there would have in all probability been less opposition than we have experienced. At a meeting at which I was present, trouble was caused by the singing of words (Notes on Wana, p.1).

Judd and other missionaries were not pleased with the kind of opposition the Christian community experienced. The missionaries' actions here seem to suggest that they were in support of the use of indigenous tunes. Judd further affirms that songs had been instrumental to many revivals (Notes on Wana, p.2). Emmah recorded one of the most popular and widely sung songs by the Eggon Christians, as recalled by Judd:

Gi he bmi àyimom. Gi he bmi àyimon ba Anhwe Allah, gi Anhwe Èyesù. Shaitaí dzu baí baí a klo gi mbugu, gi tnò íga ma mbole, Shaitaí dzu Èvumbu baí a klo gi mbugu, gi tnò íga ma mbolè. Gi he bmi àyimon, gi he bmi àyimon ba Anhwe Allah, Gi anhwe Èyesu.

We have received the Light. We have received the Light of the Son of God. We are Jesus' children. The devil is looking for our trouble, the devil is looking for our trouble, and we would not mind him. We have received the light of the Son of God; we are Jesus' children (2011:142).

Emmah argues that "Perhaps the traditional worshippers considered the phrase that "the devil is looking for our trouble" as irritating, since they interpreted it as referring to them (2011:142). Emmah further states that Ali Abundaga confirmed that his father Abundaga was one of the elders who received Christ during this period. Adding that whenever the song "*Agi he ba Ayimon*", meaning 'we have received the light', was sung during worship services, the whole congregation would be moved and filled with joy and a determination to live for Christ forever. Apparently the enthusiasm of Eggon Christians unconsciously led them to disregard the shrines of the adherents of traditional religion by singing especially close to their shrines" (2011:142).

The attitude of the missionaries at this point suggests that they were keen to allow the Eggon Christians to express their innermost feelings to God in their indigenous language and style. One is then left with the concern as to why the missionaries did not also turn their attention to the area of Eggon indigenous traditional practices, especially aspects related to the model of bereavement care, especially having noticed how the indigenous tunes during worship services brought tremendous achievement to the spread of the gospel. Was it because of the general lack of understanding by the Westerners of the importance of African religion as an integral part of the African culture and life, as expressed by Oduyoye? (1992:9). Did they thereby perceive everything pertaining to the indigenous traditions as well as culture as

demonic? Or were the missionaries altogether ignorant about the significance of learning the indigenous culture as a starting point for reaching them with the message of the gospel? Some of the doubts or questions above were made clear during the researcher's visit and interaction in Pretoria, South Africa, with one of the ERCC former missionaries that came to the ERCC around 1960 and left in 1977. He mentioned that "he had no idea of the kind of support Eggon indigenous people give to each other during the moment of bereavement".<sup>70</sup> The reason for such ignorance about the Eggon cultural practices may be due to the kinds of attitude some missionaries had whereby they "belittled African culture", as Phiri explains (2002:66).

The second possible reason could be the missionaries' strategy of staying in an isolated place known as the 'mission compound', away from the community settlement, with the idea of discipling the new converts. Phiri argues that "African people who were converted to Christianity were requested to break away from their culture in order to embrace the dominant Western civilization" (2002:66). One of the basic methods the missionaries used to achieve this was to isolate the newly indigenous converts from their people and cultural practices. As Manga explains, the missionaries upheld and exalted individualism because of their conviction that it was an individual who was to be converted. Their emphasis on an individual's conversion led to the breaking of traditional units from the organic whole which undermined the monolithic structure of the extended family who before then were responsible for the welfare of each other (2012:4). Mndeme supports the above argument by observing that "culture binds society together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity" (2008:46). By isolating the indigenous converts away from their people and culture, the missionaries actually denied these African converts the opportunity to learn their customs and practices in order to maintain their African heritage or identity.

Mwiti and Dueck observe that "the call of African identity is muffled by ignorance and shame inherited from the Western package that devalues everything African as primitive and backward" (2007:216). The question that needs to be addressed, as Kimilike explains, is "in what way can Africa still make a relevant contribution to debates on contemporary pastoral care issues?" (2008:29). The above question, according to Kimilike, "helps to identify, recognise and affirm an African identity in self-perception, community consciousness and

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<sup>70</sup>An interaction with the ERCC former missionary Gordon Russel in Pretoria, South Africa on the 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2014.

sense of solidarity for pastoral care. Those elements of African identity can enable the mobilization of local renewal processes of the social, economic, political and religious crises facing individuals and communities” (2008:29).

Manga also stresses that when the missionaries arrived in Eggon land they were zealous to evangelize the indigenous people without taking time to study the nature, customs and traditions of the people (2012:3). Manga further asserts that the missionaries’ anxiety and ignorance made them undermine the people’s traditions which if properly utilized could have been to the advantage of the gospel (2012:3-4). Recently, the researcher’s interaction with the cross section of the ERCC former missionaries<sup>71</sup> to Nigeria in the 1950s, in Cape Town, South Africa, affirms the above assertion by Manga. Ricketts remarks that “We have learned more of the Eggon indigenous bereavement practices with you [researcher] than our twenty-two years’ experience in Nigeria”.<sup>72</sup> Another missionary gave an instance where one Mr. Markus died as a result of snake bite and they [missionaries] took the corpse to his home town in Ancho, Andaha area of Akwanga LGC of Nasarawa state, Nigeria and left the family immediately to go back to their homes without witnessing the funeral proceedings.<sup>73</sup> The missionaries’ actions suggest that they were ignorant of the indigenous practices of community life. No doubt, lack of adequate knowledge about the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* model of bereavement management by the missionaries who brought the gospel to the region and indigenous leadership of the ERCC who succeeded the missionaries who returned to South Africa in 1978 due to South Africa’s policy of apartheid (see Emmah 2011:19) explains why the responsibility to care for those in crisis situations is left only to the pastors and few elected church elders as mentioned earlier. Hence, today there are cases of prolonged grieving among the Eggon Christians, especially in the urban settlements. Given that people sometimes find it helpful to ‘adapt the beliefs and values of their culture to meet their unique needs, based on their past experiences and current situation’, in the case of those in the urban settlements, it is often difficult. First, because many young Eggon people are ignorant of their heritage as a result of influences of urbanization and multi-ethnic or cultural associations. Second, since the pastors themselves are not familiar with the individual client’s cultural values, they (pastors) sometimes tend to impose their own beliefs and values on such

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<sup>71</sup> Interaction with Alec Ricketts 86yrs old, Olive Ricketts 83yrs old, Keneth Prentice 89yrs old, Silvermine village, Cape Town on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>72</sup> Interaction with Alec Ricketts 86yrs old, Silvermine village, Cape Town on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Interaction with Olive Ricketts 83yrs old, Silvermine village, Cape Town on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014.



individuals without knowing that every culture has its own worldview or a core set of beliefs that describe how the world works for them.<sup>74</sup> It could have been a tremendous blessing to the church if the missionaries and indigenous leadership had critically analyzed the indigenous model of bereavement care thereby integrating the important parts into the current ERCC model of bereavement care and counselling. I shall now turn to examine the ERCC model of bereavement counselling among Eggon Christians.

#### 4.4 The meaning of bereavement counselling in the ERCC

**Table 4.4 Respondents’ understanding of the meaning of bereavement counselling in ERCC**

<b>The meaning of BC (Bereavement Counselling)</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Moment of rendering support to the bereaved individuals or groups	7	58%
Ways of sympathizing or providing coping mechanism to the bereaved	3	25%
Interacting with someone who is worried and confused as a result of the loss of significant someone	2	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

The responses of 7 (58%) of the respondents indicated that they understood bereavement counselling to be a moment of rendering support to the bereaved individuals or group with the aim to help them cope. The researcher sums up the predominant definition of bereavement counselling as a specialized type of counselling that involves supporting individuals or groups who have experienced the loss of a significant person, helping the bereaved to work through their grief as well as perhaps learn coping mechanisms to help them when they are on their own.

<sup>74</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

## **4.5 The ERCC model of bereavement counselling**

### **4.5.1 Pastoral presence in the deceased's residence when death occurs**

The church encourages the pastoral care and nurturing of its members through visitations and counselling, fervent prayers and encouragement from God's word (ERCC Service Handbook pp. 56-60; ERCC Constitution. 2009:42-43). Pastors in the ERCC were taught right from the moment of their training the importance of a prompt response to the needs of their parishioners, especially those in a crisis situation, once they are notified. From oral history, immediately death occurs, the relatives of the deceased will notify the pastor. In the ERCC rural worship centres, the pastor will then ring the church bell that is used to draw the attention of the worshippers, though the style of ringing is slightly different from that used to call people for normal worship services. A respondent during the ERCC ministers/church elders' focus group discussion observed that "with the advent of technology, the church [ERCC] voted that a certain amount of money be given to the pastors on a monthly basis as a communication allowance. Hence, as soon as the pastor has been notified of any misfortune that occurs to any church member, they will immediately inform the church elders and together with those elders available would go to the deceased's house to sympathize, encourage and pray with the deceased's family".<sup>75</sup> A respondent argues that "the death of a loved one is so devastating and if care is not given, those left behind or the affected can hurt him/herself in the process. This is because of the fear that an individual bereaved person may hurt himself or even others. Perhaps this is part of the many reasons the ERCC strongly encourages its members, especially ministers, to visit those who are bereaved frequently so as to avoid any harm the survivors may either cause to themselves or those around."<sup>76</sup> Another respondent noted that, "One day after the burial ceremony as we were about to go, one of the brothers of the deceased requested that we should go and pray for him because his heart was filled with evil".<sup>77</sup> The respondent further asserts that when they got to where the brother was sitting, he could see that the fellow was seriously furious and after some words of encouragement the fellow became calmed.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Responses from ERCC Minister/church elders' focus group discussion in ERCC No. 1 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Response from individual interview with ERCC Minister in Nasarawa Eggon Town on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Response from individual interview with ERCC Minister in ERCC LCC Ekpom in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Response from individual interview with ERCC Minister in ERCC LCC Ekpom in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

One of the respondents during the widows and widowers focus group discussions affirmed the prompt response of her Reverend in the following words: “When my husband was confirmed dead, we phoned our Reverend and immediately the Reverend and the church elders came to the hospital and encouraged and prayed with us”.<sup>79</sup> The respondent further shared that, “the women’s fellowship (Zumunta Mata) later came to the house and sang songs in our house throughout the first day”.<sup>80</sup> Short and Searle see the act of visiting the bereaved person(s) immediately death occurs as the best way of expressing love and support, far better than attempted explanations (2004:33). Visitation is a core element of both African and Christian communal living. Gorsuch observes that visitation is an act of ministry that has as its aim the sense of building and supporting the relationship between the pastor and the bereaved, thereby enhancing the “connections between the congregation and its wider community” (1999:2). Short and Searle further argues that the bereaved during this visitation should be encouraged to be honest with God and not to be afraid to tell God their honest feelings, even their anger. The care giver should not be inclined to respond to every feeling or questions the bereaved persons may be raising. Because what the bereaved person needs most at that critical moment is the comforting shoulder (2004: 33). Scott and Lydia, who lost their six-year-old son Theo in an accident, recall their experiences thus: “We needed family and friends for support. They came in the middle of the night, straight to the hospital; what did these friends say? At that moment, we did not need words but their presence said everything—they cared”.<sup>81</sup>

Norman Wright notes that at some of the darkest moment of his life, some of his friends came to sit with him, and at some point, if they had no words to make him feel better; they sat in silence which is much better than saying, “You’ll get over it”, or “It’s not so bad” (2013: 197). Ministering to those who are bereaved, the counsellor is required to listen to the concerns, fears, troubles and the anxiety of the persons involved rather than being conscious of his personal needs and aspirations (TEE College 2012:6.1). Wright posits that “listening is one of the greatest gifts one person can give to another. It can be an act of love and caring. Listening that springs from caring builds closeness, reflects love, and is an act of grace”

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<sup>79</sup>Responses from Widows and widowers’ focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpandom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon LGC. on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>80</sup>Responses from Widows and widowers’ focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpandom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>81</sup>Comfort the Bereaved, as Jesus Did

<http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2010806?q=grief+and+comfort&p=par> (Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2014).

(2003:39-43). Wright further defines listening as the capacity not to think about what you're going to say when the other person stops talking. You are not busy formulating your response but concentrating on what is being said. Listening is completely accepting what is being said, without judging what the person is saying or how he/she is saying it (2003:40). In order to establish a good beginning in trying to listen to the bereaved person(s) as Wright explains, the counsellor needs to say, "Tell me your story. I'd like to hear what you've been through" (2011:165). Wright further stresses that "the counsellor needs to be attentive in listening to their story both with his ears, eyes and heart. He/she needs to hear the story with compassion, empathy and patience, for often there will be extended pauses as well as repetitions. And if the bereaved says 'Have I already told you this?' a response of 'Yes, but that's all right...' will help" (2011:165). Ministry of silence is very essential when attempting to counsel or console someone who is experiencing a difficult moment in his/her life, as some of the words offered may tend to aggravate the person's situation than console. Wright observes that, "If you want to help another person, just be there; your presence does wonders" (2003:39).

#### **4.5.2 Planning of the funeral service program in collaboration with the deceased's family.**

Another method of bereavement counselling in the ERCC is the aspect of planning the funeral service program in collaboration with the family. One of the respondents observed that, "the essence of this collaboration is for the church to help the deceased's family plan a program that will go in accordance to the doctrine and policies of the church".<sup>82</sup> This is very helpful when the deceased's family may not be psychologically fit to plan the program, especially when the burial will take place the very day death occurs. Clinebell observes that "as the funeral is being planned, the minister should encourage the bereaved family to talk together about their loved one - circumstances of the death, and the memories and attributes they most cherish about that person. (These cherished memories can well be incorporated in the memorial message during the funeral)" (1984: 223). Clinebell further stresses that "one purpose of the funeral is to facilitate the emotional release of grief feelings. What is said during the service should be straight and clear about the painful reality of the loss, so far as this life is concerned, and the appropriateness of mourning. Nothing should be said implying that stoicism in the face of grief is a sign of real strength or Christian virtue, or that one whose faith is genuine will not experience agonizing grief" (1984:223). Clinebell observes

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<sup>82</sup> Response from ERCC Minister individual in-depth interview in Nasarawa Eggon on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2014.

that the “funeral programme should include familiar hymns, prayers, and scripture that bring inspirited comfort and also help release dammed-up-feelings” (1984:223). A typical ERCC funeral program includes:

1. Arrival of the corpse to the church (if the corpse is deposited in the mortuary)
2. Congregational Hymn
3. Prayer
4. Welcome address by the host pastor
5. Song ministration by the singing groups in the church
6. Biography of the deceased
7. Testimonies: Usually family of the deceased, representative from place of work if deceased was employed, traditional leaders, Government representative and the church.
8. Sermon
9. Church Burial Rites
10. Collection of freewill offering for the deceased’s family
11. Announcements/vote of thanks
12. Closing prayer
13. Final interment at the family burial compound or graveyard
14. Vote of thanks by a member of the family

As stated above, inclusive in the order of the church funeral service is the biography of the deceased. Usually the leadership of the church will read through the entire program so as to make the necessary corrections in certain places before the final copy is printed. For instance, the church will ensure that the biography does not discuss the life of the deceased in detail; instead it will be brief in such a way that it reflects the essence of the person who has died and brings comfort to the mourners. Usually opportunity is given for the family members and close friends to give brief testimony about their loved one during the service. This I think can be a very important part that helps facilitate their grieving process. However, there are situations where the family members are unable to speak or even to read the biography due to instability of the mind accompanying the shock. The pastor or one of the elders will be allowed to read the biography on their behalf.

### **4.5.3 Wake-keeping service**

One of the methods of bereavement counselling in the ERCC is wake-keeping. The service of wake-keeping in the ERCC is conducted at the deceased's compound on the eve of the burial for at least two to three hours. The aim is to encourage and further strengthen the mourners and the general public. This service was officially approved last year by the General Church Council (Minutes of GCC meeting Ref. No.39/11/13 p. 24). The essence is to also give those who may not have the time to attend the funeral service the opportunity to spend time with the mourners and to console them in any way possible. The program or activities during the service include: song ministrations by the sub-groups in the church, testimonies concerning the life of the deceased by a few individuals, followed by exhortation from the word of God by the leader or any pastor that may be assigned, a special freewill offering to support the bereaved family, and finally, special prayer for the entire family and relations of the deceased, for God to strengthen them and grant them the fortitude to bear the loss and also for the success of the funeral service the next day, especially for a safe trip in all travels.

### **4.5.4 Conducting the funeral service**

ERCC believes that there is nothing of any value that can be done for a person after his/her death. The church does not pray or conduct this service for the benefit of the deceased. The service is held to comfort those who are bereaved and to share the Gospel with those who gather (ERCC Service Handbook p.47). Jackson postulates that the "funeral is a time of worship and affirming faith. A tragic or threatening event can shake faith temporarily. The bereaved need the support of those who gather around to say that while tragic events do occur in life, the long-range faith is still valid and vital" (1971:44). According to the ERCC tradition, if a church leader or a member in full fellowship dies, the service is either held in the church or at home (ERCC Service Handbook pp.47-49). This depends on the circumstances or nature of the death: first, whether the death took place at home or the hospital, and second, whether the burial will take place immediately or the corpse will be deposited in the mortuary. Jackson, however, is of the view that "the best place for the funeral of a loyal Christian is in the church where his faith has been nourished and affirmed" (1971:44). For Jackson, "the funeral service in the church gives an opportunity for forms of expression that are not easily provided elsewhere. It makes it possible to sing together the great hymns of faith" (1971:45). From oral history, for the ERCC, whether the funeral service is in the church or at the deceased's compound, the nature of the service is the same as they

still follow the planned programme. The only difference is that the service in the church is done inside a building while the one in the deceased's compound is done in the open air. In either case, as noted by Jackson, "individuals are invited during the worship to actively respond through various forms of participation. To share in the listening, singing, meditation, deep thinking, and prayerful focus of attention" (1971:45). Jackson further observes that "in the midst of the worshipping community you have the chance to become with God's help your own most competent self. In the time of emotional crisis the process of worship can make a vital contribution to the work of healthy mourning" (1971:45). Kelly argues that "for many in postmodern Western society who consider the church as otherwise irrelevant and somewhat archaic, at a time of bereavement her representatives still have the capacity to be of great significance in helping the bereaved to mark the life and death of a deceased loved one" (2008:163). Kelly gives an example of the British historian and broadcaster David Starkey, who, while being interviewed about his attitude to faith and ritual, offered insight into this prevalent contemporary perspective:

Starkey is an atheist; Priests are just 'silly, camp nonsense'. But he wanted one when his father died. 'I wanted someone to say the words, 'the ashes to ashes', the 'dust to dust' the half-comprehensible language, and musical, sonorous, powerful, and triggering memories of Grandma's prayer book. That's what I wanted at that point. I couldn't care less whether I believe in the resurrection or the life after death - that's what I wanted' (2008:163).

The ERCC burial rite has two dimensions for members who are in full fellowship: The first is done in the church during the funeral worship service and the second is done at the graveside (ERCC Service Handbook, pp. 47-49). During the funeral worship service, the officiating pastor will stand towards the position where the coffin is laid and pray, after which he will read several Scripture verses such as: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he died; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26); Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my father's house are many rooms; if it were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you (John 14:1-2). Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine...? I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither present nor future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of Christ which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35, 38, 39) (ERCC Service Handbook, pp. 47-48).

The second part of the funeral rites in the ERCC tradition is conducted at the graveside. During this period both the mourners and the sympathizers witness the corpse being carried by close friends and church members to the burial ground (cemetery),



**Figure 1: Corpse being carried to the cemetery**

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<sup>83</sup> <https://www.google.co.za/search?q=nigerian+funeral+photos&client=firefox-a&hs=75l&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&channel=np&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=u7LYU4bRH8PE7AbYyoDYCQ&ved=0CDAQ7Ak&biw=1366&bih=664> (Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2014).



and witness its descent into the ground while mourners sob and scream (Walsh-Burke 2006:64).



**Figure 2: Descending of the casket into the grave**



**Figure 3: Mourners screaming**

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<sup>84</sup>[https://www.google.co.za/search?q=funeral+photos+among+the+eggon+people+of+nasarawa+state+nigeria&client=firefox-a&hs=ItR&rls=org.mozilla:en-S:official&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=obnYU\\_-PI-fb7Ab2uoHIDw&ved=0CEkQ7Ak&biw=1366&bih=664](https://www.google.co.za/search?q=funeral+photos+among+the+eggon+people+of+nasarawa+state+nigeria&client=firefox-a&hs=ItR&rls=org.mozilla:en-S:official&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=obnYU_-PI-fb7Ab2uoHIDw&ved=0CEkQ7Ak&biw=1366&bih=664) (Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2014)

After the casket is lowered and put into the grave, the pastor will ask the people to come out of the grave so that he can proceed with the funeral rite.



**Figure 4: The casket is placed inside the grave**

The pastor will then read through the liturgy the following words, “Let us listen to the word of God; the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21). “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me” (Psalm 23:4). “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep...in Christ all will be made alive” (I Corinthians 15:20, 220) (ERCC Service Handbook, p. 49).

The pastor then continues with these words, “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall but the word of the Lord stands forever” (1 Peter 1:24-25). The pastor will again say these words, “Since it has pleased Almighty God to take our brother or sister at this time, we commit his/her body to the earth, dust to dust.” At the mentioning of those words, the pastor will use a shovel to throw earth into the grave and subsequent opportunity will be given to the family members, friends and well wishers will do the same. This act symbolizes that they buried their loved one themselves and they were able to bid the deceased a proper farewell. This act is important because it makes the family members and friends come to reality with the loss, which in turn will facilitate their grieving process. Before the pastor says the closing prayer, the opportunity will again be given to the spokesperson of the family to express appreciation and thank the general public for their coming and support. The pastor then concludes the graveside service by saying, “We thank God for the sure confidence that we have in Christ

that...the dead shall be raised imperishable and we will be changed...thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:52, 57). The pastor will say the final prayer and give the opportunity for those concerned to continue with the remaining task of building the grave (ERCC Service Handbook, pp. 49-50).

Jackson asserts that a funeral “offers the community a chance to face their own mortal natures with honesty, to do anticipatory grief work that will strengthen each to cope with death, and to aid in doing whatever unfinished work of mourning that was left over from the past loss experienced” (1971:32). A respondent expresses that, “when people attend funeral services, their very presence provides comfort both to themselves and to the mourners. It enables them to finish whatever unfinished grieving process that was left. For the mourners, seeing people around them, they feel that people care and are willing to support them at their moment of deepest need”.<sup>85</sup>

Oden argues that the rite of burial can offer consolation to the bereaved. It is also an opportunity for communal support during the moment of loss (1983:308). The funeral, according to Jackson, provides the community with a fitting chance to express its support to the mourners in ways that can be readily accepted and understood (1971:32). A respondent affirms the above assertion thus: “I remember some few years ago, when my brother went missing during one of the ethno-religious crises, it was very hard for us (family) to believe and really accept that he was dead. We often think that he will still come back home unlike those who died and were accorded funeral ceremonies”.<sup>86</sup> From the above expression, it is clear that the family at the initial stage were in denial, which later led to prolonged grieving due to the fact that they were not able to see the dead body of the deceased. Lendrum and Syme further affirm the above view thus:

The place of death will affect the course of grief. For instance, where a person has died far away from home it is easier to deny the death and imagine they will return, as expected, from their journey. This results in prolonged grief. This will be prolonged even further when the dead person’s body has not been seen, because it is even easier to deny the death and so postpone or even inhibit grieving (1992:33).

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<sup>85</sup>Response from ERCC Minister during the individual in-depth interviews in Mada station, Agidi Development Area, Nasarawa Eggon LGC on the 15<sup>th</sup>September, 2014.

<sup>86</sup> Responses from Widows and widowers’ focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpandom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon LGC. on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

Grieving is basically the road to healing from a loss and funerals facilitate this process. Detailed study has proved that “it helps loved ones face the reality of the loss as they learn to say good-bye to the deceased”.<sup>87</sup>

#### **4.5.5 Collecting and contributing of material condolences**

The church in its attempt to help bring comfort and consolation to the bereaved family collects a freewill offering during the funeral service for the deceased’s family; the essence of this collection is to help the family to provide foodstuff and drinks to the sympathizers who will come to sympathize with them. Sometimes this collection helps the family to settle other outstanding bills incurred during the hospital treatment and any other expenses. As important as this point is, it is not found in any official document of the church but is only transmitted through oral tradition. One of the respondents affirmed that, “The money the church gave us as a result of the offering collected helped us to settle the debts we incurred through the hospital bills, buying of the coffin and food stuff to feed the people who came to sympathize with us during the moment of our grief”.<sup>88</sup> Another respondent asserted that, “The offering collected in the church has really been of great help to us because we spent almost everything we had due to a long illness and we used the amount to cater for others debts and the children’s school fees”.<sup>89</sup> A respondent said, “Hmm... (some moment of silent) without this assistance from the church, honestly I don’t know how we could have coped with the challenges of settling the debts incurred, to talk of meeting day to day needs that arise during our grieving moment such as providing food for the sympathizers, and provision of school fees and other living expenses for the kids”.<sup>90</sup>

From my personal experiences as an ordained pastor, in most of the ERCC worship centres, whenever death occurs, the pastor and the elders will immediately visit the deceased family, and during such visitation they will carry along some money to be presented to the family to buy drinks for those who will be coming to sympathize with them. Other church members are always encouraged to support one another when such or any related incidents occur. One of the respondents noted that, “on the day of the burial of my late husband, many people

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<sup>87</sup><http://www.funeralwise.com/grief/> (Accessed 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2014).

<sup>88</sup> Responses from Widows & Widowers’ focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpandom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>89</sup> Responses from Widows & Widowers’ focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpandom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Responses from Widows & Widowers’ focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpandom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

attended, and some of the church members brought their private cars to assist us (family) from home to the mortuary to pick the corpse for the church service, and after the funeral service they brought us home. Others brought along foodstuff and drinks which were served to the general public after the funeral service”.<sup>91</sup> Another respondent stressed that, “In our local parish whenever a committed and dedicated member dies, the church usually provides a casket for the burial”.<sup>92</sup>

Having discussed the ERCC model of bereavement counselling we need now to analyze its advantages and disadvantages.

## **The advantages and disadvantages of the ERCC model of bereavement counselling**

### **4.6.1 The advantages of the ERCC model of bereavement counselling**

This section is concerned with the strengths in the overall approach to the ERCC model of bereavement counselling among the Eggon indigenous people. The aim is to evaluate those key themes that are helpful in order to incorporate these into the new construction of a proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling that will be more practical and life affirming than the existing model.

#### **4.6.1.1 Pastoral presence in the deceased’s residence when death occurs**

Almost all the bereaved family interviewed mentioned that as soon as death is confirmed, they notify their pastors. The pastors, church elders as well as church members’ quick response in coming to their homes further encourages and strengthens them during the grieving process. Additionally, the coming of the Women’s Fellowship (known as Zumunta Mata or Women wings) to sing songs, especially when the burial is going to take place the same day, is a great source of encouragement and help to carry the burden. Jackson further argues that “when you are with a group that knows you well and accepts you easily you feel relaxed and comfortable especially when your life is under stress” (1971:42). Jackson further observes thus:

The coming of death to one close to you is unusually difficult in that it tends to bring all the causes for emotional crisis together at one time. A tumult of external changes can be distressing when you feel so injured inside yourself. It is at this point of convergence of critical events that you can feel the value and the healing power of the redemptive community. You come to it with your needs and in turn it

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<sup>91</sup>Responses from Widows & Widowers’ focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpadom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>92</sup> Responses from ERCC Minister/church elders’ focus group discussion in ERCC No. 1 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

gives you support, understanding, and insight to help overcome the pain and discomfort. You find that you are not alone, rather, a part of a sustaining group that continues to share your feelings and help you carry your burdens (1971:43).

#### **4.6.1.2 Planning of the funeral program, wake-keeping and conducting of funeral service**

The role of the church in all these activities cannot be overemphasized. During all of these services the bereaved and the general public are reassured of the theology of life after death through preaching from the word of God and songs. For instance, the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 states thus:

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Loken argues that the above text "is the most important single passage in the epistle of 1 Thessalonians dealing with the Christian hope, especially with the coming of Christ in glory, as well as with the eternally topical subject of life after death" (1969:29). Loken further reiterates that "Christians, in contrast to all others, had the real ground of hope because of what the Apostle Paul revealed positively concerning the contents of the Christian hope of victory over death in I Thessalonians 4:14 which says, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so (we do also believe) that God through Jesus Christ will carry away with him (as booty from the thralldom of death) those who have fallen asleep" (1969:31). Cullmann supports this argument further by observing that "at the moment of Christ's return 'those who are then alive will have no advantage' over those who have died in Christ. Therefore the dead in Christ are still in time; they, too, are waiting" (1958:50).

Another important aspect worthy of mention is the collection of the freewill offering for the deceased's immediate family. Many bereaved family interviewed affirm that the money given to them had alleviated their burden in so many ways.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Responses from Bereaved family focus group discussion in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

#### **4.6.1.3 One-on-one counselling opportunities with the pastor**

This is another crucial moment that helps to further support the bereaved person in coping with the challenges caused by the death. The bereaved person is helped to further explore his/her emotions in a deeper manner through different approaches during the counselling sessions. A respondent affirmed this: “When my husband died, I was totally confused and lacked knowledge of what to do especially on issues related to his estate, lands, and children’s education among others. Gradually with the help of my pastor during series of counselling sessions I was able to do many things and today am able to manage the affairs of my family with less distress”.<sup>94</sup> Clinebell argues that “the sustaining function of the cure of souls in our day continues to be a crucially important helping ministry.... Everywhere today busy pastors are called upon to sustain troubled persons in, through, and beyond a plethora of hurts that brook no direct restoration... Tightly knit communities once furnished friends and neighbours who could stand by in moments of shock, whereas in a society on wheels the tasks of providing such sustenance to urban and suburban people falls heavily upon the clergy” (1984:170). Clinebell further stresses that “in supporting care and counselling, the pastor uses methods that stabilize, undergird, nurture, motivate, or guide troubled persons-enabling them to handle their problems and relationships more constructively within whatever limits are imposed by their personality resources and circumstances. The nature of supporting counselling becomes clearer when contrasted with uncovering, insight-oriented approaches to helping (also called pastoral psychotherapy)” (1984:170). The goal of these approaches according to Clinebell is to:

help persons gain the strength and perspective to use their psychological and interpersonal resources (however limited) more effectively in coping creatively with their life situations. Supporting methods focus on here-and-now problems in living - helping persons to handle or accept these in reality-oriented ways, thus strengthening their ability to cope constructively in the future. Such methods seek to help persons avoid self-hurting or other-hurting patterns, and to increase mutual need satisfaction in relationships. Personality growth often occurs gradually in supportive counselling, as a result of persons’ increased effectiveness in handling their problems and improving their relationships (1984:171).

Both insight-oriented and supportive methods according to Clinebell “depend on a strong, empathic pastor-parishioner relationship” (1984:171).

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<sup>94</sup>Responses from Widows & Widowers’ focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpadom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

#### **4.6.2 The disadvantages of the ERCC model of bereavement counselling**

In this section I shall deal primarily with the weaknesses of the current ERCC model of bereavement counselling in order to discard the aspects that are not needed.

##### **4.6.2.1 Counselling only left in the hands of the pastor or church elder**

During the bereavement process, the grieving person is seeking a comforting shoulder, especially someone he/she knows and trusts, and who can accept him/her easily. Unfortunately only the pastor or the church elders are officially obliged in the ERCC to counsel those who are faced with troubles and problems (ERCC Service Handbook pp. 56-60; ERCC Constitution 2009:42-43). The potential danger of this approach is the situation whereby the pastor and the elders may not be familiar or know some of the church members, especially in some of our large urban congregations. Jackson observes that when the person in distress is “with a group that is unknown or uncertain” he/she “feels threatened. It takes mental and emotional energy to adjust to the stress of being in a group that has not made you feel comfortable” (1971:42). I agree with Jackson’s views because if the bereaved person is not familiar with either the pastor or the church elders, the visit may not yield maximum results as the person may not be free to open up. Hence, such a situation will hinder the healthy grieving process. This is why the community theory adopted for this thesis is relevant. Maitland Evans argues that the aim of the community theory is “to envision the members of the community and move them towards a greater level of wholeness, wellness as well as a sense of personal and communal empowerment” (2009:128-129). This problem will be taken care of in the new comprehensive model this thesis seeks to propose. Proper guidelines will be given to the church on how to recruit and empower other laity within each community or neighbourhood to help those who are in distress or a troubled situation since they know and can accept each other easily.

##### **4.6.2.2 Lack of forum for group discussion or communal counselling**

People need to be empowered by the church to fulfil or utilize their individual gifts. The church must seek to train lay care givers to assist in providing support to those within their social, political and economic classes. The pastor and the church elders in many cases do not even hear of what members of the congregation might be going through in their respective homes or neighbourhoods, but with this kind of empowerment or incorporation of other lay persons, the latter can assume the place of the pastors or elders and render their support to



individuals who need it. Lartey in his theory of incorporation argues that “no single person can really provide the necessary support or assistance required by the individuals or groups in a crisis situation to regain their wholeness unless other personalities are incorporated (2003:27). Kelly argues for the need for the church to “offer solace and support to the bereaved not just in the form of ritual making of the life and death of the deceased but also through individual and communal care and attention” (2008:43). Kelly further states that “since biblical times, care has been offered to those in the spiritual and emotional turmoil of grief by individuals and groups representing faith communities as well as collectively by the whole community itself” (2008:43).

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In chapter four I have attempted to discuss the historical development of the ERCC; its theology and beliefs system, vision and mission statement as well as its policies and practices especially those related to the issue of bereavement care and counselling. The discussion in this chapter made us aware that the ERCC policies and practices reflect serious problems in terms of community involvement in the process of providing care and counselling to those who are emotionally troubled. The study argues for the church to be willing to release and train lay-counsellors who will complement the pastors and church elders in the overall ministry of pastoral care to the needy.

The chapter also examined the advent of Christianity (ERCC) to the Eggon land, how the Eggon people responded to the gospel as well as its impact. What emerged clearly from the missionaries “point of departure” for bringing the gospel to the Eggon land was the mission to evangelize them so that they would turn completely from their traditions and customs to embrace the Christian gospel - that was accompanied by the Western individualistic lifestyle.

In terms of their model of bereavement counselling, we discovered that once they receive the information concerning the death of any of their members, the pastor, alongside some church elders, go to the deceased’s residence to encourage and pray with the mourners. My evaluation, however, revealed that there are instances where some of the visits are not productive especially if the bereaved person is not familiar or comfortable to talk freely with either the pastor or the church elders. Second, sometimes the pastors in their attempt to provide support will tell the mourners not to cry instead of allowing them to express their

emotional feelings in a way that is best for them. Other ERCC methods of bereavement counselling noted are: planning the funeral program with the deceased's family, conducting wake-keeping and funeral services, collections and contributions of condolence materials, and one-on-one counselling sessions with the pastor. The discussion in this chapter further revealed the limitations of the current ERCC model of bereavement counselling among the Eggon people, as noted in chapter one. Primarily, it does not incorporate those key themes from the Eggon traditional practices that would add value to the current pastoral practices. It is vital to mention here that the ERCC model has strengths as well as weaknesses. Hence, there is the need for us to learn from both models if we are to build a more comprehensive model of bereavement counselling. As indicated in chapter three above, my main task in this study is to formulate a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the church. To achieve this I will draw from the insights that have arisen from the discussion on the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* model together with those that have emanated from this chapter. Chapter five deals with an examination of the changes encountered in the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* methods of bereavement management. It will also engage the Eggon and the ERCC current bereavement practices in a critical dialogue with the aim to draw from the emerging insights that have assisted in formulating the comprehensive model which will be discussed in chapter six.

## Chapter Five

### **Drinking from the Eggon's well: The dialogue between the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* and the ERCC model of bereavement counselling**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapters focused on the historical development of the ERCC, the advent of Christianity (ERCC) to Eggon land, the meaning of bereavement counselling in the ERCC, the ERCC model of bereavement counselling among the Eggon people, and the advantages and disadvantages of the ERCC model of bereavement counselling. The discussion also encompassed the analysis of theories which were complemented by the oral sources from the field research.

The objective of this current chapter is to first examine the changes the Eggon people have experienced in their ways of providing coping mechanisms to those who are emotionally troubled, as a result of the advent of Christianity to the Eggon land alongside influences of westernization, multi-cultural associations and the internet amongst others. Second, it aims to engage the Eggon indigenous and the ERCC current models of bereavement counselling into critical dialogue using the lenses of inculturation theory. In the previous chapters it was argued that both the Eggon indigenous and the ERCC models were not sufficient to bring holistic healing to those who are emotionally troubled as a result of the loss of their loved one. So far this study has discussed extensively the concept of pastoral care and counselling, bereavement counselling and its perspectives, and the Eggon indigenous and ERCC models of bereavement counselling (chapters two, three and four). There is a need for contextual approaches to the overall process of bereavement counselling.

Our discussion now will focus on critical dialogue between the Eggon indigenous and the ERCC models of bereavement counselling. We shall explore the insights they offer in our search for a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling. The information generated from this dialogue will help us answer the question: How can ERCC provide bereavement counselling among the Eggon people taking into account their indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management for effective healing? To achieve this, we shall draw from the responses of those who were interviewed about this key research question in order to hear their perspectives.

## 5.2 Changes encountered in the Eggon traditional *Awhiku* ways of helping the bereaved family

### 5.2.1 Wailing or crying when death occurs

During the interviews one of the questions asked of the respondents was, “Have you noticed any changes now from the way the Eggon people rendered bereavement counselling to one another?” One of the first themes that emerged from the respondents on the changes experienced was the idea of wailing or crying when death occurs. A respondent said, “in those days when the missionary came, I remember when one Mr. Adam visited our village, coincidentally a young girl had died and he had the opportunity to address the audience, and as he was speaking the interpreter said *e-wu okun mbo, e-wu okun mbo* do not cry, do not cry because the white man says after seven days the young girl will rise. And the people kept quiet anticipating the rising of the young girl after seven days but when the date came and they realized that nothing had happened they started arguing among themselves. Others said the white man says after seven day but others persisted that he said if they believe the young girl will rise on the last day”.<sup>95</sup> The respondent further noted that:

the misunderstanding came possibly due to the people’s cultural worldview of the kind of mystery they had. Usually when the warriors went out for wars against their enemy, if any of them was killed those who were around would not cry. After the deceased had to pass through certain rituals, he would return home.<sup>96</sup>

Being a retired pastor with the ERCC, the respondent recalled a long deliberation during one of the church’s meetings on the issue of crying when death occurs, as many delegates thought that as Christians we are not supposed to cry whenever our loved ones die. But at the end it was generally agreed that those who wish to cry when their loved ones die should be encouraged or allowed to do so,<sup>97</sup> since the aim of bereavement counselling is to help an individual explore his or her emotions. Detailed study revealed that during bereavement counselling, “the bereaved will likely be asked about his or her loss, about his or her relationship to the deceased, and about his or her own life now that s/he has lost a loved one. Answering these questions often means tapping into sadness or anger, so emotional outbursts should not be suppressed. Crying and yelling may come naturally during bereavement

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<sup>95</sup>Response from interview with an elderly Eggon man from Anzo clan in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup>September, 2014.

<sup>96</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon man from Anzo clan in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup>September, 2014.

<sup>97</sup> Response from interview with an elderly Eggon man from Anzo clan in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup>September, 2014.

counselling”.<sup>98</sup> Allowing an individual to explore his or her emotions without guilt or censure is often what appeals most about bereavement counselling.<sup>99</sup>

The reason for the long argument on the issue was understandable in light of the influence of the Christian missionaries on the first indigenous converts, who happened to believe everything the Christian missionaries said without giving it a second thought. Manga explains that, “the missionaries taught new Eggon converts not to grieve like those who have no hope and encouraged them that Christ died for them and rose again from the grave. Therefore all those who believe in God, God will bring back to life when He shall come even though they are dead” (2012:91). I think the missionaries’ encouragement here, as argued by Manga, is important because it gives hope and reason to look forward to the resurrection. However, as argued by the respondents during the field research, the missionaries also tried to encourage the bereaved to suppress their expression of emotions as discussed above. Clinebell observes that “so far as this life is concerned, and the appropriateness of mourning. Nothing should be said implying that stoicism in the face of grief is a sign of real strength or Christian virtue, or that one whose faith is genuine will not experience agonizing grief” (1984:223).

Walsh-Burke observes that “awareness of cultural norms can aid in providing assistance that demonstrates respect and understanding” (2006:63). Walsh-Burke further comments that “failure to understand and acknowledge cultural differences can be perceived as disrespect and may impede a therapist’s ability to be helpful” (2006:63). Drawing from the above insight, Mndeme explains that “if the counsellor will successfully help his/her client, s/he has to understand the cultural and social worlds of the person seeking help. This is necessary because the client is part of society and his/her personality development, to some extent, is formed by the society. The cultural environment influences personality development and behaviour patterns” (2008:46). This was not the case with Mr. Adam, as narrated in the respondent’s view above, though his encouragement was not all that bad. But because he was not aware of the people’s cultural beliefs, they completely misunderstood his words to mean the same thing as the traditional mystery, where the dead person comes back after the ritual because the relatives did not cry. A detailed research revealed that, “there is no correct way to grieve or mourn. Customs, behaviours, and feelings that may seem strange or inappropriate in

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<sup>98</sup> <http://www.helptoheal.co.uk/help/bereavement-counselling> (Accessed 17th February, 2014).

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.helptoheal.co.uk/help/bereavement-counselling> (Accessed 17th February, 2014).

one culture, may be considered usual or appropriate ways of grieving in another culture”.<sup>100</sup> Given these differences, it may be difficult to know how to be sensitive to a grieving person from a different cultural background. The care giver needs to consider the following questions as he/she seeks to support the grieving person: “What emotions and behaviours are considered to be normal grief responses within the grieving person’s culture? What are the bereaved family’s beliefs surrounding death? Who is expected to attend mourning ceremonies, and how are attendees expected to dress and act? Are gifts, flowers, or other offerings expected? What special days or dates will be significant for the bereaved family? What types of verbal or written condolences are considered appropriate?”<sup>101</sup>

To find out more about the customs and mourning practices of a person from a different cultural context, “the care giver needs much effort and skill by talking with someone who shares that cultural background, or perhaps looking for books that speak about such cultures, or searching for information on the internet concerning the bereaved person’s culture”.<sup>102</sup> Kastenbaum argues that “bereavement is a highly individual as well as a complex experience. It is increasingly recognized that individual experiences and expressions of grief associated with the death of a loved one are not uniform” (2011:71, also see Payne, Horn and Relf 1999:22). People’s reactions to a death are influenced by such factors as “ethnic or religious traditions; personal beliefs about life after death; the type of relationship ended by death (spouse, parents, child, relative, friend, colleague, etc.); the cause of death; the person’s age at death; whether the death was sudden or expected; and many others” (Archer 2011:51; Pincus 1997:123; Tedeschi and Colhoun 2004:71; Morrisey 2012). As a result of this variety and emotional complexity, “most doctors and other counsellors advise people to trust their own feelings about bereavement, and grieve in the way that seems most helpful to them”.<sup>103</sup> Pincus argues that “the precondition for a person to ‘complete’ his mourning process must be that he is allowed to mourn in his own way and time” (1997:123). Lendrum and Syme support the above argument that the bereaved persons will undergo a healthier grieving process if they learn to “trust, accept and listen to themselves and their feelings” (1992:15). This is relevant to my study in the sense that in the new comprehensive model this study

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<sup>100</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context>(Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

<sup>101</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context>(Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

<sup>102</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context>(Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

<sup>103</sup><http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Bereavement> (Accessed 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2014).

proposes for the ERCC, pastors, church elders, laity and the general public will be informed by the need to allow mourners to grieve in a way that will help facilitate their healthy healing process.

### **5.2.2 Superstitions about death**

A superstition, according to Webster, is “any belief or attitude that is inconsistent with the known laws of science or with what is generally considered in the particular society as true and rational” (1972:1830). As Fowler, Fowler and Sykes explain, “superstition is credulity regarding the supernatural; irrational fear of the unknown or mysterious; misdirected reverence; a religion or practice or opinion based on such tendencies; widely held but wrong ideas” (1978:296). Omobola argues that Superstitions were “man’s effort to explain nature and his own existence, to propitiate fate and invite fortune; to avoid evils he could not understand and to pray into the future” (2013:222). Brown observes that “superstition is a religious belief or practice founded on fear or ignorance” (1993:3150). Brown further stresses that superstition is “a practice that is not based on facts or events that can be proven. Superstitions primarily represent the underlying inherent fear of mankind, caused by the uncertainties of this world. Though widely held but irrational or unfounded belief; a common but unjustifiable idea of the effects or nature of a thing and so on” (1993:3150).

One of the remarkable changes noticed in the Eggon *Awhiku* traditional practices is the issue of superstitions. From oral history, many aged or elderly persons were discriminated against on the ground that they were responsible for the death that occurred. A respondent said, “Part of the reasons that make many elderly members of the extended families to be reluctant to fully participate when death occurs is the fear of been beaten by the youths on the ground that they are responsible for the death of the deceased even when there is clear medical proof of the disease that might have killed the person”.<sup>104</sup>

Another respondent affirmed this in the following words: “during one of the burial ceremonies in one of our villages, after the burial a young man said they should call some pastors for him and when a few of them came, he said, *ku yi mini addua domin zuchiya na ya*

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<sup>104</sup> Response from individual interview with an elderly Eggon man from Ogbaji, Anzo clan in Agidi Development Area in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

*yi beki, zan yi kisa*, pray for me because my heart is black (heavy) and I want to kill”.<sup>105</sup> The respondent further explains that “the young man was speaking from their belief that all those who were initiated into *Ombatse* cult have nothing to do with witchcraft, hence, he was possibly looking at those within their families that are not members of the *Ombatse* as responsible for the death of their loved one”.<sup>106</sup> This kind of superstition has done more harm than good to many indigenous Eggon extended families. In many instances, the survivors continue to nurture grudges against other members of their family who were suspected to have killed the deceased and sometimes it leads to divisions, unnecessary hatred and tensions. The coming of Christianity has been of tremendous assistance as many Eggon Christians were liberated from these kinds of vague superstition. First, through teaching and preaching of God’s word and Christian songs, many Eggon Christians now understand and accept death as a natural phenomenon. A respondent affirmed this view thus, “thank God for the Christianity that came; you know, before in our *Ugu* extended family, whenever deaths occurred the members would gather themselves and go for *Eha*, inquest, to find out the person(s) responsible for the death. Today because of the teaching of the gospel we don’t do that any longer”.<sup>107</sup> This however, does not mean that accusations when death occurs are no longer happening among the Eggon people. As Dugga explains, “there is still an ever growing attachment to the concept and practice of witchcraft. The popularity of this concept, which can neither be proven true or false scientifically, is largely due to the evil happenings in the society especially the deaths of illustrious Eggon people” (1996:84). Patience Abimiku argues that “...witchcraft has affected the philosophy of Eggon people in no small measure. There is hardly any misfortune, mischief or hardship that is not connected with the belief and practice of witchcraft...be it sickness, bad harvest, barrenness, failure in life, all are generally said to have been caused by either witches or sorcerers” (1990:59). Dugga asserts that “this belief was further boosted by the unravelling of witches by exorcists who have turned out to be elixirs and by the confession of these witches, accepting offences they are accused of” (1996:84). Dugga further stresses that the resultant effect of such accusations is the high level of suspicion which exists among the people, leading to shallow relationships as well as hampering the harmony and unity amongst the Eggon clans, and families (1996:84-85).

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<sup>105</sup> Responses from focus group discussions with ERCC Ministers and church elders group in ERCC No. 1 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>106</sup> Responses from focus group discussions with the ERCC Ministers and church elders group in ERCC No. 1 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>107</sup> Response from individual interview with an elderly Eggon man from Eholo clan in Alushi Wachuku in Akun Development Area in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.



### 5.2.3 The nature of the grave, the burial materials and shift in the roles played

Another change experienced is the replacement of the traditional type of grave with the modern six-foot type which automatically replaced the traditional *Ohulo* woven mat with the modern casket or coffin (see the detailed description of the traditional grave and the *Ohulo* woven mat and the modern casket in chapter three under 3.5.3). Out of the nine Eggon persons interviewed, six acknowledged that in many Eggon settlements, the traditional form of grave is no longer common. A respondent said, “I cannot remember when last I saw the traditional type of grave since I was a teenager”.<sup>108</sup> Another respondent observes that “some years back the use of *Ohlu* traditional woven mat was relatively common in some of the rural areas but now even in the typical Eggon villages when death occurs they will look for any available carpenter and sometimes they will even travel miles to search for the carpenter so that he can construct a modern casket using the available planks in the village before they will proceed with the burial ceremony”.<sup>109</sup> A number of factors are responsible for those changes over the years. For instance, the introduction of the casket was due to their contact with the Christian missionaries and the colonial masters and this definitely changed the approach to burial in the old type of grave as it would be difficult for the modern casket to enter. Another possible reason could be that the youths at some point rebelled against the old method of grave digging due to its being a laborious task.<sup>110</sup> The change from the traditional type of grave to the modern six-feet to me is good because first, it reduces the laborious work. Second, the modern type does not provide extra rooms for another corpse to be buried after an interval of a few years as done in the traditional type, which to me limits the high health risk of those undertaking the burial ceremony. However, the introduction of the modern grave and the casket brought hardship to the indigenous Eggon people in two ways: first, those who are responsible for the production of the traditional woven mats have lost their means of livelihood since people are no longer interested in buying them. Second, these changes in some instances have also brought economic hardship to many families as they sometimes borrow funds to deposit the corpse in the mortuary for some time before the burial, they purchase an expensive casket, and pay for entertainment, amongst other

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<sup>108</sup> Response from individual interview with an elderly Eggon man from Eholo clan in Alushi Wachuku in Akun Development Area in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>109</sup> Response from individual interview with an elderly Eggon man from Eholo clan in Wowyen, Akun Development Area in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>110</sup> Let me note here that the digging of the grave in our context is still done through manual labour. This is due to the kind of dignity the Eggon people attach to final home (grave) of every mortal. From oral history, those who dig the grave are not allowed to enter into the grave with their shoes on. The idea is rooted in the respect accorded to it as a final home. During the process of digging, the community elders always insist that the grave is properly and carefully built in a way that the corpse will be properly placed.

expenses, just to show the public that their deceased relation has been given a fitting burial, even when the deceased did not receive fair treatment while he/she was alive. An indigenous singer John Akass Ayakplo in his gospel album titled, *Tno Agha Eku* 'think about death' expressed the above view thus:

Año oya okpo o ghwo ame o kpo ghwo ame mba ba ame ewo esonj ma, da ame e kpu aha mbo, onda e kpu nga njo o tslo angba o sla ayi vavava la año o wo arej angba. Año o tslo angba okpo akpatu, njo o gbmo ami la aran, njo o gbmo ami la non, la año o wo arej angba<sup>111</sup>.

If you will assist me, assist me while I am alive not when I die. When I am dead you will lavish your money in purchasing an expensive casket, buying soft drinks and beers indicating that you are a rich man.

Ejike Okpa supports the above assertion by observing that the Igbos will 'hue-and-cry', some crocodile tears for far and distant dead persons, but will ignore them while alive. And sometimes, they will organize an expensive funeral, just to show the general public that indeed their dead person was given a noble burial (2014:2).

The nature of burial proceedings also changed over time especially in the communities where Christianity is strong. For example, in the pre-colonial era only the *Moa Adankpo Ashum* council of elders were responsible to bury any fellow that died, but with the advent of Christianity there was a shift in the roles, as pastors and church elders took over the responsibility to bury those who were committed members of the church, with the pastor serving as the *Adañ Ashum* chief priest who guides and gives instructions on how the casket should be laid.<sup>112</sup> This is relatively simple since the corpse is put inside the casket and there is a clear indication of where the head is, unlike the traditional grave. Dugga observes that "in burying a body in the traditional grave, one elder of the *Ashum* cult enters the 'inner chamber' by stretching himself into it, feet first and hands outstretched upward. Once he is inside, the corpse is 'pushed' in - in like manner into the inner chamber. The elder underneath receives the body and lays it properly in a 'sleeping' posture, men facing the east and women facing the west" (1996:65). That is really difficult because he will have to first think of where to place the head and turn the face in a specific direction due to their cultural belief (see

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<sup>111</sup> John Akass Ayakplo, indigenous album titled, "Tno Agha Eku", track number seven 'Kpoghwo'

<sup>112</sup> It is important to mention here that in our context if a church leader or a member in full fellowship dies, right from the mortuary to the moment the person will be buried, his pastor is the final person that gives instructions and guidelines on the proceedings. And in the case of the church leader, the responsibility for the funeral preparation lies primarily with the church in consultation with the family, especially in regard to the kind of coffin the family will prefer to buy. In some cases if the family desires a more expensive one, then the church will give the amount intended to the family so that they will purchase the coffin of their choice. From experience, many bereaved families are really happy and appreciative with these developments.

detailed discussion on the rationale behind the differences in the positioning of male and female corpses inside the grave in chapter three under 3.5.3).

One of the advantages in the changes in the roles and the burial proceedings is the aspect where the wife and children of the deceased are now allowed by the pastor to witness their loved one being buried, unlike the traditional approach where women and children were prevented by the *Moa Adankpo Ashum*, council of elders, from coming near the graveside. The Eggon traditional model does not consider the significance of the bereaved's "final time to bid the deceased a formal farewell as they throw the earth into the grave" as noted by Rees (1997:59). This act is important because it makes the family members come to terms with the reality of their loss as they say good-bye to their loved one, which in turn will facilitate their grieving process.<sup>113</sup> Rees argues that "funeral rites have great psychological impact. People often say that they needed the finality of casting earth into the grave, or seeing the coffin entering the furnace to accept the reality of their loved one's death" (1997:61). In the proposed comprehensive model, the need to pay serious attention to the immediate family by giving them the opportunity to witness their loved one being buried will be emphasised since the overall process of the funeral service aims to provide healing and consolation to them.

#### **5.2.4 Drumming, dancing, and masquerades**

Today in most of the clans in Eggon land the traditional way of dancing and the appearance of the Masquerades is reduced to the minimum. In some clans the ritual is performed primarily when the deceased is a member of the *Ashum* cult. The reason is because with the emergence of Christianity, many of these traditional practices and rituals were abolished. Another possible reason for the decline in the Eggon traditional customs and ritual practices is due to the influence of westernization and urbanization among the youth who went outside for their academic studies and upon returning seem not to attach any importance to the dancing ritual. As Eide puts it "studying any context in the east, west, north or south, the effects of modernity and globalization have to be taken into consideration. It is impossible to understand contextual issues without understanding processes of globalization. The school, the hospital and the media are icons of modernity and globalization. Young people, in particular in towns, are attracted to western ways of life, and they integrate those values and lifestyles into life in Africa" (2008:101). Again, in most places where Christianity was strong

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<sup>113</sup><http://www.funeralwise.com/grief/> (Accessed 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2014).

during those early stages, those discovered or found participating in any form of traditional practices were put under church discipline. As a result, many famous leaders of the Eggon traditional religion who were converted to Christianity were asked to bring out anything related to traditional cults to be burnt in public (see Emmah 2011:139). Manga affirms that “Christian influence did not spare the traditional funeral rites and their ceremonies either. So also it was with many other complexes and long ritual ceremonies which were connected with death” (2012:91). However, dancing is still being done during Christian funeral services in the church. The only difference is that it is directed to God rather than the ancestors. I think it relieves the bereaved family of the emotional and psychological distress especially because there are no words of mockery or any verbal insults either directed toward the deceased’s personality or the relatives as is done in the traditional funeral dance by the masquerades.

#### **5.2.5 Inheritance of widow**

The practice of inheriting widow(s) of the deceased was accepted during the pre-colonial era; both the wives and other belongings of the deceased were classified as his property. Usually when a man died, he would be mourned for a certain period of time. After the stipulated number of days was over, which was usually seven days for an adult, and then normal activities would be resumed. After this, the male adult relatives of *Moa Odne*, descendants, of one great grandfather will summon themselves to deliberate on the way forward concerning the children of the deceased and his surviving widow(s). Manga argues that the children, especially the young ones, would be shared amongst the male relatives for surrogating (2012:46). Thereafter, Manga further explains, the opportunity is given to the close relative of the deceased by elderly adult male members of the family to make known their intentions and readiness to re-thatch the widow’s room. Such a widow will then be informed of the arrangement, and if she did not object to it, it was an evidence of her acceptance of him as a new husband. Her parents would be formally informed of the arrangement and the processes of inheritance would be set in motion. But in an account where the close relative of the deceased show no interest opportunity will be given to the *Moa Ugu* extended family member as an alternative as the nearest kinsmen of the deceased. The widow, however, has the right to object to such arrangement (2012:46).

From oral history, when the widow objects to such an arrangement she stands the chance of forfeiting all the inheritance from her late husband. This to me is a violation of human rights.

I concur with Eboh and Boye when they observe that “this stressful situation makes African women to suffer a lot of emotional, physical, mental and spiritual problems” (2005:1). Eboh and Boye further argue that “African widows do not enjoy the best of health due to pressure of conforming to widowhood practice” (2005:1). Manga notes that the “practice of widow inheritance was vehemently discouraged by the Christian missionaries on the grounds that a man is only allowed to marry one wife and anyone who ventures into taking his relative’s widow will be put under church discipline especially when he had already married” (2012:92). As mentioned earlier, widows, after the death of their husband, had the latitude to decide who amongst the eligible brothers of the deceased’s husband was to be her new husband. Once the person she preferred also consented, he became obligated to protect the widow so that she would not be vulnerable as a result of the death of her husband. Scholars have criticized the above conception of a woman as someone who needs to be kept under the control of a husband as a way of denying the woman the right to be an autonomous person (see Rakoczy 2004; Oduyoye 1995). Again the practice of widow inheritance challenges the very principle of gender equality and infringes on the fundamental rights of the widow (see Okioma 2004:207; Aduba 2002:111). Bamgbose argues that the practice of widow inheritance is “denigrating and harmful” (2002:13). Christianity in no doubt has brought relief to many widows in this regard, as explained by Manga above. However, from my personal experience and through my in-depth study on the ERCC’s legal documents [constitution], I realized that there is no clear policy that protects the right of widows to this effect. This study however, will take the conversation further on what the church needs to do in order to protect the rights of the widows. This is discussed in chapter six which deals with proposing a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC.

### **5.2.6 Paradigm shift from African worldview of inter-dependency to the attitude of self-sufficiency**

Today, due to the influence of globalization, westernization, urbanization and internet, many Eggon people do not appreciate the communal way of living as they often think they have all the resources that will take care of their needs. Most of the respondents attributed this to lack of love and the attitude of individualism in our society. A respondent said, “it is the truth, the kind of love exhibited during pre-colonial era is not the same today even among the same members of the family as everyone tends to be more concerned with his/her immediate family members and sometimes people tend to treat issues of collective interest with less

commitment. This also affects how we treat each other during bereavement as people tend to be selective on whose burial to attend, who should be supported; in fact, the same thing applies to other festivities and so on”.<sup>114</sup>

Some other families who are well to do sometimes despise the less privileged simply because of the question of ‘what can they really offer us?’ And some consciously or unconsciously do that because of their ego. Katherine Walsh-Burke notes that, “a French-Canadian member of our interdisciplinary hospice team acknowledged that in her family of origin self-sufficiency is highly valued and accepting help from those outside the immediate family is sometimes difficult because it is viewed as contradictory to this value” (2006:63).

This however, is totally different from the Eggon cultural norms and beliefs. As argued by Manga, “the Eggon people believe in communal living, hence, they see an individual as a part of the community and not as an entity” (2012:4). This belief in the community, according to Meiring, often contradicts Western notions of individuality (2008:733-735). Shutte argues that “Our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human by entering more and more deeply into community with others<sup>115</sup>” (2004:30). Most of the respondents observe that the true sense of community is diminishing as people tend to show solidarity based on social, economic and political class.<sup>116</sup> In this case, the less privileged do not gain the support needed as they are given little or no attention.

### **5.3 The dialogue between the Eggon indigenous and the ERCC model of bereavement counselling**

#### **5.3.1 Forms of disseminating information when death occurs**

Among the Eggon indigenous people, when death occurs the neighbours and community members are first alerted through wailing. This is followed by verbal messages, and in some instances the local trumpet will also be used especially if the deceased is an aged person and

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<sup>114</sup>Response from individual interview with an elderly Eggon man from Anzo clan in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>115</sup> This reminded me of a story one of my students shared with me in 2012 after a spirituality class during the summer school. During the class we discussed the significance of love, mercy and forgiveness as the three highest points of Christian spirituality and we emphasized the needs for Christians to love and care for their neighbours. A highly placed civil servant, he then said that they (senior civil servants) were always encouraged not to associate with the common people in their neighbourhood and that the class helped him to see things in a better perspective.

<sup>116</sup> Responses from individual interview with the elderly Eggon persons in Nasarawa-Eggon on the 8<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014 respectively.

someone who has lived a decent life. The ERCC's way in most of the rural parishes is to ring the church bell (one used to draw the attention of worshippers to come for worship service) to notify the people of the exit of a member in full fellowship. The style of ringing the bell when death occurs differs from that which is used for normal worship services. Given the emergence of technology, many of these forms of announcements today especially among the Eggon people in the cities and in some of the ERCC churches in the cities - are mostly done through phone calls, SMS's, and emails among others. But the majority of the Eggon people from the rural areas are still left behind. Hence, they still keep to the old methods of disseminating information. The question that needs to be explored is 'How do Eggon people respond to these forms of announcement when death occurs?' From experience, I discovered that in most of the Eggon communities, as soon as the announcement is passed, people will suspend whatever they are doing and go to the deceased's residence to behold the calamity that has befallen them and find appropriate ways to render support to the mourners.

### **5.3.2 Ministry of presence**

The second method used by the Eggon people is an act of coming to the deceased's residence to console and encourage the mourners immediately the news of the exit of their loved ones is spread. As noted earlier in chapter three, in some of the Eggon rural settlements it is compulsory for every male child that is above 20 years of age to come to the deceased's residence when death occurs, irrespective of the time they received the news. This is to show the spirit of solidarity and communalism to one another. From history we learn that sometimes the Eggon people start digging the grave the very night they receive the news of the exit of a member of their community. This confirmed what Manga said earlier that, when death occurs, the community will gather to behold what death has done to them and after they have expressed their shock over the demise of the person, the elders in the community will seek the consent of the family member concerning the site to dig the grave. (2012:55).

Similarly, within the ERCC, many respondents attest that as soon as the news of the death of any of their members is announced, the pastor and the church elders will go to the deceased's residence to encourage and pray with the mourners. Kreis and Pattie observe that "as soon as one receives the news that someone is in grief, efforts should be made to get to him/her as quickly as possible and if possible sit beside the mourner. To the mourner in shock, you are just a comforting shoulder" (1969:122). The best way to help a person who is emotionally

troubled, as Wright explains, “is to be around the person; because the presence of one seeking to assist does wonders” (2003:39). Wright further observes that “when loss invades one’s life, a person is never the same; for when their world changes, they change in many ways, some of which challenge, threaten, disappoint and surprise. Many people, especially in early stages of grief, wonder if their life will ever be whole again” (2013:13). Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler observe that there are five stages of grief that “are a part of the framework that makes up our learning to live without the one we lost. They are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling. But they are not stops on some linear timeline in grief. Not everyone goes through all of them or goes in a prescribed order” (2005:7). These stages, according to Kubler-Ross and Kessler, include “denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance” (2005:7).

Kubler-Ross and Kessler argue that denial in grief has been misinterpreted over the years. When the stage of denial was first introduced in a book written by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross titled *On Death and Dying*, it focused on the person who was dying (2005:8). Whereas in their book titled, *On Grief and Grieving*, the focus is on “the person who may be in denial is grieving the loss of a loved one and the denial in this case is more symbolic than literal” (2005:8). Kubler-Ross and Kessler further stress that:

This does not mean that you literally don’t know your loved one has died. It means you come home and you can’t believe that your wife isn’t going to walk in the door at any minute or that your husband isn’t just away on a business trip. You simply can’t fathom that he will never walk through that door again. When we are in denial, we may respond at first by being paralyzed with shock or blanketed with numbness. The denial is still not *denial of the actual death*, even though someone may be saying, “I can’t believe he’s dead”. The person is actually saying that, at first, it is too much for his or her psyche (2005:8).

McIlwraith observes that “shock can be regarded as a physiological trauma that seems almost to overload the system. The news is too much to take in” (2001:8). This first stage of grieving according to Kubler-Ross and Kessler, “helps us to survive the loss. In this stage, the world becomes meaningless and overwhelming. Life makes no sense. We are in a state of shock and denial. We go numb. We wonder how we can go on, if we can go on, why we should go on. We try to find a way to simply get through each day. Denial and shock help us to cope and make survival possible. Denial helps us to pace our feelings of grief. There is grace in denial. It is nature’s way of letting in only as much as we can handle” (2005:10). McIlwraith argues that “the more common reactions during the denial stage are a desire to withdraw socially,



feeling unable to cope with the new responsibilities that you've inherited after a loved one's death, or being incapable of making simple decisions" (2001:8).

The second stage of grieving is anger. McIlwraith observes that:

after you have partially recovered from the shock of death, you may experience an anger that spills over into an almost uncontrollable rage. The anger may be directed against yourself - for example, if you were not with your son when he died and feel you could have prevented what happened by some action or other, or that you should have had enough money to hire the services of a famous specialist who might have been able to save or prolong your partner's life. Perversely, you may direct your anger against the loved one who has died: Why did he leave me to face the world all alone? Why did she deprive me of the chance to see her grow up / to fulfil all the plans we'd made together, etc (2001:9).

A respondent shares his experiences thus, "I remember the kind of anger I directed towards myself after the death of my father some few years back; he died while I had just finished my Master's in 2007, when I had just started working. When I was recovering from the shock of the death, I began to think that if only I had enough money to take him to the famous hospital, they might have prolonged his life".<sup>117</sup> Kubler-Ross and Kessler argue that "this stage presents itself in many ways: anger at your loved one that he didn't take better care of himself or anger that you didn't take better care of him. You may be angry with the doctors for not being able to save someone so dear to you. You may be angry that bad things could happen to someone who meant so much to you" (2005:11). Kubler-Ross and Kessler further emphasise that "it is important to remember that the anger surfaces once you are feeling safe enough to know you will probably survive whatever comes. At first, the fact that you lived through the loss is surprising to you. Then more feelings hit, and anger is usually at the front of the line as feelings of sadness, panic, hurt, and loneliness also appear, stronger than ever" (2005:11-12). Kubler-Ross and Kessler also note that "anger has no limits. It can extend not only to your friends, the doctors, your family, yourself, and your loved one who died, but also to God. You may ask, 'where is God in this? Where is his love? His powerfulness? His compassion? Is this really God's will?' You may not want people to talk to you about God's plan or his mysteries" (2005:13).

The third stage is bargaining. Kubler-Ross and Kessler observe that "before the loss, it seems you will do anything if only your loved one may be spared. "Please, God", you bargain, "I will never be angry at my wife again if you'll just let her live". After a loss, bargaining may take the form of a temporary truce" (2005:17). Guilt, according to Kubler-Ross and Kessler,

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<sup>117</sup> Responses from Bereaved family focus group discussion in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

is “often bargaining’s companion. The ‘if onlys’ cause us to find fault with ourselves and what we “think” we could have done differently” (2005:17). McIlwraith opines that:

guilt often brings pain, but it’s important to realize that only a saint would feel no resentment at having to look after a sick partner or forgive and forget all their imperfections. Every human relationship is bound together with conflicting feelings of love and occasional dislike. And after someone you love dies it’s normal to feel guilt at having had some feelings of dislike for them when they were alive (2001:12).

The fourth stage of grief is depression. Kubler-Ross and Kessler observe that after bargaining, the attention of the bereaved person moves squarely into the present. Empty feelings present themselves, and grief enters into his/her life on a deeper level, deeper than he/she can imagine. The depression stage feels as though it will last forever (2005:20). Kubler-Ross and Kessler further argue that “depression is not a sign of mental illness. It is the appropriate response to a great loss” (2005:20). During this stage the bereaved person will often prefer to “withdraw from life, left in a fog of intense sadness, wondering, perhaps, if there is any point in going on alone. Why go on at all?” (2005:20). Depression after a loss, according Kubler-Ross and Kessler, “is too often seen as unnatural: a state to be fixed, something to snap out of. However, if grief is a process of healing, then depression is one of the many necessary steps along the way” (2005:21).

The fifth and final stage of grief according to Kubler-Ross and Kessler is acceptance. Kubler-Ross and Kessler argue that “acceptance is often confused with the notion of being all right or okay with what has happened. This is not the case. Most people don’t ever feel okay or all right about the loss of a loved one. This stage is about accepting the reality that our loved one is physically gone and recognizing that this new reality is the permanent reality” (2005:24-25; McIlwraith 2001:15). Experience has shown that most bereaved persons would love to avoid the reality of losing a loved one to death. As difficult as this may be, they are left with no option other than to accept it and learn to live with it. Kubler-Ross and Kessler classify this stage as a “new norm with which we must learn to live. This is where our final healing and adjustment can take a firm hold, despite the fact that healing often looks and feels like an unattainable state” (2005:25).

The church during all these difficult stages is expected to show love, support, care and empathy with the aim to bring restoration of human identity to such an individual whose life has been devastated as a result of the loss of the loved one.

### 5.3.3 Burial procedure

The first approach by which Eggon people support the bereaved family is by collective or communal participation in the digging of the grave by the community members. Among all the three Eggon clans as earlier mentioned, the relatives of the deceased from both the maternal and paternal sides are not allowed to partake in the digging of the grave. As Dugga explains, “this is to ensure that the stress is taken off the bereaved family just like food is brought in from friends and sympathisers” (1996:64). The in-laws of the deceased also have a major role in digging the grave alongside the community and friends. Dugga argues that “the social significance of this act is that husbands’ loyalty and appreciation is expressed to the family from which they married their wives. Where such husbands are not physically present, they are represented by their own relations and in modern day practice; some in-laws pay for the grave to be dug if they are not able to do it themselves” (1984:64). Dugga further stresses that “the inter-marital relationship is oiled by this custom of grave digging, by compulsorily bringing husbands to sympathise with their wives and relating with her family” (1996:64). This custom, according to Dugga, “serves as an anti-divorce device and it demands that in-laws ensure that wives’ relations are properly buried” (1996:64).

A detailed discussion revealed that the ERCC has little or no responsibility in regards to digging the grave as compared to the Eggon people; instead the digging of the grave is left in the hands of the mourners alone. Often, digging of the grave is seen as the task belonging to the common people in the community. I think if the pastor or church elders can find a way of participating during the digging of the grave it would add dignity to the overall process and, above all, many people would be influenced to also participate.<sup>118</sup>

Kirwan argues that “our model for Christian counselling springs from this very sense of personal identity that God in His love has given us. In counselling others we can extend the love of God by helping them in turn to realize for themselves the firm sense of identity and inner security which we have” (1984:119). Kirwan further writes that “just as Christ meets our needs for self-esteem, members of the body of Christ are to build up others thereby bring them to the point where they can say I am loved and therefore experience self-esteem”

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<sup>118</sup> Let me note here that digging of the grave in our context is still done through manual labour. This is due to the kind of dignity the Eggon people attach to final home (grave) of every mortal. From oral history, those who dig the grave are not allowed to enter into the grave with their shoes on. The idea is rooted in the respect accorded to it as a final home. During the process of digging, the community elders always insist that the grave is properly and carefully built in a way that the corpse will be properly placed into it.

(1984:119). This insight and how the church can implement it will be fully discussed in our chapter on the comprehensive model this thesis seeks to propose.

During the burial ceremony among the Eggon people, the chief priest is the presiding officer who directs and guides each step to be taken. Women or children are not allowed to go near the edge of the grave. This I think is discriminatory on the basis of gender and a violation of fundamental human rights and it has the tendency of prolonging the healing process. Rees observes that by allowing the relations of the deceased, particularly the wife and children, to witness their loved one being buried will help them face the reality of the loss as they learn to “make the last gesture of bidding the deceased farewell in the form of throwing earth or flower petals into the grave, sprinkling the coffin with holy water or singing a farewell song” (1997:59). In the ERCC, however, the pastor assumes the role of the presiding officer in the burial ceremony of any church member. Women as well as children are allowed to witness the burial of their loved ones. They are also given a special seat during the church service and also space in front during the funeral rite at the grave site to enable them to bid a final farewell to their loved one who died by way of throwing earth into the grave (see chapter four under 4.5.4 for details). As noted in chapter four, the funeral facilitates healing from the loss, especially when careful attention is given to the feelings of the mourners as a way of assisting them to obtain holistic healing. Jackson observes that “in the time of emotional crisis the process of worship can make a vital contribution to the work of healthful mourning” (1971:45).

#### **5.3.4 Collecting and contributing of material condolences**

The fourth method used among the Eggon people is by supporting the mourners with foodstuff, drinks and other materials condolences to assist in feeding the sympathizers. Most of the bereaved family interviewed both during the individual and focus group discussions affirmed that the support received had been of great assistance. It was argued in chapter three that this aspect is gradually diminishing among the Eggon people as many tend to be more concerned with their immediate family members. Kinoti argues that “the many challenges facing African society today demand a truly caring spirit among Africans themselves” (2002:34). Kinoti advocates for the situation where the “communities of faith can and should stimulate the kinship system, especially where rapid social change has diminished it” (2002:34). Our discussion in chapter four indicated that the ERCC in recent years is trying to

support the mourners with cash donations in the form of offerings during funeral services, to assist the mourners in providing food and drinks for the sympathizers. A respondent comments thus:

In each of the congregations I pastored, I always encouraged church members to support one another when any misfortune occurred especially challenges such as the loss of a loved one. Sometimes, some church members will even volunteer to pay for the cost for the corpse to be embalmed. During the funeral services other members will bring their private cars to assist in transporting people to the mortuary to collect the corpse for the church service and back to the deceased's residence when the funeral is over.<sup>119</sup>

### **5.3.5 Post-funeral counselling**

The post-burial counselling among the Eggon people is seen in the way they make time to come and stay with the mourners. As noted earlier, whenever death occurs, the female relatives are required to come and stay in the deceased's house for the stipulated period of mourning. In some instances, the elderly ones will stay back even after all the rest of the female relations have gone, to help the bereaved family cope and undergo some level of normalcy or stability. Many respondents confirmed that the presence of the people around them during the grieving period enabled them to cope quickly with the trauma resulting from the loss. The discussion in chapter four however revealed that this method is limited within the ERCC. Clinebell opines that "it is crucial that caring support of the family continue during the weeks and months following the funeral" (1984:223). Clinebell further argues that "many people are unaware that the bereaved continue to need special support during the extended process of working through the loss" (1984:223).

Due to the absence of post-funeral counselling in the current model of the ERCC, I emphasise the need for the church to consider establishing a grief recovery group within its membership who will always make time to stay around with the bereaved individual for certain period of time after the funeral to help the bereaved person(s) undergo a healthy healing process. Usually during the early days or weeks of the death of a loved one the bereaved person is surrounded by friends and relatives who tend to be attentive to the needs of the mourners but as weeks pass especially after the funeral. People would begin to return to their daily activities, hence, the support system may definitely diminish to a certain extent.<sup>120</sup> Details of how the church can develop this grief recovery team ministry will be discussed in the next chapter which deals with the proposed comprehensive model.

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<sup>119</sup> Response from ERCC Minister individual in-depth interview in ERCC LCC Alushi Wachuku, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa Eggon LGC on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>120</sup> <http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/NYCU/grief.pdf> (Accessed 18th June, 2014)

## **5.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I first examined the changes encountered in the Eggon indigenous model of bereavement management over the centuries. The chapter also engaged the Eggon and the ERCC models of bereavement counselling in a critical dialogue with the aim to help create a better foundation for the development of a comprehensive model to be used by the ERCC among the Eggon Christians, as presented in the next chapter.

Findings from the critical analysis of the models, in both contexts, attributed the underlying reasons for complicated cases of grief by some bereaved family, to the limitations in the current existing models of bereavement counselling among both the Eggon indigenous people and the ERCC. Hence, we looked at the key insights that the two contexts offer through their approaches to bereavement management. Under the pastoral presence in the deceased's residence, they argued for the need for a prompt response to the call that someone is bereaved. During this period, further preparations such as the process of grave digging, planning of funeral programs, wake-keeping and conducting the funeral service as well as collecting and contributing condolence materials will be taking place. After the funeral, one-on-one counselling with the pastor can also be held. However, there are other key elements or themes discovered from our detailed study of other literature in general, which show limitations of either the current Eggon and ERCC models.

These relate to: allowing mourners the opportunity to grieve in a way that is best to them, the need for the training and development of lay-counsellors' grief recovery ministry within the church, the need for referral to enable the counselee to receive further support from other professionals, the need for the church to develop policies that will protect the rights of the bereaved family, especially the widows and orphans, from oppression by the relations of the deceased, and the need to emphasise the issue of writing wills.

With this theoretical work in place, we are now better placed to formulate the comprehensive model this study seeks to create for the church. This I think will be more effective and efficient in providing holistic healing and coping mechanisms to those who are bereaved or emotionally hurt.

## Chapter Six

### **The proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter examined the changes the Eggon traditional practices have encountered over the years. The chapter also engaged in critical dialogue the models of bereavement counselling within the Eggon indigenous people and the ERCC contexts. Insights were drawn for consideration regarding the new proposed comprehensive model of bereavement management discussed in this chapter.

The objective of this current chapter is the formation and development of a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC. To achieve this, methods of bereavement counselling analyzed in the previous chapters which were found to be useful will be further strengthened and considered. This will involve a detailed explanation on how each approach can be applied, alongside other key elements or themes discovered from our detailed study of other literature in general which were identified as lacking in the Eggon and the ERCC current models, with the idea to bring holistic healing to the Eggon Christians. Since the study embraces three theoretical frameworks, namely inculturation, incorporation and the community theory, the discussion in this chapter is arranged according to these theories.

#### **6.2 The proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC**

In this section, I first pull together all the lessons and insights generated from the previous discussion on the methods of bereavement counselling that were found useful in the Eggon and the ERCC current practices. These are important because they form the groundwork for this new model. They include: the pastoral presence in the deceased's residence when death occurs, guiding and planning the funeral program in collaboration with the bereaved family, organizing the wake-keeping service, conducting the funeral service, collecting and contributing material condolences, and one-on-one counselling with the pastor.

The second aspect will bring together those elements discovered to be lacking in the two contexts but which have the potential to bring holistic healing to overall bereavement counselling with Eggon Christians. These elements include: allowing individuals the opportunity to grieve in a way that is best for them, the need for referral to seek other

professionals' further support, developing a lay-counsellors' grief recovery ministry within the church, and developing policies that guide and protect the rights of the bereaved family with emphasis on the idea of writing a 'will'.

### **6.2.1 Pastoral presence in the deceased's residence when death occurs**

From the field data, we found that the participants from among the Eggon people, ERCC ministers, church elders and the bereaved family mentioned the significance of visiting someone who is suffering from the loss of his/her loved one. Indeed, visitation is a core element of both African and Christian communal living. Visitation is an act of ministry that has as its aim the sense of building relationship between the pastor and the bereaved (Gorsuch 1999:2). Gorsuch states that visitation must not be relegated to only the moment of crisis and problems, instead it should be an intention to nurture in faith (1999:4-5). Gorsuch's argument is very important for those who only visit when misfortune happens to others. There should be a deliberate attempt to visit each other in order to establish good relations so that when problems arise he/she stands a better chance to render assistance to the person in need. It should be noted, as argued by Short and Searle, those who are emotionally troubled are looking for 'comforting shoulders' that they can trust, in order to freely express their deepest innermost feelings concerning the loss (2004:33). Short and Searle observe that it is very vital to visit the bereaved family as soon as possible; its significance can never be quantified because it is the best way of expressing love and support that words cannot readily explain. It is important to note that during the moment of bereavement, the balance of the family system is disrupted and each member of the family unit differs in his or her response to the death that occur and acceptance of it. Hence, the person visiting should understand that each family member's grief is unique (2004:33).

It does not matter whether the care giver meets with a family of three or four or even a group of eight or ten; each one will respond in a unique way, even though they have all been exposed to the same loss. Each person's response to grief is affected by numerous factors as discussed in the previous chapters (see Wright 2011:179; Payne, Horn and Relf 1999:22; Tedeschi and Colhoun 2004:71). Additionally, the cultural norms of the individual concerned should also be acknowledged by the care giver. For instance, in some cultures, emotional expression and venting is allowed while it is forbidden in other cultures. It is important to assess this level; whether the family members have permission to express or not to express



their feelings. This is very important because when the expression of feelings is encouraged, the atmosphere will be healthier. Lendrum and Syme argue that “what is needed most of all is emotional support, for this enables us to talk. Where the expression of grief is not encouraged and where denial is given priority, then feelings are repressed. This repression may well eventually manifest itself in physical or mental illness. The more a particular group in society is likely to repress or deny death, the more likely are its members to have difficulty with grieving” (1992:49). During the time of encouragement and counselling, the counsellor needs to reflect upon these factors, in order to know the appropriate methods to be given to each member of the family unit.

Given these differences as mentioned earlier, it may be difficult, especially for a counsellor from a different socio-cultural background than the bereaved, to really know how to be sensitive to a grieving person from a different cultural background. Lendrum and Syme suggested that “in working with people from a variety of cultural groups whose socio-cultural background may be unfamiliar to us, we need to recognise both the value of all the mourning rituals and also the range and variety of different rituals in the different groups within our society” (1992:48). To achieve this, Lendrum and Syme observe that the counsellor or the care giver needs to have “some knowledge of the culture and religion from which he or she comes, as well as some awareness of the different sects and varieties within that group” (1992:49). It is therefore imperative for a good counsellor to consider the following questions as he/she seeks to support another person who is from a different socio-cultural background: “What emotions and behaviours are considered normal grief responses within the grieving person’s culture? What are the bereaved family’s beliefs surrounding death? Who is expected to attend mourning ceremonies, and how are attendees expected to dress and act? Are gifts, flowers, or other offerings expected? What special days or dates will be significant for the bereaved family? What types of verbal or written condolence are considered appropriate?”<sup>121</sup> Another way to “investigate more about the customs and mourning practices of a person from another culture, is to seek the assistance of someone who shares a similar cultural background, and / or look for books that talk about such cultures, or even to search for the information on that culture from the Internet”.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

<sup>122</sup> Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014).

Furthermore, the ministry of silence is very essential when attempting to encourage, counsel or console someone who is experiencing a difficult moment in his/her life, as some of the words uttered may tend to aggravate the person's situation rather than console. Wright observes that, "If you want to help another person, just be there; because your presence does wonders" (2003:39). Just as words are important in consoling those who are grieving, so also our presence can likewise console them.

### **Listening!**

As mentioned elsewhere in this work, in ministering to those who are bereaved, the counsellor is required to "listen to the concerns, fears, troubles and the anxiety of the persons involved rather than being conscious of his personal needs and aspirations" (TEE College 2012:6.1). Wright further argues this point in the following words:

When loss invades one's life, a person is never the same; for when their world changes, they change in many ways, some of which challenge, threaten, disappoint and surprise. Many people, especially in early stages of grief, wonder if their life will ever be whole again. When we move into the world of a person in mourning, we enter a world of unpredictability, chaos and pain. We may understand what is happening from firsthand experience or just cognitively; but to effectively assist the one who mourns, we need to have a full understanding of what it's truly like to be in constant grief. Each person will have his or her own unique experience, but there are common threads for all who mourn (2013:13).

To emphasise what was discussed in chapter four under 4.5.1, I reiterate Wright's observations that listening is "one of the greatest gifts one person can give to another. It can be an act of love and caring. Any kind of listening that springs from caring builds closeness, reflects love and is an act of grace" (2013:39-43). Wright further defines listening as not thinking about what you're going to say when the other person stops talking. You are not busy formulating your response but concentrating on what is being said (2013:40). By concentrating and focusing attention on the speaker, the counsellor would deduce what the bereaved is saying through the body movement. As Kennedy puts it "people use their eyes, their hands, and their shifting feet to punctuate and underscore what they attempt to understand and communicate about themselves" (1977:103). During the visitation and perhaps after words of encouragement, Berner points out, the counsellor must not forget to conclude with prayers with the bereaved family by deliberately mentioning some key concerns raised in the course of discussions, with the aim to "bring their wounds, struggles and anxieties into dynamic healing contact with God the wonderful counsellor" (1992:32). This will provide comfort and consolations to the troubled persons by enhancing their awareness of God's grace and faithful presence in their predicaments and thereby increase their ability to live their lives more fully in the light of these realizations (1992:32). Affiku

argues that “Prayer is the only weapon by which Christians can wage war against those powers that would likely hinder their growth as well as a healthier grieving process” (2012:9). Affiku further asserts that “it is only through prayers that a bereaved person will overcome the trials and temptations that will come his/her way as a result of the loss of a loved one” (2012:9).

As noted in chapter five, some respondents affirmed that there were moments where the bereaved person sent for the group of pastors to pray for him because his heart was full of evil and that he wanted to commit murder. After the prayer the young man was able to be calmed and released from his confusion. A prayer group can also serve as a support network for the bereaved family. The bereaved persons should be encouraged to join the grief recovery group within the church. Nasimiyu-Wasike argues that “Talking about their problems, praying together, encouraging each other can lead to healing and rehabilitation” (1994:115). Prayer is significant in a grieving person’s journey because it provides a moment of emotional and psychological release.

#### **6.2.1.1 Allowing individuals the opportunity to grieve in a way that seems best for them**

From the field data, it was gathered that among the Eggon people, males are restricted from expressing their emotions and feelings in public while females on the other hand are forced to show overt emotional displays in public (see chapter three under 3.5.1 and chapter five under 5.2.1). A respondent observed that “whenever someone dies in our culture (the Eggon people) it is required that women should show overt displays of emotion. Sometimes we (females) in particular cry not because we feel like crying. It is usually considered abnormal if women, either wives or daughters of the deceased, are not seen in demonstrative weeping; sometimes people tend to say that the person knew something about the cause of the death, this tends to suggest that the person may be responsible for the death”.<sup>123</sup> A detailed discussion also revealed that during the visitation, the ERCC pastors, elders as well as members sometimes encourage the mourners to repress the expression of their emotions and feelings. Being an insider (ordained pastor from the ERCC), I also affirmed this. My attitude in this regards only began to change during my Masters of Theology studies in 2007 when I began to engage in thorough study of bereavement counselling material and it was so profound during the proposal stage of this thesis.

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<sup>123</sup> Responses from Widows & Widowers’ focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpadom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

Detailed studies make us aware that grief is a life-shaking sorrow over the loss. It shakes one from top to bottom. We often talk of grief but some of us have experienced it, while others have not. The following questions can help those who attempt to help the bereaved: Do we know how those who are bereaved feel? Are we able to help them cope during their grieving moment?"<sup>124</sup> Reflecting on the approaches of the Eggon people and some pastors within the ERCC who tend to consider intense agonizing as unchristian or a sign of weakness - as in the case of Eggon culture's restrictions for men - one then asks "does repressing people from expressing their emotions help or aggravate their situation?" Or worst still, does it not hinder the bereaved from experiencing a healthy grieving process? Many prolong or what we may call complicated grieving as a result of not undergoing a normal grieving process due to external pressures either by friends or colleagues. Lendrum and Syme observe that "the outcome of the grief is affected by certain factors in such a predictable way that they can be called determinants of grief. Some of these determinants not only make the grief more complicated but also more prolonged" (1992:33). The aim of any meaningful bereavement counselling is to help an individual explore his or her emotions. During the interaction, "the bereaved will likely be asked about his or her loss, about his or her relationship to the deceased, and about his or her own life now that s/he has lost a loved one. Answering these questions often means tapping into sadness or anger, so emotional outbursts should not be suppressed. Crying and yelling may come naturally during bereavement counselling".<sup>125</sup> It was observed that "allowing an individual to explore his or her emotions without guilt or censure is often what appeals most about bereavement counselling".<sup>126</sup>

We need to understand that individual experiences and expressions of grief are not the same (Rosenblatt & Barner 2006). One person may have frequent episodes of sobbing and weeping while another keeps tight control over emotional expression (see Kastenbaum 2011:71; Parkes 2001). Hence, we must learn to respect every personality irrespective of the way they display their emotions during the grieving process and encourage them to grieve in a way that is best for them, provided it will enable them to undergo a healthy grieving process. In coping with grief, other emotions such as guilt, anger, confusion, withdrawal and fear may be involved. This is true because bereavement, according to Kastenbaum, often "leads to outbursts of anger for one person but at the same time leads to a sunken, apologetic state

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<sup>124</sup> <http://www.helptoheal.co.uk/help/bereavement-counselling> (Accessed 17th February, 2014).

<sup>125</sup> <http://www.helptoheal.co.uk/help/bereavement-counselling> (Accessed 17th February, 2014).

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.helptoheal.co.uk/help/bereavement-counselling> (Accessed 17th February, 2014).

accompanied by low self-esteem in another” (2011:71). Kastenbaum further observes that some bereaved persons barely attend to the activities of everyday life, whereas others could become embedded in a rigorous work schedule (2011:71). Our understanding as pastoral counsellors of such different emotional outbreaks from the bereaved will enable us to forget about our defences or what we may presume to be the most appropriate thing based on our experiences. Such understanding will enable us to find a better way to help them deal with their grief more appropriately within their own experience (see Donald Howard 2009:15; Rosen 1998). Pedersen maintains that “understanding group differences, as well as individual differences, are important to the accurate interpretation of behaviours. Counselling strategies that disregard the influence of a client’s cultural context are unlikely to interpret a client’s behaviour accurately. The same behaviour across cultures might have a very different interpretation, just as different behaviours might have the same interpretation. Therefore, developing multicultural awareness is essential for all counsellors in order to learn the range of cultural similarities and differences” (1988:vii)

## **6.2.2 Burial procedure and ritual as a moment of healing**

### **6.2.2.1 Guiding and planning funeral program in collaboration with the bereaved’s family**

The minister as a representative figure of the Christian community needs to always be around the mourners when it comes to the issue of funeral preparations, especially in the context of this study where the concept of a funeral director<sup>127</sup> is seemingly absent. First, if the burial is to take place the same day, his assistance will be much needed due to the confusing and unstable condition of the mourners as a result of the shock; he will be guiding the survivors in the necessary steps to be taken. Second, the minister will play a vital role in guiding the mourners not to go against the teaching of the Bible and the doctrine of the church.<sup>128</sup>

More importantly, the minister will help to prevent the possibility of organizing a flamboyant funeral that will later put the entire family in debt as they borrow funds in an attempt to organize a fitting burial for the deceased, just to please the public. It was observed that in some places and cultures, “so much importance is attached to funerals that even the poorest

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<sup>127</sup> Funeral director is a person incharge of funeral cover. Whenever death occurs among the family that are under funeral insurance, the funeral director, would be contacted and after the necessary document regards the deceased is provided, the funeral director take charge of other responsibilities such as mortuary arrangement, purchase of casket, transportations during the funeral as well as entertainments amongst others.

<sup>128</sup> Beware of Customs that Displease God

<http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2005006?q=grief+and+comfort&p=par> (Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2014).

of families often make great effort to gather enough funds to provide ‘a fitting burial,’ though it might bring hardship and debt”.<sup>129</sup> Abanyam argues that “this notion of a befitting burial has attracted extravagant spending of resources in Tiv society”.<sup>130</sup> Abanyam further states that “this extravagant spending affects individual households, families and the society as a whole, since the resources meant for development are wasted in the name of a befitting burial”.<sup>131</sup>

The idea of befitting burial practices, according to Abanyam, reflects “the influence of cultural norms that prescribe practices as appropriate for a given social institution”.<sup>132</sup> During the funeral planning, the role of the pastor is to educate the mourners of the danger of incurring such extravagant spending due to its negative effect on the family in future, particularly the deceased’s children in terms of school fees, and other basic needs”.<sup>133</sup>

Additionally, during the planning, Clinebell observes, “the pastor should be sensitive to encourage the bereaved family to talk together about their loved one - circumstances of the death, and the memories and attributes they most cherish about the deceased” (1984:223). The bereaved family should also be allowed to suggest whatever they think should be done and if need be every member of the family should be allowed to suggest or speak on what he/she feels is best. Choices that the family makes to personalize the service can make it

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<sup>129</sup> Beware of Customs that Displease God

<http://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2005006?q=grief+and+comfort&p=par> (Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2014).

<sup>130</sup> Noah Lumun Abanyam. The Significance of Befitting Burial and its Effects on the Development of *Tiv* Society of Central Nigeria

[http://www.google.com.ng/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffaceser.net%2Fjournals%2Fdownload.php%3Faid%3D29%26action%3Ddownload&ei=s2h7VIncNea07gb\\_2YCgCA&usg=AFQjCNEX7qPOP4Dfm4cGmPCMugn-PqEFRg&bvm=bv.80642063.d.ZGU](http://www.google.com.ng/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffaceser.net%2Fjournals%2Fdownload.php%3Faid%3D29%26action%3Ddownload&ei=s2h7VIncNea07gb_2YCgCA&usg=AFQjCNEX7qPOP4Dfm4cGmPCMugn-PqEFRg&bvm=bv.80642063.d.ZGU) (Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2014)

<sup>131</sup> Noah Lumun Abanyam .The Significance of Befitting Burial and its Effects on the Development of *Tiv* Society of Central Nigeria

[http://www.google.com.ng/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffaceser.net%2Fjournals%2Fdownload.php%3Faid%3D29%26action%3Ddownload&ei=s2h7VIncNea07gb\\_2YCgCA&usg=AFQjCNEX7qPOP4Dfm4cGmPCMugn-PqEFRg&bvm=bv.80642063.d.ZGU](http://www.google.com.ng/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffaceser.net%2Fjournals%2Fdownload.php%3Faid%3D29%26action%3Ddownload&ei=s2h7VIncNea07gb_2YCgCA&usg=AFQjCNEX7qPOP4Dfm4cGmPCMugn-PqEFRg&bvm=bv.80642063.d.ZGU) (Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2014)

<sup>132</sup> Noah Lumun Abanyam. The Significance of Befitting Burial and its Effects on the Development of *Tiv* Society of Central Nigeria

[http://www.google.com.ng/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffaceser.net%2Fjournals%2Fdownload.php%3Faid%3D29%26action%3Ddownload&ei=s2h7VIncNea07gb\\_2YCgCA&usg=AFQjCNEX7qPOP4Dfm4cGmPCMugn-PqEFRg&bvm=bv.80642063.d.ZGU](http://www.google.com.ng/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffaceser.net%2Fjournals%2Fdownload.php%3Faid%3D29%26action%3Ddownload&ei=s2h7VIncNea07gb_2YCgCA&usg=AFQjCNEX7qPOP4Dfm4cGmPCMugn-PqEFRg&bvm=bv.80642063.d.ZGU) (Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2014)

<sup>133</sup> Noah Lumun Abanyam .The Significance of Befitting Burial and its Effects on the Development of *Tiv* Society of Central Nigeria

[http://www.google.com.ng/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffaceser.net%2Fjournals%2Fdownload.php%3Faid%3D29%26action%3Ddownload&ei=s2h7VIncNea07gb\\_2YCgCA&usg=AFQjCNEX7qPOP4Dfm4cGmPCMugn-PqEFRg&bvm=bv.80642063.d.ZGU](http://www.google.com.ng/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCYQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Ffaceser.net%2Fjournals%2Fdownload.php%3Faid%3D29%26action%3Ddownload&ei=s2h7VIncNea07gb_2YCgCA&usg=AFQjCNEX7qPOP4Dfm4cGmPCMugn-PqEFRg&bvm=bv.80642063.d.ZGU) (Accessed 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2014)

more meaningful to them. Hence, the bereaved families should be encouraged or allowed to select their own music, the order, content, and style of service that will suit the family's needs. Personal tributes from friend(s) or family members, or perhaps including appropriate cultural traditions, may also make the service more meaningful as long as that does not contradict the teaching of the Scripture or the tradition of the church.<sup>134</sup> This is important because it enhances the healing process and the aim of the program is first to bring comfort and consolation to the bereaved family. The minister should not be autocratic in the whole process but be tender-hearted and patient with the behaviour and attitude of the bereaved, taking into account that they are not in a stable frame of mind due to the challenges of the shock. Otherwise, the aim of the service may be defeated. Kelly observes that “ the model of working with the bereaved to co-construct funerals for their loved one not only enables many of their spiritual needs to be met but it also affords the chance for the church, in the form of her ritual representative, to grow and learn” (2008:165-166).

#### **6.2.2.2 Organizing wake-keeping service**

A wake is the custom of keeping a vigil or watch over a body from death until burial.<sup>135</sup> Different church denominations have different approaches to it. In the ERCC, the wake-keeping service is usually conducted at the deceased's residence in the evening before the burial for at least two to three hours. The aim or the objective is to encourage and further strengthen the mourners, as well as to give those who may not attend the funeral service the opportunity to spend time with the bereaved and to console or express their sympathy.<sup>136</sup> During this service the program of events include: singing of hymns, prayers from the congregation, song ministration by the sub-groups in the church, and testimonies concerning the life of the deceased by a few individuals. This is followed by exhortation from the word of God by the leader or any pastor that may be assigned, collection of a freewill offering to support the bereaved family, and finally, special prayer for the entire family and relations of the deceased for God to strengthen them and grant them the fortitude to bear the loss. It also appeals for the success of the funeral service the next day especially for safe travel in all the journeys that have to be made.

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<sup>134</sup><http://pacificgardenschapel.com/importance-of-services> (Accessed 10th July 2014).

<sup>135</sup> Wakes & Vigils <http://thefuneralsource.org/wake.html> (Accessed 4th March, 2015).

<sup>136</sup> Wakes & Vigils <http://thefuneralsource.org/wake.html> (Accessed 4th March, 2015).

From my personal experience, the overall program is planned by the church with little or no contribution from the family. I think this is not good enough; instead the church should be willing to involve the mourners in drafting the program. This will further strengthen them, especially if the church encourages the mourners to come together to talk about their loved one, select their own music, and determine the style of service that will suit the family's needs in order to make the service more personal and meaningful. This should be done as far as possible, as long as it does not contradict the teaching of the Scripture or the tradition of the church.<sup>137</sup>

### **6.2.2.3 Conducting the funeral service**

A funeral service fills several important needs: It provides for the dignified and respectful care of the person and is a special tribute to their life. Among its purposes, it makes those present acknowledge the death, remember the life and activate support during this naturally difficult time.<sup>138</sup> As mentioned earlier, the funeral ceremony can offer consolation to the bereaved family. It is also an opportunity for experiencing communal support during the moment of loss. It offers a great deal of encouragement that enables a healthy mourning process as it confirms the painful reality of the death - the first big step toward taking grief from the inside and allowing the mourners to express it on the outside through mourning. Together, close friends and relatives can lend support and consolation when they're needed most and offer the bereaved the opportunity to accept group support.<sup>139</sup> Grieving generally is the road to healing from a loss and the funeral ceremony facilitates such a process (see Jackson 1971:32). During this moment, the pastor, as a faith community facilitator, needs to provide a "noncritical atmosphere in which each member is fully accepted in the group and feels free to speak his/her own personal opinions and ideas" concerning the order, content and style of the funeral service (Gangel 1981:150-151). In the current ERCC model, often pastors serve as bosses who plan, control, direct and decide. But in this new proposed comprehensive model, I am strongly suggesting that the pastor, as a leader of the Christian community, should instead, during such a service, endeavour to act as a guide, who seeks to allow and encourage the lay-leaders to also contribute to the plan, and control, direct and

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<sup>137</sup><http://pacificgardenschapel.com/importance-of-services> (Accessed 10th July 2014).

<sup>138</sup>Why have a funeral? <http://www.meaningfulfunerals.com/meaningful-funerals/why-have-a-funeral/> (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

<sup>139</sup>Why have a funeral? <http://www.meaningfulfunerals.com/meaningful-funerals/why-have-a-funeral/> (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014)



decide on the funeral service (see Gangel 1981:151). As facilitators, the pastors should ensure that all “contributions are accepted and evaluated on the merit of the idea”, and be very sensitive to anything that might likely interrupt or hinder a healthy grieving process by way of the preaching, individual speeches or even the testimony concerning the deceased (see Gangel 1981:151).

Funerals provide three basic needs for those that are bereaved. These include, first, emotional fulfilment. A good funeral service allows the mourner to “let go” of their emotions and face the reality of death. It allows family and friends to share memories of a loved one, to laugh and cry together and provide vital support for each other’s grief.<sup>140</sup> Clinebell observes that “funerals facilitate the emotional release of grief feelings” (1984:223). As mentioned earlier, Clinebell states that during the service everything said should indicate the “clear painful reality of the loss... and the appropriateness of mourning. Nothing should be said that suggests stoicism in the face of grief is a sign of real strength or Christian virtue, or that one whose faith is genuine will not experience agonizing grief” (Clinebell 1984:223). This is the kind of new approach to funerals that this thesis is proposing for the ERCC to adopt, unlike the previous approaches where the pastors urge those who are expressing their feelings to repress them. A respondent affirms the above thus: “I still remember a moment during the funeral service where a colleague of mine rebuked the mourners to stop expressing their feelings but after the service I called him and told him to allow the mourners to express their emotions as it helps in facilitating their healthy grieving”.<sup>141</sup>

Second, it provides social support during the funeral ceremony since it is a social event that emphasizes and acknowledges life. And at the same time, it is a historical event that should be shared, whereby family and friends receive support from each other.<sup>142</sup> One of the basic methods of supportive counselling, as observed by Clinebell, is gratifying dependency needs (1984:172). Clinebell further argues that “the support giver is a ‘good parent’ figure upon whom the parishioner can lean. There are many forms of dependency gratification including comforting, sustaining, feeding (emotionally and physically), and inspiring, guiding, protecting, instructing, and setting dependable limits to prevent self- or other-damaging

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<sup>140</sup> <http://pacificgardenschapel.com/importance-of-services> (Accessed 10th July 2014)

<sup>141</sup> Response from individual interview with the ERCC Minister in ERCC Ekpom in Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.

<sup>142</sup> <http://pacificgardenschapel.com/importance-of-services> (Accessed 10th July 2014).

behaviour. Such dependency gratification communicates caring to a troubled person” (1984:172). Clinebell further asserts that “the acceptance of a person’s burdensome feelings is one of the most supportive things a counsellor can do. Pouring out one’s feelings in an understanding relationship drains the poison from the wounds of the spirit. It also helps reduce the paralyzing anxieties that inhibit the use of judgment and problem-solving abilities. To sense that another person knows and cares about one’s inner pain gives troubled persons the strength that comes from having their lives undergirded” (1984:172). This thesis seeks for a situation where the church will provide a conducive atmosphere during the funeral service whereby those who are troubled can be easily accepted with their burdensome feelings by the faith community without any opinion concerning their status as Christians. This supportive relationship, according to Clinebell, “allows troubled persons to gain enough objectivity to view their problem from a somewhat wider perspective and to explore feasible alternatives. This objectivity helps them make wiser decisions concerning what can and should be done” (1984:172-173). Clinebell opines that “when persons are stunned or paralyzed by feelings of anxiety, defeat, failure, damaged self-esteem, or tragic loss, it is often helpful for the pastor to prescribe some activity that will keep them functioning and in touch with people. This diminishes the tendency to retreat into depression and to withdraw from relationships. Constructive activity gives temporary structure to the person’s chaotic world as well as providing ways of changing the painful situation” (1984:173-174).

Third, it provides spiritual nourishment. During the funeral service, it helps everyone present to realize that material things don’t really matter as money can’t buy the most precious gift of all, that of life. It also gives expression to love and allows faith to be shown.<sup>143</sup> Kelly argues that “the spiritual dimension of our personhood significantly shapes and influences our individuality and how we relate to others and world around us, as well as how we make sense of our life and our living. This spiritual element in all of us seeks possibilities to transcend any present trying circumstances, to hope and to dream. Our spirit also desires opportunity for our self to relax, to be and to allow our senses to playfully and creatively roam. At a deep level we seek to love and be loved, to be connected to others, yet maintain our own beliefs, values and sense of identity” (2008:45). Kelly further asserts that “in times of trauma, transition and adjustment the bereaved have a myriad of thoughts, feelings, questions and doubts within them, many of which are difficult to articulate. “Each person living with loss

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<sup>143</sup><http://pacificgardenschapel.com/importance-of-services> (Accessed 10th July 2014).

will have a unique experience and way of living with bereavement but all will have spiritual needs” (2008:48). Pastoral care according Kelly is “a particular form of spiritual care offered by church representatives and communities relating to those whose lives also are informed by the Christ story. It is also not just about offering bereaved individuals’ time and space in which to seek meaning and purpose in their experience of loss. Pastoral care may also be given and received within corporate worship or through the enactment of rituals” (2008:52). Clinebell observes that “caring support of the family continues during the weeks and months following the funeral but many people are unaware that the bereaved continue to need special support during the extended process of working through the loss” (1984:223). This aspect is particularly lacking in the current model of the ERCC bereavement counselling. A detailed explanation on how the church can encourage this form of post-funeral counselling is provided in this new model I proposed for the church (see 6.2.3.2 lay-counsellors’ grief recovery ministry within the church).

Denial is always easier than facing reality; without a meaningful funeral service, the family could face more difficulty in the days to come. Without this time of reflection and remembrance, they lose a real opportunity to begin the grieving process.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, the funeral as mentioned earlier is for those who are living. It is a celebration of the life of the loved one and a great comfort and support for families to see how much their loved one was loved by others.<sup>145</sup> From the testimonies the guests share, the family can hear insights into their loved one’s life that they did not know, and may have never heard before. It has been said that every life has value and every life makes a contribution to the world. The funeral service is a testament to that truth.<sup>146</sup> Often, just seeing how much others care can be a tremendous help for the bereaved family in adjusting to their loss.<sup>147</sup> Clinebell argues that the “funeral is also a service of thanksgiving for the deceased person, a service of mutual support of the bereaved by the Christian community, and an affirmation of the beliefs of this community that helps the bereaved put the loss in the larger context of a life-affirming faith” (1984:223). As discussed in the previous sections, during these services the bereaved and the general public are reassured of the theology of life after death through preaching from the word of God and songs (see chapter four under 4.6.1.2).

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<sup>144</sup> <http://pacificgardenschapel.com/importance-of-services> (Accessed 10th July 2014)

<sup>145</sup> <http://pacificgardenschapel.com/importance-of-services> (Accessed 10th July 2014)

<sup>146</sup> <http://pacificgardenschapel.com/importance-of-services> (Accessed 10th July 2014).

<sup>147</sup> Why have a funeral? <http://www.meaningfulfunerals.com/meaningful-funerals/why-have-a-funeral/> (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

#### **6.2.2.4 Collections and contributions of material condolences**

Bereavement generally is a traumatising experience and sometimes those affected can be confused as well as psychologically unstable and incapacitated. Hence, food and drinks brought by church members, friends and the community will help the mourners themselves and the general public who come to sympathize with them. Most of the bereaved, during the interviews and focus group discussions, agreed that such support was very helpful to them in many ways.<sup>148</sup> For some of the bereaved, they confessed that the cash donations had assisted them in settling outstanding medical bills incurred and expenses such as buying the casket and other funeral preparations. Others said it took them several weeks or months before they started cooking or even went to the market to buy foodstuff.<sup>149</sup> The church must emphasise strongly the idea of supporting and bearing each other's burdens, as the Apostle Paul encouraged the Galatian Christians to do in Galatians 6:2. Pastors and teachers of the gospel of Christ must see to it that no Christian should ever think that he/she is totally independent and doesn't need help from others, and no one should feel excused from the task of helping others. The body of Christ – the church - functions more effectively when the entire church membership works together for the common good.

From my evaluation, I think the ERCC needs to be commended in this area, especially the aspect of the collection of a freewill offering during the funeral service for the deceased's family. During both the interviews and the focus group discussions, the respondents mentioned the significance of this offering. The collection, according to the bereaved families, was a great help to them in terms of providing food and drinks to the sympathizers, settling outstanding hospital bills, paying children's school fees, amongst other expenses.<sup>150</sup> As important as this issue of a special freewill offering is, from my investigation during the course of this study, none of the official documents of the church contains this information; it is only transmitted orally as part of the tradition of the church. I think it is vital for the church to document this in its official documents for future reference.

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<sup>148</sup> Responses from Widows and Widowers focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwa Kpandom in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014 and the Bereaved family focus group discussion in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>149</sup> Responses from Widows and Widowers focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwa Kpandom in Akun Development Area of Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>150</sup> Responses from the Bereaved family focus group discussion in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

I think the collection of a freewill offering during the funeral service is not enough considering how funerals in our contemporary society turn out to be very expensive. I wish to therefore suggest that the ERCC should begin to think of inaugurating an “extended family funeral plan” within the headquarters of the ERCC, to handle the affairs of funeral cover across the entire church. One way to make the program effective is by establishing a funeral committee and encourage church members from ages six and above to join. The nature of the extended family funeral insurance plan should be completely non-discriminatory and available to every ERCC member above the age of six years. The committee will agree upon a certain amount which every member will contribute each month. There should be an initial number of months from inception of cover during which no benefits will be payable, to enable the committee make proper plans. Once the number of months from the inception is completed, if death occurs, the survivors will contact the funeral insurance plans’ committee and make available to the committee every necessary document concerning the deceased. The committee will then take care of the logistics, ranging from taking the corpse to the mortuary, buying the casket, transportation arrangements during the funeral service as well as entertainment, based on the amount the individual members have contributed. This is rather than leaving the bereaved stranded with the burden of raising funds for all that needs to be done, as is the case with many families today.

### **6.2.3 Post-funeral counselling**

#### **6.2.3.1 One-on-one counselling with the pastor**

In as much as this thesis seeks to encourage and recognise the contribution of the whole community of faith in the overall bereavement counselling procedures, the role of the pastor cannot be overemphasised in supporting the bereaved person(s) to cope with the challenges caused by the death. Turner argues that “people looking for help with life's problems often turn to a minister (pastoral counsellor) as a source. One study showed that 80 percent of those with family and marital problems turned first to their pastors. People trust ministers to care about their concerns, to be honest with them, to keep their confidences, and to give them sound counsel that is consistent with the Word of God”.<sup>151</sup> Here the pastor will help the bereaved person(s) to further explore his/her emotions in a deeper manner through different approaches during the counselling sessions. The pastor needs to help the bereaved person cope and make adjustments in the following: the emergence of new roles in the family, such

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<sup>151</sup> Turner, Ron. 2014. Referral: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Counselling Relationship in Enrichment Journal [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048\\_referral.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048_referral.cfm) (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

as facing the challenges of taking decisions for the upkeep and welfare of the family, handling domestic responsibilities such as preparing children for school and making meals, amongst other responsibilities. This also includes helping to sort out papers, the issue of wills, settling the estate, and so on. The field data affirm this, as a respondent narrated how the pastor assisted her through all these processes after the death of her husband (see chapter four under 4.6.1.3). For the counselling to be most effective, Lendrum and Syme observe that “the counsellor should offer complete and unconditional acceptance of the bereaved person, feel and communicate empathic understanding towards the bereaved and be congruent or genuine in all the approaches” (1992:17). The pastor however, needs to be sensitive enough to make referrals when the need arises and never think of providing solutions randomly. Having discussed the role of the pastor in one-on-one counselling with the bereaved, we shall now turn to the next section which deals with the development of the lay-counsellors’ grief recovery ministry within the church.

### **6.2.3.2 Developing lay-counsellors’ grief recovery ministry within the church**

Garzon and Tilley look at lay counsellors as “persons who lack formal credentialing, training, and experience as licensed mental health professionals, yet they are involved in the care of emotionally hurting people” (2009:130). The church is a strategic place to have such a lay-counsellors’ grief recovery group. Siang-Yang Tan argues for the need for such people to be trained to minister as caregivers, to facilitate support and recovery groups, do grief counselling, and provide a number of other helping services to hurting people in need (2013:382). The church must seek also to train these lay-counsellors theologically, as Adams explains: “the relationship between counselling and theology is organic; counselling cannot be done apart from theological commitments” (1979:15). Adams further stresses the need “to study theology continually for further implications of truths that lead to a more biblical sort of counselling and lend a proper sort of authority to that counsel” (1979:15). How to develop or start a grief recovery group within the church is simply by the pastor’s personal invitation to those he/she knows to have some sort of scriptural knowledge that will guide them in the process of counselling others. Those who have experienced a loss within the past few years would also be encouraged to join the group by general invitation in the church’s bulletin. The group would also be very helpful to the participants themselves, since many of them have suffered loss and possibly suffer from unhealed grief wounds (TEE College 2012:13.2-13.3). Dunphy and Schniering affirm that when lay counsellors spend time to share with the client,

they feel that the positive environment of the community in which they are working helps them to cope with the highly emotional work (2009:354). The loss of a loved one is a key cause of crisis. Almost everybody is carrying some burden or loss. Unless people have the kind of help to deal with their grief which can be available in a sharing group, many will experience complicated or prolonged grieving (TEE College, Caring in Faith Workbook 3 of 3 2012:13.1). This kind of a group is effective in providing self-help, or mutual help whereby people who have suffered a significant loss of any kind can experience healing through a sharing and caring group (TEE College, Caring in Faith Workbook 3 of 3 2012:13.1).

The purpose of developing such a grieving group is to help persons who have experienced loss to deal constructively with the feelings and the practical problems that result. It is to help each other by sharing in a small group as well as to discover ways they can reach out to other persons in a church community who are going through loss (TEE College, caring in faith workbook 3 of 3 2012:13.2). It is important to note that one's painful experiences are potential resources for helping others who have experience loss; this is because they will be speaking from their past experience (TEE College, Caring in Faith Workbook 3 of 3 2012:13.2). During the process of recruiting members of such a group, it is good to spell out the qualifications and purposes of such a group explicitly. Additionally, the participants need to be told from the outset of their positions, never to equate and/or see themselves as professionally trained persons such as pastoral counsellors, psychologists, psychotherapists etc, due to the issue of licensing laws (see Tan 1997:240). Preferably, as argued by Tan, the lay counsellors can use alternative titles like "lay helper, lay minister, lay caregiver, or lay shepherd" (1997:240). Tan describes the categories of lay counsellors to include: psychiatric aides, community workers, parents, college students, mental health technicians, and other church or religious workers (1997:368). Tan further asserts that these groups of persons provide therapeutic services through telephone hotlines, suicide prevention programs, national care-giving ministries, church based lay counselling centers, and peer counselling programs in many schools, colleges, businesses, prisons, religious institutions, and other community agencies (1997:368).

Tan classifies lay counselling services into three major models, which are usually provided free of charge. The first is the informal, spontaneous model which is provided by untrained or minimally trained paraprofessionals in informal and spontaneous friendships or relationships

that already exist in natural settings. Peer or friendship helping is a good example of this model in which the paraprofessionals may or may not receive some basic training in helping skills but do not have any on-going supervision of or formal direction to their people-helping activities (1997:368).

The second is the informal, organized model in which paraprofessional helping is still provided in informal or natural settings - such as restaurants, homes, hospitals, neighbourhoods, classrooms, businesses, prisons, and other religious, social, and community meeting places - but in a well-organized context of systematic training and regular, on-going supervision of the paraprofessionals involved. Organized peer counselling, especially in schools and colleges, is a good example of this model (1997:368 see also 1991, 1992). The third type is the formal, organized model in which paraprofessional helpers provide counselling services in more formal settings, such as in a community counselling clinic or agency, a hospital, or a church counselling centre. These paraprofessionals are also well-trained and regularly supervised, usually by mental health professionals. Examples of this model include the use of student volunteers in mental hospitals and the use of volunteers as mental health counsellors in outpatient clinic work with adolescents and adults (1997:369 see also Korchin 1976). In the context of this study, I prefer the second model which is provided in informal or natural settings - such as restaurants, homes, hospitals, neighbourhoods, classrooms, businesses, prisons, and other religious, social, and community meeting places - provided it is convenient for both the lay caregiver and the counselee. As mentioned earlier, one of the qualifications for the recruitment is that those participating must have experienced a loss of a significant someone within the past few years. This would be complemented with a well-organized context of systematic training and regular, on-going supervision to enable them to be efficient and effective in their art of delivering counselling services. This is where the community theory by Maitland Evans comes into play. Evans argues that “the aim is to help the members of the community and move them ‘towards a greater level of wholeness, wellness as well as a sense of personal and communal empowerment’ (2009:128-129). Lartey observes that the “communal framework is very crucial because the success of pastoral care, especially in the African context, has to do with mobilizing the resources of the total community in caring for the needs of individuals and groups” (2003:24).

The total number of persons that are expected to be recruited for a specific period of time as noted in the TEE College materials should be between six to ten persons. Some churches



have found that an “ongoing open-ended grief group, which people can join when they need it and leave when they no longer feel the need, is a valuable resource” (TEE College 2012:13.2). However, when the group is aware of the limited time of their tenure, it often stimulates them to work more productively within the time range (TEE College 2012:13.2). I prefer a situation where the group will be given a specific period of time to work rather than allowing people to choose when to join and to leave the group. The danger is that there may come a time that the group will be dysfunctional due to absence of the majority of its members as a result of their choosing to leave as they wish without any prior notification to the church leadership.

The establishment of such a lay counselling group will be more effective in terms of providing healing and coping mechanisms to those who have suffered the loss of their loved ones, than just having a widows or widowers fellowship group, as in the case of the ERCC. Such groups often meet monthly to discuss issues related to the challenges facing them. However, widows and widowers are not the only categories of persons within the church that experience loss of significance people. In most cases parents who lose their children and those who lose their siblings or others are abandoned. In order to help the different categories of people within the church who have lost their loved ones, the recruitment of a lay counsellors’ grief recovery group should include those who have experienced different kinds of loss such as their spouse, parents, children, siblings, relations, friends, and colleagues amongst others.

Today we are living in a world where everyone seems to be extremely busy; hence, during bereavement people prefer to make phone calls, send SMSs, or emails and so on to the mourners. People hardly make time to visit so as to enable the mourners to explore their emotions, nor to assist them in doing some domestic chores or even help in taking the children to school. I gathered during the field research that some of the bereaved persons during this mourning period were so devastated that they could hardly do anything meaningful, including make decisions, due to the shock and other factors resulting from the trauma of the loss. Friends and family members coming to stay with the bereaved family at this point help to resuscitate the bereaved, rousing them from their lack of interest in normal activities, their loss of appetite, numbness, and/or any other consequence of the distressing experience. Many of the victims during the interview confirmed that people coming to their

homes to stay with them really encouraged them and enhanced their ability to cope, enabling them to undergo a healthy healing process (2014).

I think with the formation of the lay-counsellors' grief recovery ministry, it will further strengthen the bereaved families. The members of the group can select from among themselves those who are close to the bereaved person, to spend some time with the person so as to encourage and help the person, and thereby avoid complicated grief. During the process of searching for those to stay with the mourners, those who have suffered similar loss and have completed their own grief work can be the best potential persons that would be of help. This is because they would be speaking from their past experience. Hence, it will be easier for the mourner to express his/her feelings more confidently. Payne, Horn and Relf observe that "stress and coping theory suggests that in general bereaved people are unlikely to need sophisticated therapy but rather support that compensates for the inadequacy of informal networks. Such support may be provided by volunteers or by people who have experienced bereavement themselves and wish to help others in similar situations" (1999:92). Raphael, cited by Payne, Horn and Relf, state that "the background to all bereavement counselling is general support; support that offers human comfort and care that accepts and encourages appropriate grief and mourning. Indeed, while many professionals work with bereaved people, volunteers play a major role in bereavement services in the UK" (1999:92-93). We shall now turn to the next section which is referral.

### **6.2.3.3 The needs for referral to seek for other professionals' further support**

Referral simply means a person whose case has been referred to a specialist or professional group and/or a recommendation to consult the (professional) person or group to whom one has been referred.<sup>152</sup> Referral could also mean 'how the patient got to see the counsellor' (or whatever professional they're seeing).<sup>153</sup> The counsellor must take into account the appropriate procedures to be followed in the referring process in order to yield a meaningful result. As Kennedy puts it, "referring clients to other professionals for continued assistance is an issue faced regularly by counsellors, especially those whose helping work is part of other

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<sup>152</sup> Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary. 2010. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/referral> (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

<sup>153</sup> In counselling explain the importance of referral procedures? <https://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20061010055203AArd6hr> (Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014).

occupational responsibilities” (1977:115). Geoffrey et al argue that “the manner in which a counsellor introduces a counselling referral is important. The nature of the referral will set up expectations of counselling that may immediately influence the client’s decision to pursue the referral. The expectations created in the referral process may also have an impact on the counselling itself through the client’s evaluation of the counsellor’s effectiveness”.<sup>154</sup>

Referral procedure means a method of deciding when the client or counselee needs further support.<sup>155</sup> The idea is to get people the right help when they need it, instead of just trying things out randomly.<sup>156</sup> The basic approach to all counselling and referral is one of fundamental respect for the individual and the belief that it is best for that person to work out his/her problems in his/her own way. The referrer (counsellor) is a helper in this process by providing a variety of alternatives for assistance on the client’s own terms. He/she may choose to ignore or accept the help available. The role of a referrer is to see that the counselee becomes aware of this help and has the maximum opportunity to utilize it.<sup>157</sup> The counsellor who is initiating the referral process should give the counselee the contacts of the specialist, such as telephone number, cell phone number, email address and location of the person. And better still, the counselee should be given the freedom to make his/her own appointment; he/she will have a sense of responsibility for his/her own welfare, which is always very important.<sup>158</sup> For the counsellor who has been involved with counselling an individual, it is imperative to get signed permission from the counselee before sharing information with the referred professional. As noted above, it is good for the counsellor to provide the counselee with the name and phone number of the professional, instruct him or her to call for an appointment, check to make sure the appointment was made and kept, and later, check with the counselee to see if the referral was a good source of help.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Geoffrey, Y. G. et al. Referral to a Counselor: Impact on Expectations and Counselor Effectiveness. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED384834> (Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014).

<sup>155</sup> In counselling explain the importance of referral procedures? <https://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20061010055203AArd6hr> (Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014).

<sup>156</sup> In counselling explain the importance of referral procedures? <https://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20061010055203AArd6hr> (Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014).

<sup>157</sup> Rererral information for friends, faculty, staff, parents and others who are concerned <http://www.apsu.edu/counseling/referrals> (Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014).

<sup>158</sup> Rererral information for friends, faculty, staff, parents and others who are concerned <http://www.apsu.edu/counseling/referrals> (Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014).

<sup>159</sup> Turner, Ron. 2014. Referral: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Counseling Relationship in Enrichment Journal [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048\\_referral.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048_referral.cfm) (Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2014).

From my personal observations and experiences in the ministry as a theological educator and parish pastor, many counsellors (pastors) prefer to handle the problems randomly even when the situation is getting more complicated. The reasons for such unethical behaviour are, first, ignorance of the significance of referral, and second, fear of being seen as inadequate or not competent. But contrary to this belief, people in the helping professions, including counsellors, consider a referral as an indication of competency on the part of the person making the referral rather than as an inadequacy.<sup>160</sup> Sullender and Malony argue that “Clergy must be mature enough and professional enough to know their limits when it comes to counselling troubled persons. These limits may involve training, available time, conflict of interest, or just available energy” (1990:206). Anyone able to identify situations needing specialized counselling or advising deserves commendation.<sup>161</sup> In addition, referring a client to another professional appropriate to the problem demonstrates to the client that you (referrer) have his or her best interests at heart.<sup>162</sup>

As mentioned earlier, when loss invades one’s life, a person is never the same; for when their world changes, they change in many ways. And many people, especially in early stages of grief, wonder if their life will ever be whole again. Hence, when counsellors move into the world of a person in mourning, they should understand that they have entered a world of unpredictability, chaos and pain (see Wright 2013:13). There is no doubt that extreme grief can cause chemical changes in the body that may lead to depression. Immediately the care giver should notice any of the warning signs of depression, such as:

- Feelings of sadness or intense depression, hopelessness or apathy over an extended period of time
- Decreased interest and participation in activities, particularly those the client previously used to enjoyed doing
- Inability to keep up with crucial work and life tasks
- Noticeable physical changes such as stomach problems, extreme loss of appetite, confusion, severe headaches and/ or sleep changes for at least an extended period of time

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<sup>160</sup> Rererral information for friends, faculty, staff, parents and others who are concerned <http://www.apsu.edu/counseling/referrals> (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

<sup>161</sup> Rererral information for friends, faculty, staff, parents and others who are concerned <http://www.apsu.edu/counseling/referrals> (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

<sup>162</sup> Rererral information for friends, faculty, staff, parents and others who are concerned <http://www.apsu.edu/counseling/referrals> (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

after the loss and

- Expression of feelings of suicide.<sup>163</sup> Here the pastor should consider referral of such a client as the best and necessary option to help safeguard against any further danger to the health of the client.

Ron Turner asserts that “Ministers are presented with a multitude of questions about the Bible, theology, ethics, personal and family relationships, God's will, medical problems, finances, real estate, vocational concerns, and legal issues. Yet most Ministers (pastoral counsellors) do not have the expertise to give competent counsel in all of these areas. Therefore, one of the wisest time investments is for ministers to develop and use a referral network of other professionals in the community”.<sup>164</sup> Apostle Paul admonishes ministers of the gospel to recognize their limitations: “For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3 NASB). Paul goes on to explain that we are one body with many members. We are not expected to know it all or do it all, but we are to exercise our gifts and allow others to do the same. This is very essential. As observed by Lartey in the theory of incorporation adopted in this study, “no single person can really provide the necessary support or assistance required by the individuals or groups in a crisis situation to regain their wholeness unless other personalities are incorporated” (2003:27).

Apparently, as argued by Turner, to present ourselves as having competence and expertise beyond our training or qualifications is dishonest, unethical, and illegal. Thus, building a referral network of other competent professionals becomes an issue of good ethics and integrity for the minister.<sup>165</sup> Turner reiterates that a “minister should make referrals for two reasons: i). To provide the church member or counselee with competent care and ii). To safeguard the ministerial relationship with the layperson. A clear understanding of the minister's competencies and limitations helps safeguard the integrity and appropriateness of the counselling relationship and will likely spare the minister some frustration, pain, and even

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<sup>163</sup><http://www.foh.dhhs.gov/NYCU/grief.pdf> (Accessed 18th June, 2014)

<sup>164</sup> Turner, Ron. 2014. Referral: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Counseling Relationship in Enrichment Journal [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048\\_referral.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048_referral.cfm) (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

<sup>165</sup> Turner, Ron. 2014. Referral: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Counseling Relationship in Enrichment Journal [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048\\_referral.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048_referral.cfm) (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

a lawsuit. It also allows the minister to more clearly define the kind of referral sources that need to be built".<sup>166</sup> Bill Blackburn argues that "it is important for pastoral counsellors to be willing to refer their counsees to other professionals and know when and to whom a counsee should be referred" (1997:80). Blackburn further provides some guidelines to be followed during the process of referral:

◀Ministers are responsible for knowing a variety of professionals to whom they might refer. They need to know about the professional's reputation, training, experience, professional supervision, network of other professionals or hospitals to call on, and faith commitment or appreciation of such a commitment in the client.

◀Ministers have the responsibility to appropriately present the referral to their counsee. They must interpret carefully why they are making the referral and why it is being made to the particular professional. They should explain their own limitations of time and/or training and explain the qualifications of the other professional, while being careful not to promise what the professional will do. Many clients fear that they are being referred to a mental health professional because they are crazy or about to lose their mind. Ministers should reassure their counsees at this point.

◀Ministers should explain how to get in touch with the professional referred to and what to expect from the sessions.

◀Ministers should reassure their counsees about their relationship together. Counsees need to know they are not being rejected and their minister will be in touch to talk things over and pray. Ministers need to be careful to continue to serve as the person's pastor but not as his or her therapist.

◀Ministers have the responsibility to maintain the pastoral relationship through phone calls, notes, visits, and prayer.

◀Ministers need to maintain proper contact with the professional to whom the counsee has been referred (1997:80-81).

Turner argues that some emotional difficulties are caused by physical problems. Hence, it is

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<sup>166</sup> Turner, Ron. 2014. Referral: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Counseling Relationship in Enrichment Journal [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048\\_referral.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048_referral.cfm) (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

sound judgment on the side of the counsellor to refer those who have experienced a change in their emotional health to a physician for a complete physical examination.<sup>167</sup> Turner further opines that developing a successful referral network requires an investment of time and energy on the part of the minister or counsellor, but it is time and energy well invested.<sup>168</sup>

Remember, the reason for making referrals is to ensure that people in the church get the best care possible. Referrals should not be viewed as limiting the pastor's ministry or hindering the fulfilment of the pastor's calling. When managed properly, referrals become a reflection of the minister's love and maturity. They also allow the minister to focus more energy on specific ministry gifts.<sup>169</sup>

#### **6.2.4.4 Developing policies that will guide and protect the rights of the bereaved family**

The church must learn to come up with policies that will guide and protect the rights of the bereaved family from tendencies to adopt any cultural and ritual practices that are unbiblical and against the teaching of the Bible. In many cultures in Nigeria, widows are faced with problems which range from inhuman mourning rites, disinheritance, levirate or forced re-marriage, impoverishment, stress related health problems, negative social attitudes, neglect, inadequate provision or protection under the law, and discrimination.<sup>170</sup> The church in this sense must encourage all its members to take the issue of writing a 'will' seriously and ensure that the rights of widows and their children are protected against such unjust treatment after the death of their husbands and fathers.

The unfortunate thing is that most Nigerian men do not write wills.<sup>171</sup> It should be noted that the property of a deceased can be disposed of by a will under any of the three types of marriage (statutory, customary law and Islamic law marriage). Many states have enacted laws which prohibit Moslems from disposing of their property by wills, in contravention of the

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<sup>167</sup> Turner, Ron. 2014. Referral: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Counseling Relationship in Enrichment Journal [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048\\_referral.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048_referral.cfm) (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

<sup>168</sup> Turner, Ron. 2014. Referral: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Counseling Relationship in Enrichment Journal [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048\\_referral.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048_referral.cfm) (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

<sup>169</sup> Turner, Ron. 2014. Referral: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Counseling Relationship in Enrichment Journal [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048\\_referral.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048_referral.cfm) (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

<sup>170</sup> Widows as Properties in a Μανχυλλεδ φρομ: Guardian Newspaper of Saturday, January 26, 2002.

<sup>171</sup> Widows as Properties in a Μανχυλλεδ φρομ: Guardian Newspaper of Saturday, January 26, 2002.

Islamic rules of succession. Hence the major problem widows' face nationwide is that of the right to succession of property after their husband's death.<sup>172</sup> Mrs. Kisaba said, "it is noteworthy that under the Nigerian law, a Will is revoked by the subsequent marriage of the testator under the Statutory Marriage Act. However, it is not so in the case of subsequent customary marriage law".<sup>173</sup> As Okagbue notes, "where a man who is married under statutory law makes a will in favour of his wife that will not be revoked by his subsequent marriage to another woman under customary law. For a man to disinherit his wife, it should be stated, may use a will".<sup>174</sup> Joseph Danboyi, a Jos lawyer who voluntarily handles widows' cases noted that "writing of a 'will' will certainly ameliorate the problems widows generally face in the area of inheritance".<sup>175</sup> Second, regarding the issue of forcing a widow to marry any of her late husband's relations against her will, the church needs to work hard to safeguard the rights of the widow and protect her from anything that will subject her to the decision of the family. These policies must be well spelled out in the church constitution and any other legal document, and must be read from time to time to its members, with all its implications. Koffeman observes that "there is a one-sidedness of church law if compared with public law. Modern constitutions are characterized by two aspects: on the one hand there are the fundamental structures of state, but on the other hand there are the rights and freedoms, the fundamental human rights. Usually, this is not the case in church law: they only present the fundamental structures of a particular church, and they are silent about human rights in the church which is of paramount importance due to the cases of unjust treatment some vulnerable church members experience" (2014:260).

### **6.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have focused on the formation and development of the proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling. It seeks to enable the church to bring holistic healing to those who are emotionally troubled by making use of the insights drawn from the Eggon indigenous and the ERCC models of bereavement management and a range of contemporary bereavement counselling theorists. The proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling discussed in this chapter is proposed in response to the limitations seen, in our previous analysis, of the Eggon and the ERCC models which have limited impact

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<sup>172</sup> Widows as Properties in a *Manchullled* forum: Guardian Newspaper of Saturday, January 26, 2002.

<sup>173</sup> Widows as Properties in a *Manchullled* forum: Guardian Newspaper of Saturday, January 26, 2002.

<sup>174</sup> Widows as Properties in a *Manchullled* forum: Guardian Newspaper of Saturday, January 26, 2002.

<sup>175</sup> Widows as Properties in a *Manchullled* forum: Guardian Newspaper of Saturday, January 26, 2002.



in enabling healthy grieving for those who have lost their loved ones. I also explored the fundamental principles for a model of bereavement counselling. The bereavement experience is a journey, hence, I suggest that immediately death occurs, members of the community of faith should come to the deceased's residence to journey together with the mourners by showing them love, care and empathy in such a difficult moment. We also understand that many emotionally troubled people turn to their pastors for acceptance, encouragement and provision of answers to their difficult questions. I have argued that the pastor should encourage the family to talk together when the funeral program is being planned and the family should be allowed to fully participate in the planning in order to make the program more personal based on the family's needs. I have sought to show that in managing bereavement, the cultural worldview of the bereaved person must be taken seriously because it comprises a core set of beliefs that describe how the world works for him/her. The counsellors or care-givers cannot ignore this and still be effective in the act of helping those who are emotionally troubled. This brings to our attention the fact that an inability to acknowledge the culture of the counsellee will limit the therapist's ability to assist the bereaved as they may view the content of the counselling as disrespectful of their culture. Grief is a life-shaking sorrow over loss; hence, I have argued that individuals should be allowed to explore their emotions without guilt or censure. It was discovered that grieving is the road to healing from loss and funeral ceremony facilitate such a process. I stressed that during the funeral service everything that is said either through preaching or songs should be able to confirm the painful reality of the loss and the appropriateness of mourning. Any attempt to suppress the mourners' expression of emotion should be avoided. I also stressed the need for post-funeral counselling, especially one-on-one counselling with the pastor, to further help the mourners explore their emotions in a deeper manner. This also brings to our attention the point that one single person cannot really provide all the necessary support required by those in a crisis situation to regain their wholeness, unless other individuals from within the community are included. In this new model I argue strongly for the development of a lay-counsellors' grief recovery ministry within each local congregation in the ERCC to help mourners go through this journey without complications. I also argue that counsellors or care-givers must be very sensitive to making referral when and where necessary, in order to get the bereaved persons the best support needed rather than just trying things out randomly. I also proposed that policy that will protect the right of widows and orphans be included in the church legal documents, to prevent the relations of the deceased from oppressing the innocent

and vulnerable people. A detailed analysis of the ERCC constitution, when compared with the national or public law revealed that the church presents its own fundamental structures but is silent about the human rights aspect of the parishioners. This is of paramount importance due to the cases of unjust treatment some vulnerable church members experience in our contemporary society. The study also indicated that some Nigerian men do not write wills. This I discovered to be problematic in trying to help the widows and the orphans after the death of the husbands or fathers. Hence, I push strongly that the church must seek appropriate ways to encourage its members to cultivate the idea of writing wills.

I am aware that the proposed comprehensive model in this chapter is still in its beginning stages of development and has only been tested in one of the ERCC congregations [parishes]. As it is now, it still needs to be put into practice in all the ERCC worship centres, in order to come up with a better model for further practice and reflection. The next chapter will be concerned with the implementation of this new proposed comprehensive model. I hope from this implementation I will be able to discover new insights that will be helpful in improving the model.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Reflections on facilitating the comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for holistic healing**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter I examined the proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC that emerged from critical dialogue between the Eggon indigenous and the current ERCC model of bereavement counselling. This I think should be used to counsel Eggon Christians who are bereaved, to facilitate holistic healing. Having proposed the comprehensive model of bereavement counselling to be used by the ERCC, I am now going to reflect on an example of bereavement counselling recently used in ERCC Bukuru<sup>176</sup>. I begin by explaining the location and context of ERCC Bukuru. I will first highlight the full story of every step that took place and the reason for it. Thereafter, I will critically examine some of the dynamics involved, especially those pertaining to the responses of the bereaved family and general public regarding each of the stages. These will be analyzed with the aim of drawing out insights and important lessons. The features of the proposed comprehensive model include: ways of disseminating information when death occurs, pastoral presence at the deceased's residence, organizing the wake-keeping service, conducting the funeral service, collection and contributions of condolence material support, one-on-one counselling with the pastor, and the development of lay-counsellors' grief recovery ministry within the church.

#### **7.2 The location and context of ERCC Bukuru**

ERCC Bukuru is situated around Bukuru metropolis in Jos South Local Government area, which is about 15 kilometres from Jos city, the capital of Plateau state, Nigeria. ERCC Bukuru was established in 1995 with the aim to provide for the spiritual needs of the ERCC students in the School of Health Technology, Zawan and the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) Bukuru respectively. ERCC Bukuru is structurally under Gimi conference<sup>177</sup> which comprises of ERCC worship centres in places like Jos, Bauchi, and part of Kaduna with its headquarters in Fadan Karshi, Sanga Local Government Area of Kaduna state. ERCC

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<sup>176</sup> ERCC Bukuru is one of the worship centres in ERCC Gimi conference located in the Southern part of Jos the capital of Plateau state, Nigeria.

<sup>177</sup> Gimin conference is one of the ten conferences in ERCC (see chapter four under the historical development of the ERCC for details).

Bukuru is a small congregation of about 75-80 members<sup>178</sup> who are predominately students and staff from the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) and the School of Health Technology Zawan, with few members who are residents in the area. The congregation is multicultural, comprised of different social backgrounds and many ethnic groups, such as the Eggon, Mada, Nizom, Ngas, Birom, Arum, Tiv and many others.

### **7.3 Reflections on the recent example of bereavement counselling experiences in ERCC Bukuru**

The story will be presented using pseudonyms and or disguised names for all the participants where necessary. The counsellor in this story will be referred to as a Pastor, while the mourners will be discussed as the bereaved family in some instances, as the story unfolds. One of the remarkable factors that made the testing of the proposed comprehensive model possible and easy was the fact that both the facilitator and the participants, including some of the elders, are seminary teachers and students. Hence, they were open and willing to learn new methods. I was a member of this congregation from 2003 when I came for my first degree (undergraduate) and Master's (postgraduate) in TCNN respectively. After I completed my studies in May 2007, the church (ERCC) seconded me to TCNN<sup>179</sup> as lecturer. When I assumed my duty as a lecturer with TCNN Bukuru I was elected to serve as an assistant pastor in ERCC Bukuru between August 2007 and July 2008. In August 2008 I took over the responsibilities of the pastor in-charge<sup>180</sup> of the congregation till January 2013 when I came to the University of KwaZulu-Natal for my PhD study. Being the former pastor of ERCC Bukuru and the fact that I was the only ordained<sup>181</sup> pastor among them during the time of the research made it easier to put the new model to the test. The burial ceremony took place at the end of November, 2013.

#### **Roles**

- Facilitator: Rev. M. E. Affiku;

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<sup>178</sup> Handing over note from Rev. Affiku, Engom Monday (the outgoing ERCC Bukuru Chairman) to V. Rev. Dr. Nasara Zechariah, the incoming Chairman ERCC Bukuru on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2013.

<sup>179</sup> TCNN is an institution that had about fifteen different denominations from across Nigeria as its proprietor under the name TEKAN, meaning 'The Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria (Tarayoyyin Ekklesiyoyin Kristi a Nijeriya).

<sup>180</sup> Handing over note from V. Rev. Nasara Zechariah (the outgoing ERCC Bukuru Chairman) to Rev. Affiku, Engom Monday, the incoming Chairman ERCC Bukuru on August, 2008.

<sup>181</sup> In the ERCC tradition, the burial of any communicant member of the church is reserved for the ordained pastor.

- Participants: Bereaved family, Church elders, seminary students, church members and members of the community.

### **7.3.1 Dissemination of information when death occurs**

It was one Sunday, the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2013, in the morning at about 4am. Mrs. Tokolo (not her real name) phoned me to say that her husband died. During this period, I was in Akwanga, two hours' drive from the pastoral area (where the incident took place) for the purpose of my research. I then immediately phoned some of the church elders and told them the news. I advised them to meet Mrs. Tokolo at the hospital and see how they could help bring her home.

### **7.3.2 Pastoral presence at the deceased's residence**

After I informed the church elders, I drove back to the pastoral area. I arrived a few minutes after 6am. Then we drove with my wife to the deceased's residence. When we got there we found that some of the elders and other church members who were mostly seminary students were already in the deceased's house. I first went inside and greeted the wife and the children and stayed with her for a while. After leaving my wife and a few other women with her in the sitting room, I came outside and organized with the men that were present, the seminary students and the church elders that we start cleaning up the compound. After the necessary adjustments in the compound, we made arrangements for canopies and chairs so that those who would be coming to mourn and comfort the family would find a place to sit. As Koka explains, when death occurs "people come to clean the home, slaughter what is to be slaughtered, help dig the grave, cook and serve meals, and so on" (2002:56). The reasons I engaged the church elders and community members in keeping the compound clean was the fact that the family were not in a stable mind-set as a result of the shock of the loss, and they could not think of keeping the environment tidy. Further, for the previous couple of weeks, the wife and the children had been busy taking care of their dying father in the hospital and things were very scattered around the compound. Since it was on Sunday, we then left for a short service in the church and after the service, we again returned to the family compound to further encourage and console the family through the ministry of presence. We were in the compound virtually the whole day. The following day around 5am we (the pastor, some elders and the seminary students) returned to the deceased's residence for morning devotion with the entire family to further encourage and pray with them. The lay-counsellors' grief

recovery committee members alongside a few church elders and some community members made time and stayed with the bereaved family to sympathize and to also help with some of the domestic activities.

As a pastor, being the representative figure of the Christian community and knowing that the burial will not take place immediately, I allowed the bereaved family some time to think through their emotions. A few days later, we started discussing the possibility of drafting the funeral program knowing full well that I had a vital role to play, especially in the area of curtailing the possibility that the family would organise a flamboyant funeral. The result would be to later put the entire family in debt as they would likely have to borrow funds in their attempt to organize a befitting burial for the deceased, just to please the public.

Additionally, during the planning, I was very sensitive to first allow the family to talk to each other and suggest whatever they think should be included in the program, such as the date and the time for the burial, the kind of music or hymns (songs) to be used, the number of singing groups to be allowed to sing during the funeral service, those to be allowed to give testimonies, and the overall content of the program. This is a completely new approach compared to the old model where the pastor and the church elders sometimes do all the planning with little or no contribution from the bereaved family. I think this old method is not liberating; but with the introduction of this new model, the bereaved family does all the planning while the pastor and the church elders play an advisory role. This approach enhances the bereaved family's healing process. As Clinebell explains, by encouraging the bereaved family to talk to each other about their loved one, especially their most cherished memories which would be incorporated into the memorial message during the funeral in the program, it helped to facilitate their emotional release of grief (1984:223). The overall aim of the funeral program was to bring comfort and consolation to the bereaved family. After all their suggestions, I advised them systematically on some sensitive issues. At the end, the mourners were very appreciative for being allowed to make contributions to the overall planning of the funeral program. They knew that previously such opportunities were very rare.

### **7.3.3 Wake-keeping service**

On the eve of the burial we organized a wake-keeping service, where many people were in attendance. The activities during the wake-keeping service included: opening prayer followed by a familiar hymn for all the congregation to participate in; singing of songs by the various singing groups in the church; testimonies by a few personalities concerning the life of the deceased; encouragement from the word of God by the pastor (myself); collection of a freewill offering for the deceased's family; and special prayers for the family and safe travel for those going to the funeral service the next day.

### **7.3.4 Conducting funeral service**

After the wake-keeping service, some women were selected by the women's fellowship leaders in consultation with the pastor to stay and make other necessary preparations, such as cooking food for the bereaved family and the funeral ceremony the following day.

On the day of the burial, many church members came with their private cars and assisted in transporting people from the mortuary. We gathered to take the corpse to the home town of the deceased where the burial took place. The pastor, church elders and the welfare committee were always with and available to the bereaved family at every stage of the funeral proceedings until the entire program was over. This helped to ensure the mourners' healthy grieving or healing process.

### **7.3.5 Collecting and contributing of condolence materials**

During the funeral service in the church, there was a collection of a freewill offering for the deceased's family, to help them in taking care of any other needs that would arise and to also provide drinks and food for those who might come to the post funeral activities. Many church members also brought foodstuff and drinks which were shared with the general public after the funeral ceremony.

### **7.3.6 Post-funeral counselling**

#### **7.3.6.1 One-on-one counselling session with the pastor**

After the funeral ceremony, I took my time and visited the family. At the initial stage I sought to talk with the entire family by encouraging them and also praying with them. As the counselling progressed I undertook to make time to speak to them individually, seeking to

further support them as individuals, to further explore their emotions in a deeper manner through different approaches during the counselling sessions. A detailed study of Clinebell's work revealed that during one-on-one counselling "the pastor uses methods that stabilize, undergird, nurture, motivate, or guide troubled persons - enabling them to handle their problems and relationships more constructively within whatever limits are imposed by their personality resources and circumstances" (1984:170). My main goal in all of the approaches used, consistent with Clinebell, was to help the bereaved family gain the strength and perspective to use their psychological and interpersonal resources more effectively in coping creatively with their life situations (1984:171). During some of the sessions, particularly with the widow, I was able to help her see the need to cope and make adjustments in her emerging new role in the family, such as facing the challenges of taking decisions for the upkeep and welfare of the family, such as paying children's school fees, and other responsibilities.

#### **7.3.6.2 The development of the lay-counsellors' grief recovery ministry within the church**

As mentioned earlier, I served both as an assistant pastor as well as the pastor in-charge of the congregation from 2007 till January 2013, when I left for further studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. In 2008, I inaugurated a committee called the "welfare committee" to replace what was known in the ERCC as the diaconal committee (Deacons). From my experience as a church elder before joining the full time ministry as a pastor, I discovered that in most cases the diaconal ministry is only concerned with the welfare of the pastor and his family. In fact, in some of the rural congregations, the leader of the committee, known as "chief deacon", was the representative of the committee in the council (elders meeting) and would always report to the council on the challenges in the pastorium (church house) and also provide meals for the elders during the meeting. From my Masters' research (MTh) which dealt with the role of the pastor in promoting church growth, I argued that for the church to grow into its full potential, individual members must be taught and released to use their God-given talents and gifts in supporting, nurturing and helping each other to cope with the challenges of their day to day life (Affiku 2007:19). Hence, when I was appointed to serve as the pastor-in-charge of ERCC Bukuru, while serving as a full time lecturer in TCNN, I saw the need to empower and engage all the members of the church in the act of caring for one another. I also selected some individuals who were spiritually mature and had the potential to counsel others, commissioning them to be the "welfare committee".



Their responsibilities included visiting the sick, the bereaved and helping the needy among other things. Clinebell observes that “laymen and women should be encouraged to use the pastoral gifts that many of them possess. Mutual care of members by each other as well as by the clergy is needed in the church today. Christians have many natural opportunities for the pastoral care of neighbours, workmates, relatives, friends and others” (1984:394). In order to maintain the sustainability of this committee, we opened a separate bank account with the chairperson and secretary of the committee together with the pastor in charge (myself) as signatories to the account. The account is mainly to take care of church members who are in need. From time to time, I organized workshops and seminars for the committee where we discussed some basic skills on how to counsel and help those who are emotionally troubled. This included caring for their spiritual, physical and financial needs as well as how to identify difficult or complicated cases in the lives of individuals. As Clinebell explains “any emphasis on the ministry of the laity means not only training but a special kind of pastoral care” (1984:394). The committee was encouraged to always refer complicated issues to the pastor in charge for further counselling and subsequent referral to other professionals where necessary. Clinebell further stresses that “the implications of the lay renaissance for pastoral care and counselling are profound and challenging! Pastoral care, rightly understood, is a function of the entire congregation. A local church should strive to become a healing, growth-stimulating redemptive organism. The aim of the church’s pastoral care program should be to develop a dynamic climate of mutual, loving, enlightened concern, which gradually leavens the whole congregation” (1984:395). Every member of the church, according to Clinebell, “has pastoral care opportunities that are uniquely hers or his. Only as increasing numbers of us [pastors] accept this challenge can our churches fulfil their mission as training and empowering centers for healing and liberation, wholeness and justice” (1984:395). The caring ministry of the laity according to Clinebell is “essentially a ministry to persons in need in the congregation and in the community” (1984:395).

#### **7.4 Analysis on the reflections of the above example of bereavement counselling experiences**

In this section I will analyze the procedure of bereavement counselling that took place in ERCC Bukuru. In my analysis I will draw on insights that emerged from my reflections on the dynamics of the overall bereavement counselling process and the bereaved family’s responses to the new model.

The bereaved family were greatly overwhelmed by the contributions of the entire congregation towards their family during their grieving moment. This was very new to them, unlike where only the pastor and a few elders feature in terms of providing care and support to the bereaved family. Often when death occurs in the city, the mourners are left alone, sometimes with a little assistance from their tribal association who will make time to come to support them, unlike in the rural areas where the whole community will come together to sympathize with the mourners. The widow expressed her views as thus:

Hmm...I was so surprised when I came outside and realized how our compound was kept clean and also the organization of canopies and chairs by the church. Truly I remain grateful to you [pastor], elders, seminary students and the entire church membership.<sup>182</sup>

Second, one of the daughters of the deceased expressed the family's gratitude to the youth while they were sweeping. Some women who came to the compound at the time we were cleaning the house were very surprised when they saw the men sweeping, as it is often considered to be a task reserved for women in our cultural context. I remember a woman wanted to collect the broom from one of the young men who was sweeping, but he refused. I solicited the youth, who were mostly seminary students, to engage in the task for three reasons: first, it was due to the fact that the compound was not tidy because the widow and the children had been busy in the hospital taking care of their dying father for many weeks. Second, not many females were around at the early hour that we arrive the deceased's residence. Third, I did that purposely to let the seminary students, who are the future pastors of the ERCC, understand that it does not matter who you are in terms of status and gender or what you do in trying to care for someone, especially those who are emotionally troubled or hurt. Sometimes it may demand the caregiver go to the extent of breaking down cultural norms, especially those related to gender-stereotypes. The idea that gender difference is socially constructed is a view present in many philosophical and sociological theories about gender. One is not born but rather becomes a woman is to take it as a claim about gender socialisation: females become women through a process whereby they acquire feminine traits and learn feminine behaviour. Masculinity and femininity are thought to be products of nurture or how individuals are brought up<sup>183</sup>. Gender is the sum total of the parents', the

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<sup>182</sup> Mrs. Tokolo's conversation during one-on-one counselling session with the pastor.

<sup>183</sup> Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-gender/> (Accessed 24th March, 2015)

peers', and the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression<sup>184</sup>

From my analysis of both contexts, there is clear evidence of gender inequality on issues related to bereavement counselling. This I think is informed by the fact that our (Nigerian) society is still a male dominated society where patriarchy is highly emphasised. The idea of allowing men to engage in what is considered to be women's responsibilities during the act of providing care and support for the bereaved family was to raise the faith "community consciousness and sense of solidarity for pastoral care" within the church (Kimilike 2008:29). This form of identity with one another irrespective of gender will "enable the mobilization of local renewal processes of the social, economic, political and religious crises facing individuals and communities" as Kimilike observes (2008:29).

Again, members of the same cultural group as Mr. Tokolo (the deceased) were very surprised when they visited the house and discovered that everyone present was doing one thing or another in an attempt to provide support and help the bereaved family to cope. The neighbours of the deceased who were not members of the congregation (ERCC Bukuru) were also happy with this new development. Some of them could not keep it to themselves but shared with some of the church members their happiness over what they had seen. Some relatives of the deceased approached me personally and expressed their gratitude for the role played by the community of faith during their grieving moments.

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of introducing this new model was to test the proposed comprehensive model developed for the ERCC in chapter six. One of the profound lessons learned in the test of the bereavement counselling model above is the fact that the whole bereavement counselling procedure was not only dependent upon the pastor or a few church elders as it used to be previously, but the entire community of faith was involved. As Clinebell observes, "all Christians have a ministry because they are Christians, whether or not they are ordained! This awareness gives lay-persons a new self-image. They are no longer second class Christians who leave spiritual work to the pastor. They have a vital, unique ministry to the world beyond their church - to their neighbours, their business associates, their union, their friends, their enemies, and especially to the disadvantaged, rejected, and

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<sup>184</sup> Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-gender/> (Accessed 24th March, 2015)

exploited in their community” (1984:394). The involvement of the members of the congregation in the overall counselling process is very rewarding and holistic. More important is the fact that the mourners confessed that this approach was practical and life affirming. Rainer argues that “accepting and implementing this new model is not achieved in a few weeks. Instead patience, strength and persistence are three requisites for the pastor as he attempts to lead the people to a new paradigm that will ultimately result in a church where most of God’s people are in ministry” (1993:199).

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This chapter examined the recent example of the bereavement counselling experience in ERCC Bukuru. The elements discussed in this bereavement counselling example include: the process of disseminating information when death occurs; pastoral presence in the deceased’s home; organizing and conducting wake-keeping and funeral services; collections and contributions of condolence materials, and post-funeral counselling activities (this includes all the counselling dynamics provided and the lessons gained).

The foregoing discussion has enabled us to implement the proposed comprehensive model in the real situation in ERCC Bukuru. Looking at the insights drawn, I can confidently say that the new proposed model is effective because it was tested. From my personal observations and evaluation, I think the model has the potential to provide efficient and holistic healing for the emotionally troubled within the church. During the implementation process I noticed the insights (key themes) drawn during the dialogical process between the Eggon and the ERCC models as well as from other literature in general being applied during the bereavement counselling experiences in ERCC Bukuru. Being the first stage of testing the model, I also realized that there is room for improvement in each of the stages discussed but I was not able to test the model again in this present study. I am optimistic that I will be able to put it to further test in the future. Since human beings are dynamic, and every congregation has its dynamics in terms of leadership style and pastors’ personality profiles, the different stages identified through this model will continue to experience changes and take new forms.

The next chapter focuses on the summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations.

## Chapter Eight

### Summary of the thesis, conclusions and recommendations

#### 8.1 Introduction

Chapter seven focused on reflections on the comprehensive model of bereavement counselling proposed for the ERCC. It examined a recent example of a bereavement counselling experience in ERCC Bukuru. The aim was to test the effectiveness of the comprehensive proposed model provided in the above chapter so as to reflect on key themes that emerged from the experience. To achieve this, I first presented the full story of what took place from the moment of the announcement of the death, the burial proceedings and even the post funeral counselling. Thereafter, I analyzed the key concepts that emerged from both my reflections on the dynamics of the bereavement counselling process, and the mourners and general public's perception of the new model.

This concluding chapter provides a summary, conclusions reached based on the findings of this study as well as recommendations. It brings together the concepts, themes and insights drawn from all preceding chapters and suggests themes for future research. In addition, I discuss the contribution that this thesis seeks to make by retrieving Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concepts of bereavement management. Some of these were then integrated into the ERCC model of bereavement counselling, laying a foundation for the development of the proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC. To achieve this, I examined and introduced new themes that should be incorporated into the current ERCC model of bereavement counselling after I engaged both the Eggon and the ERCC models of bereavement counselling in a critical dialogue. The aim was to help facilitate and enhance the overall bereavement counselling process among Eggon Christians. Though the sample of my study concerned only one ethnic group, the findings of the previous chapters can serve as a guide to the broader church. The lessons learnt are important guides for further research within the wider context of the ERCC, in order to address the issue of bereavement counselling among other cultures within the church. Having identified the problems that emerged from this study, the objective is to identify proposals that will help in addressing the gaps identified as well as enhance future research in this area.

## 8.2 Summary of the thesis

In this section I will summarise all the chapters of the thesis and identify the key insights that have emerged from each.

In chapter one, I discussed how the current ERCC model of bereavement counselling among the Eggon Christians is insufficient because it does not take into account the Eggon indigenous model of bereavement management. Hence, I argued for a critical dialogue between the Eggon indigenous and the ERCC models of bereavement counselling to be considered, as a way forward for the development of a comprehensive model to be used by the church. This first chapter also dealt with the background information of the study. It examined the motivation for the research, which deals primarily with the issue of decline in the communal support network among the Eggon Christians due to the influence of Christian missionaries and their teaching. As Phiri explains, “African people who were converted to Christianity were requested to break away from their culture in order to embrace the dominant Western civilization” (2002:66). Phiri further argues that while “some (African converts) succeeded in completely breaking away from African beliefs and practices, others had to develop a dual personality by finding ways of accepting Christianity without losing traditional beliefs and practices” (2002:66). As Mwititi and Dueck explain, many “African young people are caught up in a contradiction. On the one hand, they are supposed to show allegiance to their indigenous cultures. On the other hand, modern culture screams at them from the West” (2007:216). Drawing from the above insight, Clinebell observes that “the decline of community support and of corporate rites of passage and mourning in our society has made it more difficult to recover from grief” (1984:220). Clinebell further observes that “the uprootedness of the lonely crowd in megapolis has deprived millions of people of a community of caring. Personal crisis and tragedies are exacerbated by loneliness and social crises in our world” (1984:220). Pincus stresses that “in the loneliness and isolation of modern society every mourner needs special sympathy and support from the people around him” (1997:124). This is one of my basic reasons for considering community theory as appropriate and relevant for this study, as the intention is to help the Eggon people retrieve the communal caring spirit in the context of contemporary society “where the focus has largely shifted from the community to the individuals concerned”, as observed by Waruta (1994:99). Waruta also explains that “the escalating psychological instability among many African peoples...and indeed the disintegration of social order in contemporary African

society is to some extent related to the weakened status of the most important institution of the human socialization process” (1994:99). In order to reduce the risk of psychological instability among bereaved persons, as Waruta argues, this thesis has proposed a way by which the ERCC can mobilize and empower the faith community to engage in a rigorous communal support network within the church. This introductory chapter also introduced the research problem and objectives, the significance of the study, the research design and methodology and the definition of key concepts.

In this chapter I also discussed the qualitative empirical nature of the study and how the study was organized. It also discussed the sources of data, namely the analysis of existing literature and field research data.

In the second chapter I located the research within the existing literature. The following issues were identified and addressed: the concept of pastoral care and counselling, pastoral counselling within the discipline of pastoral care, the meaning of pastoral care and counselling, the concept of bereavement counselling, and the perspectives of bereavement counselling. In this second chapter I also discussed and analyzed the three principal theoretical frameworks underpinning the studies, which are comprised of: i) the theory of inculturation, ii) the theory of incorporation and iii) the community theory. The analysis revealed that in as much as these theories are helpful, they also have their limitations. First, in the case of the theory of inculturation, the fact that the gospel demands and claims superiority is already a hindrance to any fruitful dialogue or interaction between the Christian faith and culture (Ukpong 2013:531; Mbillah 2010:112). However, both the gospel and culture are concerned with the wellbeing of humankind (Younan 2009:64). This shared concern can serve as source of strength for meaningful dialogue.

Second, the theory of incorporation argued for the need to incorporate other lay-counsellors into the task of counselling and providing care to those who are emotionally hurt. The aim is to address the current situation in the ERCC approach to bereavement counselling where the task is left solely to the pastor and church elders. A detailed discussion emphasizes the importance of having a lay counsellors’ grief recovery ministry that “lay counselling in general is a biblically based ministry that has received much support from the research literature for its effectiveness” (Tan 2013:382). The presence of the lay-counsellors with the

bereaved person can be the most essential gift to present in such a difficult moment, as observed by Wright who said that, “If you want to help another person, just be there” (2003:39). Most of the bereaved families interviewed affirmed that the presence of people in their homes during their grieving moment was of tremendous assistance.<sup>185</sup>

Third, like the other two theories, the community theory is prone to compromise in the case of a counselee who is “quiet and reserved as he/she may not feel comfortable to receive communal support from everyone that is literally present in their house”.<sup>186</sup> Kastenbaum argues that “the individual variation in what can be termed grief profiles at any particular time makes it difficult to evaluate possible changes with time and circumstance” (2011:71). Despite the limitations of these three theories discussed above, the researcher utilized the theories and formed a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling that is life affirming for the ERCC.

In chapter two I explored the concept of bereavement care and counselling and the perspectives of bereavement counselling in general. Then, in order to locate this study in our own context, chapters three and four examined the Eggon and the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling. In chapters three and four, I used both oral and the written sources jointly, “each serving to verify, complement and interrogate the other” as observed by Denis and Duncan (2011:6).

Chapter three consisted of a historical overview of the Eggon people. Other elements discussed include their origin, socio-political structures, and their economic and religious life. The chapter highlighted issues related to death and bereavement among the Eggon people. It was argued that death is a universal event that cuts across cultures, races and ethnic nationalities; however, people’s reaction to death and the accompanying ceremonies differ from culture to culture. *Ek* is the Eggon translation of the word death and is believed to mean those rites of transition that accompany death. Though death is viewed as a universal phenomenon, the study revealed that the Eggon person holds that every death has its origin and is always caused by a force or power. Dugga argues that “it is common among the Eggon

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<sup>185</sup> Response from individual interview with the bereaved family in ERCC No. 2 Nasarawa-Eggon on the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

<sup>186</sup> Understanding Grief Within a Cultural Context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)



people whenever death occurs, they always seek to find out the cause, and this is usually confirmed or dispelled by what they call *Eha*, an inquest (1996:59-60). Their reactions over the death of any member of the community depend greatly on the circumstances that surround the death, that is, the nature or way in which the death occurred, and the age at which the person died, among other factors. The chapter also highlighted their ways of disseminating information when death occurs, including wailing which is an expression of sorrow as well as a form of announcement to the neighbours and community that someone has died. Another means is by sending verbal messages across to members of the community and other surrounding villages. But in a typical instance, especially when the deceased is an aged person who lived a decent life, *Egbaru*, local trumpet, will be sounded to notify the community and other neighbouring villages of his/her exit. I also noted how the Eggon people bathe the corpse with the idea that they are preparing the deceased for the world beyond and to join his/her ancestors. Another area discussed is their communal approach to grave digging and the fact that the relations of the deceased, both from paternal and maternal sides, are not allowed to participate in the digging. This is left to the community and the in-laws as a way of taking the burden off their hands and to be a sign of love, concern and solidarity with one another. Other aspects include supporting one another with foodstuff and drinks and making time to stay with the mourners during the post-funeral activities so as to further strengthen the mourners and help them to cope.

My evaluation noted some of the approaches that seem to hinder a healthy grieving process. First, the traditional burial denies the women and children the opportunity to go near the grave to witness their loved one being buried. This tends to prolong their grieving process as they are not given the opportunity to say a final farewell to the deceased by way of throwing earth or flowers into the grave. Rees argues that “it is at this stage that the member of the family may speak in remembrance of the deceased and have the opportunity to bid the deceased farewell by way of throwing earth into the grave” (1997:59). Second is the situation where, during the funeral dance, the masquerades mock the deceased and his relatives, ranging from verbal insults about the deceased’s personality and imitation of his vocation and actions in life. Sometimes the masquerades even attempt to disfigure his environment. In other instances, according to Dugga, “during the farming season, the masquerades under the pretext of dance, would trample on the deceased’s farm destroying the crops around the spot

where they stand. Some others in frenzy, cut down branches or leaves from the trees that provide shelter (*maka*) for that family” (1996:71).

Chapter four highlighted the historical development of the ERCC, taking into account its vision and mission statement, theology and belief system, and its policies and practices, especially those related to the area of bereavement care and counselling. The chapter further explained how Christianity came to the Eggon land, the reaction of the Eggon people towards the gospel, and its impact on them. I sought to explore the methods of bereavement counselling the ERCC renders among the Eggon Christians. My investigations show that the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling are not adequate, the reason being that the church from the outset neglected to consider the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* methods of bereavement counselling. The resultant effect is that the ERCC current model of bereavement counselling is not able to provide holistic healing to the bereaved. Msomi argues that the counsellors must first seek to understand the *worldview* of their parishioners so as to minister effectively within their context (2008:36).

In chapter five I examined the changes the Eggon traditional practices have encountered over the centuries. I also engaged the Eggon indigenous and the ERCC model of bereavement counselling in a critical dialogue with the aim of developing a more comprehensive model of bereavement counselling to be used by the ERCC. Having explored the Eggon and the ERCC models in detail, I discovered underlying reasons for complicated cases of grief among those who had suffered the loss of their loved ones. Such complications are a result of the limitations discovered in the current existing models of bereavement counselling within the two contexts. In order to complement or bridge this gap, effort was made to improve on their current practices. Other key elements or themes discovered from our detailed study of other literature in general that have the potential to add value to the ERCC model but were absent were identified and integrated with the insights drawn during the dialogue between the two contexts. These include: allowing mourners the opportunity to grieve in a way that is best for them; the need for training and development of a lay-counsellors’ grief recovery ministry within the church; the need for referral to enable the counslee to receive further supports from other professionals; the need for the church to develop policies that will protect the rights of the bereaved family, especially the widows and orphans, and shield them from oppression by the relations of the deceased; and the need to emphasise the importance of

writing wills to ensure that the rights of widows and their children are protected against any unjust treatment after the death of their husbands and fathers. Joseph Danboyi, a Jos lawyer who voluntarily handles widows' cases, noted that "writing of a 'will' will certainly ameliorate the problems widows generally face in the area of inheritance".<sup>187</sup> With all these elements in place, I think the proposed comprehensive model will be more effective and efficient in providing holistic healing and coping mechanisms to those who are emotionally troubled as a result of the loss of their loved one.

In the sixth chapter I focused on the proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling to be used for the ERCC. This was done after I critically engaged the models of bereavement counselling from the two contexts. The insights drawn from the critical dialogue were integrated with those discovered from a detailed study of other sources. These key elements were brought together to form what I call a "comprehensive model". In chapter five, I noted how both the Eggon indigenous people and the ERCC ministers and church elders, upon receiving the news of the death of one of their members, rush to the deceased's residence to offer support and help the mourners to cope. However, from my evaluation, their support is not sufficient in the sense that they sometimes do not allow the mourners the opportunity to grieve in a way that is best for them. In the proposed comprehensive model I argued for the need for counsellors and caregivers to encourage the mourners not to suppress their emotions. Detailed discussion revealed that allowing an individual to explore his or her emotions without guilt or censure is often what appeals most as one attempts to assist someone who is emotionally troubled. In addition, I observed that there is the need for pastoral counsellors and lay-counsellors to make referrals during counselling session with the mourners, where necessary, to get them the right and appropriate help they need rather than just trying things out randomly. Research has made us aware of the contribution of Sullender and Malony who point out that pastoral counsellors must "be mature and professional enough to know their limits when it comes to counselling troubled persons. These limits may involve training, available time, conflict of interest, or just available energy" (1990:206). I also noted that contrary to those who think referral is a sign of inadequacy or lack of competency, a referral as an indication of competency on the part of the person making the referral rather than inadequacy. Remember, the reason for making referrals is to ensure that people in the church get the best care possible. Referral should not be viewed as limiting the pastor's

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<sup>187</sup>Widows as Properties in a *Manχυλλεδ φρομ*: Guardian Newspaper of Saturday, January 26, 2002.

ministry or hindering the fulfilment of the pastor's calling - instead it is a reflection of the counsellor's love and maturity.<sup>188</sup> Another area I introduced is the idea that the ERCC should think of developing policies that will guide and protect the rights of the widows and orphans, protecting them from oppression from the relations of the deceased. I argued that in many cultures in Nigeria, widows are faced with problems which range from inhuman mourning rites, disinheritance, forced re-marriage, impoverishment, and stress related health problems, among others. Koffeman made us aware that there is a one-sidedness to church law compared with public law. Most churches only present the fundamental structures of their particular churches, but are silent about human rights in the church, which is of paramount importance in light of the unjust treatment some vulnerable church members, especially widows, experience (2014:260). I concluded the section with the suggestion that the church encourage its members to seek the assistance of their lawyers to help them write 'wills' in order to protect their families against any unjust treatment.

Chapter seven focused on reflections on the proposed comprehensive model of bereavement counselling. The chapter presented a recent example of a bereavement counselling experience in ERCC Bukuru using the proposed comprehensive model. I introduced some key themes in bereavement counselling by way of testing the model I propose the church adopt. One of the profound areas was the involvement of many people in the overall process of providing support to the mourners rather than support being pastor-centered and involving only a few church elders. First, there was prompt pastoral presence at the deceased's residence immediately upon the announcement of the death. Second, the welfare committee, which serves as the lay-counsellors grief recovery ministry, were very active from the first day when the death occurred as well as during the post-funeral counselling. These dynamics are lacking in the current model used by the ERCC. From my evaluation of the tested model, I discovered that the mourners and the general public are very happy with the proposed comprehensive model because it is more practical and helps to facilitate the healing process. However, being the first stage of testing the model, I also realize that there is room for improvement in each of the stages.

Chapter eight, the final chapter of this study, contains the summary of findings, conclusions and suggestions/recommendations for further research. In this chapter, the insights and

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<sup>188</sup> Turner, Ron. 2014. Referral: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Counseling Relationship in Enrichment Journal [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048\\_referral.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199803/048_referral.cfm) (Accessed 2nd August, 2014).

discussions that emerged from the study are highlighted, thus attempting to answer the research question: How can the ERCC provide bereavement counselling among the Eggon people taking into account their indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management, for effective healing? The way forward in addressing the challenges were proposed.

### 8.3 Conclusions

The conclusions are reached by revisiting the four objectives of this study, namely: i) to investigate the methods of bereavement counselling rendered by the ERCC pastors among the Eggon people, ii) to explore the nature of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management, iii) to interrogate the convergences and divergences between the ERCC methods of bereavement counselling and the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management, and iv) to develop a comprehensive model of bereavement counselling for the ERCC that will be life affirming for Eggon Christians and other cultures in general.

The study revealed that ERCC pastors are too concerned with and over emphasize Christian doctrine as they attempt to provide care and counselling to the bereaved, with little or no consideration of the bereaved's cultural worldview. Culture comprises a core set of beliefs that describe how the world works for a particular people group. People often find it helpful to "adapt to meet their unique needs, based on their past experiences and current situation".<sup>189</sup> Msomi argues that the counsellors must first seek to understand the worldview of their parishioners (counselee) in order to effectively provide care that is relevant within their context (2008:36). This suggests that during their training, the ERCC needs to educate and empower its pastors on how to deal with the issue of grief and mourning and other crisis related cases cross-culturally, so that they can understand the world of the counselee, as suggested by Msomi. Rosenblatt observes that beliefs and customs are basically what inform how people within a particular culture approach death (2011:208). I am aware of the large body of literature that emphasises the need for connection to be made between culture and grief (see Goss & Klass 2004; Rosenblatt 2001; Rosenblatt & Wallace 2005a, 2005b; Rosenblatt 2011; Walsh-Burke 2006; Jackson 1976; Shapiro 1996). Rosenblatt maintains that "the primary message of this culturally sensitive literature is that culture creates, influences, shapes, limits and defines grieving, sometimes profoundly" (2011:207-208). Rosenblatt

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<sup>189</sup>Understanding grief within a cultural context <http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context> (Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014)

further states that understanding the complexity involved between cultures and grieving is a first step toward theorizing about grief in a culturally attuned way and in providing support to culturally diverse grieving people (2011:208).

The data from the field also revealed that there were changes in the Eggon traditional ways of helping the bereaved persons from the way it used to be. The reasons ranged from the influence of the Christian gospel that came to the region in the early 1920s, to the influences of westernization, urbanization, multi-cultural associations, the internet and other technology in general. The study further argued that in addition to the influences mentioned above, most of the young Eggon indigenous people are ‘ignorant of the expectations of their heritage’ as a result of migration at an early age with their parents in search of greener pastures, or to the cities looking for job opportunities (see Mwititi and Dueck 2007:216). This has contributed to the increase in individualistic lifestyle, forgetting the fact that our deepest moral obligation, as observed by Shutte, is “to become more fully human. This means entering more and more deeply into community with others” (2004:30). Community life is another important point that was highlighted in the study. Church members need to understand that they are the new community of faith. From my analysis I noted that no Christian should ever think that he/she is totally independent and doesn’t need help from others, and no one should feel excused from the task of helping others because the church can only function effectively when the entire church membership works together for the common good.

The study also noted that with the advent of technology, both contexts now disseminate information through phone calls, SMSs, and emails, among other means. From the findings, it was discovered that upon hearing the news of the death of any person, both the Eggon people and the ERCC pastors or church elders rush to the deceased’s residence with the aim to provide support or assist the deceased’s family to cope. It was also observed that both the ERCC and the Eggon people do celebrate the life of the loved one who passed away. This was evidenced in the ways of the Eggon people where, during the lying-in-state, the relatives recount all the good qualities of the deceased and the role played while alive. Similarly, the ERCC do this in the testimonies given about the deceased by some individual personalities and the leadership of the church during the wake-keeping and funeral service. It was also established that it is a great moment of comfort and support for families to see how much their loved one was also loved by others. From stories the sympathizers share especially, the

family can hear insights into their loved one's life that they did not share, and may have never heard before. It is also a moment that gives everyone a chance to celebrate the life of the deceased.<sup>190</sup> The study however revealed some areas of differences in the two contexts. For instance, the Eggon indigenous people engage in a communal act of digging the grave but this aspect seems to be lacking within the ERCC. Further, the Eggon people always find time to stay with the mourners especially during the post-funeral time, while the ERCC has little concern for the bereaved family after the burial rites are completed. To bridge this gap, in the comprehensive model I proposed, there is a provision for a lay-counsellors' grief recovery ministry within the church to further assist the bereaved to undergo a healthy grieving process.

In the new comprehensive model, all the weaknesses discovered from the two contexts of bereavement counselling were rectified. Some of the key themes discovered from the detailed discussion of other literature have the potential to add value to the ERCC model and these were incorporated into the new comprehensive model to provide holistic healing. The new proposed model can be regarded as communal since it encompasses not only a few individual personalities in the act of caring and counselling those who are emotionally troubled, but it involves different sets of people from within the faith community in the overall task. From my assessment of the old model, the church has depended too heavily on its pastors and a few church elders for administrative work, pastoral care and counselling, among other services. This situation leaves only a few individuals to do everything in the church and others tend to fold their hands thinking that ministry is an activity for 'them' and not 'us', as explained by Willhauck (2004:154). Whereas in the new proposed model, the whole community of faith is given the opportunity to participate in the overall process of bereavement counselling. This is what makes the community theory and the incorporation theory chosen for this thesis appropriate. A detailed discussion drew on the contribution of Gibbs who observed that "troubled people cannot experience their fullness unless the laities are mobilized to fulfil their distinctive role in the ministry both to the church and the outside world" (1981:313). This communal involvement, according to Graham, demonstrates greater mutuality and enhances effective healing while at the same time serving as a vital source of community experience

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<sup>190</sup>Significance of a Funeral or Memorial Service

<http://pacificgardenschapel.com/importance-of-services> (Accessed 9th July 2014).

(2006:855). Engaging in a communal contextual care, observes Stitzinger, reflects a believing community that teaches and practices biblical pastoral ministry (1995:145).

In my observations and evaluation after testing the proposed comprehensive model, the significance of including lay-counsellors in the overall counselling procedure was profound. From my experience as an ordained pastor, I discovered that there are moments when the pastor is limited in his attempts to counsel a young widow who loses her husband, for the fear of abusing the therapeutic power and engaging in sexual misconduct with her. In relation to this Shackelford and Sanders emphasise:

When people consult therapists, they most often do so in times of great personal vulnerability. They step into an office where they have never been, confused about painful issues they may not clearly understand, tell their innermost secrets to a person they hardly know, and largely by faith, trust that therapist will be able to help them... client in despair becomes tearful and slides off the couch and on the floor near her male therapist's chair, placing her hand on his arm, the therapist is left with a decision about how to respond... he could express verbally his care and empathy for her deep despair, but say little about her sitting on the floor next to him or her touching him; he could get down on the floor with her and embrace her while speaking warmly to her... Though a therapist might rationalize a return embrace, arguing that it represents a genuine, caring response, responses of this kind clearly enter a danger zone that could set a collision course for blatant misconduct later (2013:118-120).

To avoid such a risk, I strongly suggest that the counsellor may find it helpful to use some of the female counsellors (care-giver) among the lay-counsellors' grief recovery ministry within the church to assist in ministering to the widow. Apparently, sometimes the widow will be more free and open to express her deepest innermost emotional feelings with her fellow widow than a male therapist. The responses of the fellow widow will be more up to date and more appreciated by the widow who is bereaved since she is speaking from her previous experience. Colgrove, Bloomfield and McWilliams maintain that "the support of others who know what you're going through can be invaluable. People who have survived similar losses can provide support, guidance-and are proof that you too will survive" (1991:58). Most of the widows interviewed affirmed the above view.<sup>191</sup>

#### **8.4 Suggestions /recommendations for further research**

In view of the above findings and conclusions, four areas for further study have been identified. First, there is a need for research on the competence of the ERCC pastors who minister across culture. A question that would need to be investigated in such a study is "What is the ERCC doing to improve the competence and effectiveness of the ministers in

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<sup>191</sup> Responses from Widows and widowers' focus group discussion in ERCC LCC Ungwan Kpandom, Akun Development Area, Nasarawa-Eggon LGC on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.



providing bereavement counselling cross-culturally? Kimilike argues that the contemporary challenges facing churches in Africa have brought about a scenario in which pastors experience “a crisis of confidence about how they can meaningfully minister in today’s environment in Africa” (2008:69). It is important for the ERCC to start thinking about better ways to enhance and improve the methods of providing support for the needy, especially with recent changes that have been taking place globally in the circumstances of life in general; which have had a negative impact on the experiences of those in grieving situations (see Kastenbaum 2011:69). Based on the importance of building competence in cross-cultural ministry, the church must see the task of personnel capacity development, as argued by Roberts, with an eye to learning more about the kinds of education that encourages innovation, exploration, and continued learning in leadership capabilities (2004:121). To achieve this, the church must include in the curriculum of their schools the idea of intercultural pastoral care and counselling. The relevance of the content of the curricula, as Kimilike opines, “should be seen in the way it relates to the context. It should influence the choice of what is taught, the perspectives on what is taught, and the resources used to inform what is taught. Thus a good pastoral care program will recognise the importance of culture” (2008:36). Kimilike further maintains that “the teaching in theological seminaries ought to be determined by the life and perspectives of local communities. A dialogue ought to be established between experiences in everyday life and biblical patterns of care, with a continuous reflection on the meaning of the Gospel” (2008:27). Kimilike argues that this approach is important in order to facilitate down-to-earth teaching that can help African Christians to grapple earnestly with the issue of integrating faith and daily life crises. (2008:37). As Kimilike explains, this “should be done in order to enable Christians to understand biblically informed caring systems. The concern is to make an attempt to develop a friendly caring system that can serve as a model in African Christian contexts” (2008:37).

Second, there is a need for further research on grief across cultures, particularly within the geographical location of the ERCC. This is very important, as Rosenblatt explains: “everything written or known about grief through study and personal experience is saturated with cultural perspectives, concepts, and beliefs and no knowledge about grief is culture free” (2011:207). Thus, knowing that someone is culturally an Alago person from Nasarawa state, Nigeria, is not enough; instead there is a need to further explore the person’s religious background, whether he/she adheres to traditional Alago ancestor beliefs, or is a Christian or

Muslim and so on. It is also important to further investigate whether he/she lives in the Alago hometown of Keana Local Government Area of Nasarawa state or one of the great cities of Nigeria. The counsellor also needs to know the dominant language of his/her everyday life and thought (see Rosenblatt 2011:208). So to think of people from Nasarawa state, Nigeria, as culturally similar or the same in terms of how they grieve is “to be unhelpful to the person trying to support someone from among such cultures who is grieving” as Rosenblatt explains (2011:208-209). Rosenblatt further argues that “making sense of the many cultural variations in grieving and in meanings of what one takes as givens is important from the viewpoint of understanding grief, providing grief support and services to diverse others, and making sense of our own grieving as well” (2011:208).

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## Appendix 1

### TURNITIN Originality Report

A Pastoral Critique of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counselling: Retrieving the Eggon Indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management

Monday Engom Affiku

From Methods of Bereavement Counselling: Retrieving the Eggon Indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement (Roderick Hewitt)

- Processed on 15-Apr-2015 11:20 AM CAT
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<http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/understanding-grief-within-cultural-context>

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<http://www.cancer.net/printpdf/25292>

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<http://facingbereavement.co.uk/BereavementCounselling.html>

10

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<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/On-Grief-and-Grieving/Elisabeth-Kubler-Ross/e/9780743274500/?pt=BK&stage=bookproduct&pwb=2>

11

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[http://lrd.yahooapis.com/\\_ylc=X3oDMTVnNzBrZnZyBF9TAzIwMjMxNTI3MDIEYXBwaWQDTHJlazRUTFYzNEdRVjYwVDFRYVIHeC5xMDYuMHVja2pJb3dfYzJFV3NGejhWZzVHX2xkQjRPX1YweDZPdVNOME9zVjg2a0I2BGNsaWVudANib3NzBHNlcnZpY2UDQk9TUwRzbGsDdGI0bGUEc3JjcHZpZAMudGppdWtnZUF1MVI0SjhhaIdGbkdXYnMwRG1IOGtwSTVVWUFDVDVo/SIG=12eqa8v0b/\\*\\*http%3A//master.umc.org/uploads/documents/Growing%2520Through%2520Grief.pdf](http://lrd.yahooapis.com/_ylc=X3oDMTVnNzBrZnZyBF9TAzIwMjMxNTI3MDIEYXBwaWQDTHJlazRUTFYzNEdRVjYwVDFRYVIHeC5xMDYuMHVja2pJb3dfYzJFV3NGejhWZzVHX2xkQjRPX1YweDZPdVNOME9zVjg2a0I2BGNsaWVudANib3NzBHNlcnZpY2UDQk9TUwRzbGsDdGI0bGUEc3JjcHZpZAMudGppdWtnZUF1MVI0SjhhaIdGbkdXYnMwRG1IOGtwSTVVWUFDVDVo/SIG=12eqa8v0b/**http%3A//master.umc.org/uploads/documents/Growing%2520Through%2520Grief.pdf)

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<http://www.encyclopedia.com/utility/printtopic.aspx?id=63424>

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<http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Grief+and+Bereavement/Grief+Among+Cultures>

17

## Appendix 2a

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Main Campus,  
Private Bag X01 Scottville 3209,  
Republic of South Africa.

Dear Sir/Madam

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I need to gather information that will help me in my research. I am going to conduct interviews and focus group discussions where applicable. I hope that you will be able to provide me with useful information.

The working title of my research is “A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management”. The choice of this topic was informed by two factors: first, the changes and the disorganization of the Eggon cultural and traditional practices that was experienced over the years as a result of the coming of colonial masters and the Christian missionaries into the Eggon land. Second, the influences of westernization, urbanization, globalization, multi-ethnic and cultural associations, internet and other technologies. Many Eggon sons and daughters were and still are facing the challenges of living within two worldviews: the Eggon traditional communal lifestyle and the western individualistic worldview. And the later seems to be more appreciated, as a result, many bereaved families and those in other crisis related cases are left isolated and lonely, as people tend to be more concerned with their immediate families, thereby relegating the accompaniment of those in crisis situations to the pastor or the elders of the church. This growing individualism is threatening to destroy the communal management of grieving and general supportive network among the Eggon people. This study seek to contribute to this body of knowledge by focusing on retrieving the Eggon Indigenous Awhiku concept of bereavement management into ERCC methods of bereavement counseling in order to develop new effective methods of bereavement counseling that will be more relevant to the Eggon Christians. This is the hypotheses I want to investigate and the information you will provide will be of great assistance in accomplishing this task.

I need your consent and time to be interviewed. The interview will last for 30-35 minutes unless otherwise. The focus group discussions will last for about 40-50 minutes. With your permission, I will be using a Digital Voice Recorder during the interview and the focus group discussions after which the information will be deleted upon the completion of the project. Your responses will be treated in a confidential manner and that anonymity will be ensured where appropriate, that is, your name will be disguised and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences on your personality.

For more inquiry, find my contact, that of my supervisor and Research Ethical Office: HSSREC details below:

Rev. Affiku, Engom Monday Email: [eaffiku@yahoo.com](mailto:eaffiku@yahoo.com) Cell phone: +2348069682178; +277616577138 Residence: TCNN, Bukuru- Jos, Nigeria.

**Supervisor:** Prof. Raymond Kumalo; Email: [kumalor@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:kumalor@ukzn.ac.za)

**Research Ethics Office: HSSREC**

Ms P. Ximba 03122603587

## Appendix 2b

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Main Campus,  
Private Bag X01 Scottville 3209,  
Republic of South Africa.

Dear Sir/Madam

### WASIKA NEMAN IZINI

*Ina bincike domin samun digiri na uku a tauhidi a farnin Pastoral Theology. Ina tara bayani da zai taimaka wurin yin wannan bincike. Domin haka zan tambayi mutane su taimaka da bayani da ko zarafi na tattauna da kungiyoyi. Ina fata zaka/ki taimake ni da bayanai da nake bukata, amma ina so iznin yin haka daga gareka/ki. Domin kare mutuncinka/ki inda akwai hatsari gareka/ki, na dauki alkawarin sakaye sunanka/ki. Kasancewarka/ki cikin wannan bincike ba tilas, ka/kina kuma da zabin janyewa daga bada bayani ko tattaunawa a kungiyance duk lokacin da ka/ki ga daman yin haka.*

*Kan maganan wannan bincike shine: “fanhintar pasto akan hanyoyi da Ekklessiyar Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) ke kawo ta’aziya: da tunanin daidatashi da hanyoyi da mutane Eggon ke kawo ta’aziya”. Zaba wannan kan magana ya kumshi dalilai biyu: na fari, sakewa da birkicewa da mutane Eggon sun fuskata cikin al’adun gargagajiya ta dalilin zuwa turawan missan a kasar Eggon. Na biyu, tarihin al’adun kasashen turai, bunkasuwan alkarya, kasancewar kungiyoyin kabilu da na al’adun dabam dabam, yanan gizo da wasu fasa’oi. Wadannan dalilai sun sa yau yayan Eggon suna fuskanta rayuwar cikin al’adun biyu: rayuwa na dayataka da kuma rayuwa kaidanci. Kuma sun goyon baya rayuwa kaidanci, wana ya sa wadanda a yi musu rasuwa da masu fuskata makamata wahalu suna fama ba mai taimako domin kuwa ya fi damu da harka iyalsinsa sa’ana a bar wa pasto ne da datije ekklessiyar aiki kulawa da masu bukata. Wana rayuwa kaidanci yana kokari ya kawo karshe ga rayuwa na dayataka na kabila Eggon. Wana bincike na kokari kawo gudumarwa ga fasa’a ta wurin dawowa da hanyoyi da mutane Eggon ke kawo ta’aziya cikin ma’amala da hanyoyi da ekklessiyar ERCC ke yi domin kikiro da sababen hanyoyi ta’aziya da zai fi anfani ga masubin na kabilan Eggon. Wannan sammani ne; ina so in bincika in ga ko haka ya ke da taimakon bayani da zan samu daga wurinka/ki.*

*Ina bukatar ka/ki taimake ni ta wurin ba ni lokacinka/ki domin in yi maka/ki tambayoyi ko kuma ka/ki kasance cikin tattaunawa a kungiya. Bada amsoshi ga tambayoyin zai dauki wajen minti 30-35 in ba wadansu tambayoyi da suka taso. Tattaunawa a kungiya kuma zai dauki minti 40-50 kachal. Zan yi amfani da na’ura mai dauka murya domin daukan amsoshi da tattaunawa a kungiya. Bayan na gama bincike na zan share wadannan amsoshi daga wannan na’ura da kuma na’ura mai kwakwalwa na watau computer. Domin kare mutuncinka/ki inda akwai hatsari gareka/ki, na dauki alkawarin sakaye sunanka/ki. Kasancewarka/ki cikin wannan bincike ba tilas, kana kuma da zabin janyewa daya bada bayani ko tattaunawa a kungiya duk lokacinda ka ga daman yin haka.*

*Hanyoyin sadaswa na da kuma na mai yi mani jagora cikin wannan bincike suna nan a kasa idan kana/kina son Karin bayani ko wani tambaya game da wannan bincike.*

Rev. Affiku, Engom Monday Email: [eaffiku@yahoo.com](mailto:eaffiku@yahoo.com) Cell phone: +2348069682178; +277616577138 Residence: TCNN, Bukuru- Jos, Nigeria.

**Supervisor:** Prof. Raymond S. Kumalo; Email: [kumalor@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:kumalor@ukzn.ac.za)

**Research Ethics Office: HSSREC**

Ms P. Ximba 03122603587

**Appendix 3a**

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

If you agree to be interviewed or participate in the focus group discussions, please sign the consent form agreement below.

I..... (Fill in your full names),  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

**Signature of the respondent**

**Date**

.....

.....

### Appendix 3b

#### TAKADAR BAYANA YARDA

*Idan ka/ kin yarda in yi maka/ maki tambayoyi ko kasance cikin tattaunawa da sauran mutane domin wannan bincike, sai ka/ ki sa hannu kan wannan takarda a kasa.*

#### **Bayana yarda**

*Ni..... (rubuta suna cikake), na tabbatar cewa na fahimci abinda ke kuncce cikin wannan takarda da kuma yanayin wannan bincike, na kuma bayana yardana domin in bada gudumawa na ga wannan bincike. Na yarda / ban yarda a yi amfani da na'ura mai dauka murya domin daukan amsoshi da tattaunawa*

*Na fahimta cewa ina da yanci in janye daga kasancewa duk lokacin da na ga dama, in ina son yin haka.*

.....

*Sa hannun*

.....

*Kwanan wata*

## Appendix 4a

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Pietermaritzburg Main Campus,  
Private Bag X01 Scottville 3209,  
Republic of South Africa.  
6<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

The General Secretary,  
ERCC Headquarters,  
Alushi, Akwanga.  
Nasarawa state.

Dear Sir,

### LETTER OF PERMISSION

My name is Rev. Monday Engom Affiku, am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I am conducting a research on the topic, "A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management". As part of the research, I will be going to the field to interview ERCC Ministers as well as church members to get data that will help in developing the research.

In order to conduct these interviews and focus group discussions, I need permission from the authority of the church. I therefore write to request your assistance in granting me the permission from gatekeepers and all those it may concern to allow me access to premises and persons under your oversight.

Thanks in anticipation.

Yours faithfully,



Rev. Monday Engom Affiku.

Appendix 4b



**EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF CHRIST (ERCC)**

(A Member Of TEKAN Churches)

**FORMERLY CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CENTRAL NIGERIA.**

Founded by Sudan United Mission (South Africa Branch) 1916

**Motto:** Go ye into World and Preach the Gospel (Mark 16vs 15)

Headquarters,  
P.O.Box 104, Akwanga,  
Nasarawa State-Nigeria.  
E-mail [erccheadquater@yahoo.com](mailto:erccheadquater@yahoo.com)  
8<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

Our Ref: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Ref: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir,

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

I write to introduce one of our Reverends by name Monday Engom Affiku who is doing his doctoral studies with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa. The study programme requires that he does a field research. In view of this, I have been directed to write in order to inform you that the church headquarters has granted his request for permission to have access to premises and persons as it may concern to conduct interviews and Focus Group discussions.

This letter serves as grant of permission of access. All gatekeepers of relevant premises and persons concern should please take note and grant the candidate all the necessary assistance he may require from you throughout the period of his field study.

Thank you.

**Very Rev. Peter Yarima Aya**  
ERCC General Secretary

*General Secretary*  
EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
(ERCC)  
Headquaters Alushi  
Akwanga Nasarawa State.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES:-**

Very Rev. S. Adamu Mari, Very Rev. Samson D. Agidi, Very Rev. Usaini Oduh (Rtd),  
Very Rev. Dr. Koni A. Dakong, Very Rev. Dr. Nehemiah V. Swende, Very Rev. Dio Adamu & Hon. Gbaja J. Makeri

## Appendix 5a

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Pietermaritzburg Main Campus,  
Private Bag X01 Scottville 3209,  
Republic of South Africa.  
6<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

V. Rev. Peter Yarima Aya,  
ERCC General Secretary,  
Alushi.

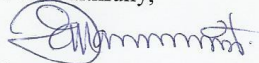
Dear Sir,

### LETTER OF REQUEST TO OFFER COUNSELLING SERVICES

My name is Rev. Monday Engom Affiku, am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I am conducting a research on the topic, "A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management". As part of the research, I will be going to the field to interview and hold focus group discussions with those who suffered loss of their loved ones no-less than two years prior to the interview, so as to grant the person(s) the opportunity to talk through their experience of bereavement. I write to seek your consent to assist in the case of any emotional eruption in the course of individual in-depth interviews or focus group discussions to further support such a participant with counselling.

Thanks in anticipation.

Yours faithfully,



Rev. Monday Engom Affiku.



Appendix 5b



**EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF CHRIST (ERCC)**

(A Member Of TEKAN Churches)

**FORMERLY CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CENTRAL NIGERIA.**

Founded by Sudan United Mission (South Africa Branch) 1916

**Motto:** Go ye into World and Preach the Gospel (Mark 16vs 15)

Headquarters,  
P.O.Box 104, Akwanga,  
Nasarawa State-Nigeria.  
E-mail [ercheadquater@yahoo.com](mailto:ercheadquater@yahoo.com)

Our Ref: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Ref: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

Dear Rev Monday Engom Affiku,

**RE: REQUEST TO OFFER COUNSELLING SERVICES**

With reference to your letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2014 on the above subject matter request to offer counselling services. I humbly write to confirm that I Very Rev. Peter Yarima Aya agree to provide pastoral counselling during your interview and or Focus Group discussion sessions in the event of any emotional eruption during the interviews and focus group discussion sessions. This is very important so as to support them and to curtail any further grieve complications in addition to the one they had already suffered as a result of the loss of their loved ones..

Thank you.

**Very Rev. Peter Yarima Aya**

**ERCC General Secretary**

*General Secretary*  
EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
(ERCC)  
Headquarters Alushi  
Akwanga Nasarawa State.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES:-**

Very Rev. S. Adamu Mari, Very Rev. Samson D. Agidi, Very Rev. Usaini Oduh (Rtd),  
Very Rev. Dr. Koni A. Dakong, Very Rev. Dr. Nehemiah V. Swende, Very Rev. Dio Adamu & Hon. Gbaja J. Makeri

## Appendix 6a

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Pietermaritzburg Main Campus,  
Private Bag X01 Scottville 3209,  
Republic of South Africa.  
6<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

Dr. Paul E. Joseph,  
ERCC Medical Director,  
Alushi.

Dear Sir,

### LETTER OF REQUEST TO OFFER COUNSELLING SERVICES

My name is Rev. Monday Engom Affiku, am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I am conducting a research on the topic, "A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management". As part of the research, I will be going to the field to interview and hold focus group discussions with those who suffered loss of their loved ones no-less than two years prior to the interview, so as to grant the person(s) the opportunity to talk through their experience of bereavement. I write to seek your consent to assist in the case of any emotional eruption in the course of individual in-depth interviews or focus group discussions to further support such a participant with counselling.

Thanks in anticipation.

Yours faithfully,



Rev. Monday Engom Affiku.

# EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH OF CHRIST (ERCC)



(Formerly CCCN)  
**MEDICAL SERVICES ALUSHI**  
P.M.B. 03, Akwanga, Nasarawa State.

13<sup>th</sup> January, 2014

Our Ref: .....

Your Ref: .....

Date: .....

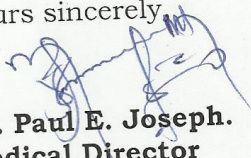
Dear Rev Monday Engom Affiku,

## RE: REQUEST TO OFFER COUNSELLING SERVICES

With regard to your letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2014 on the above subject matter request to offer counselling services. I wish to write and affirm that I Doctor Paul E. Joseph agree to render any medical assistance to your participants in the case of any emotional eruption in the course of your interviews and focus group discussions sessions with those who had suffered loss of their loved ones. This I think will curtail any possible grievance complications that may likely erupt.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

  
Dr. Paul E. Joseph.  
Medical Director  
ERCC Medical Services.

Director  
E. R. C. C  
Medical Services  
ALUSHI

## Appendix 7



14 July 2014

Reverend Monday Engom Affiku (213567082)  
School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0639/014D

Project title: A Pastoral critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon Indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management

Dear Reverend Affiku,

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application dated 18 March 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.


Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisors: Professor Raymond S Kumalo and Dr Herbert Moyo  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Denis  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Cathrine Murugan

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za) / [snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohuno@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohuno@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

1910 - 2010  
100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

## Appendix 8a

### Questions for ERCC Ministers

#### Introduction

My name is Monday Engom Affiku, am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I am conducting a research on the topic, “A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a new model of bereavement counseling that will address these concerns.

1. What is your understanding of bereavement counseling?
2. What are the methods ERCC is using in terms of providing coping mechanism to the bereaved person(s) or families?
3. Can you briefly explain the methods of bereavement counseling that you use in providing coping mechanism to those who are bereaved among the Eggon people?
4. From your experience, can you mention the kind of support the Eggon people give to each other during bereavement?
5. Do you sometimes find it helpful to adopt some of the Eggon indigenous Awhiku concept of bereavement management in your ministry among the Eggon people? If yes, what aspects of their methods do you sometimes adopt?
6. Are there any similarities in ERCC methods of bereavement counseling with the Eggon indigenous Awhiku concept of bereavement management?
7. What differences, if any, do you find between ERCC’s methods of bereavement counseling and the Eggon indigenous Awhiku concept of bereavement management?

**Thank you for your time and contributions towards this study.**

## Appendix 8b

### Tambayoyi domin pastorci

#### Gabatarwa

Sunana Monday Engom Affiku dalibin digiri na uku a jamiar UKZN. Ina bincike akan “fanhintar pasto akan hanyoyi da Ekklessiyar Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) ke kawo ta’aziya: da tunanin daidatashi da hanyoyi da mutane Eggon ke kawo ta’aziya”. Ina godiya domin sadaukar da lokacinka/ki da amsoshin da zaka/ki kawo ga wadannan tamboyi. Zan saurari wadannan amsoshin da natsuwa domin in yi anfani dasu wurin ginin wannan bincike. Wannan zai taimakemu domin sanin muhimin damuwan da ka/ki ke fuskanta a wannan fanni, a kuma kirkiro hanyoyi mafi inganci na ilmantar da jama’ a game da wadannan batu na ta’azantarwa.

1. Menene, fahintanka/ki game da ta’azantarwa a lokacin rashi?
2. Wane hanyoyi ne ERCC take mora domin taazantarwa a locacin rashi?
3. *Ka dan bayana iri hanyoyi taazantarwa da ka ke yi wan mutanin Eggon a lokacin rasuwa?*
4. A ganinka, ko zaka/ki fada mana wane irin taimakone mutanin Eggon su ke yi jama’arsu a lokacin rasuwa?
5. Wani lokaci ka/ki gan samin shi da taimako don yin anfani da wansu hanyoyi aladan kabilan Eggon ke yi don kawo ta’aziyya? Idan ai ne amsanka/ki, a wane fanni?
6. A kwai kama da ka gani, a tsakanin aladan ta’azantarwa a ERCC da na aladan kabilan Eggon?
7. Akwai banbancin da ka lura da shi a tsakanin hayoyin ta’azantarwa a ERCC da na aladan kabilan Eggon?

Nagode domin gudumawar ka zuwa nasara wannan bincike.

## **Appendix 9a**

### **Questions for Elderly persons in Eggon**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Monday Engom Affiku, am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I am conducting a research on the topic, “A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a new model of bereavement counseling that will address these concerns.

1. What are the traditional Awhiku ways of helping the bereaved?
2. What were the methods used in terms of providing coping mechanism among the Eggon people before the coming of Western Missionaries to the Eggon land?
3. Have you noticed any changes now from the way it used to be?
4. What do you think are the reasons for these changes?
5. In your own opinion as Eggon Christian, what aspects of the Eggon indigenous Awhiku methods of bereavement management do you think is still needed today?
6. Can you briefly explain the methods of bereavement counseling that ERCC pastors give among the Eggon people?
7. Are there any similarities between the kind of support given by the traditional Eggon community and that of ERCC?

**Thank you for your time and contributions towards this study.**

**Appendix 9b**  
**Tambayoyi domin dattije mutane Eggon**

Gabatarwa

Sunana Monday Engom Affiku dalibin digiri na uku a jamiar UKZN. Ina bincike akan “fanhintar pasto akan hanyoyi da Ekklessiyar Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) ke kawo ta’aziya: da tunanin daidatashi da hanyoyi da mutane Eggon ke kawo ta’aziya”. Ina godiya domin sadaukar da lokacinka/ki da amsoshin da zaka/ki kawo ga wadannan tamboyi. Zan saurari wadannan amsoshin da natsuwa domin in yi anfani dasu wurin ginin wannan bincike. Wannan zai taimakemu domin sanin muhimin damuwan da ka/ki ke fuskanta a wannan fanni, a kuma kirkiro hanyoyi mafi inganci na ilmantar da jama’a game da wadannan batu na ta’azantarwa.

1. Menene fahimtar ka/ki game da kalma Awhiku a lokachi ta’aziyya?
2. Wanne hanyoyi ne mutanen Eggon su ke yin ta’aziyya kamin zuwan turawan mallaka da turawan mission zuwan kasan Eggon?
3. Ko ka/ki lura da wani banbanci da yadda ake yi da dana yanzu?
4. Wane dalilai ne ka/ki ke tsamani ya kawo wannan bambancin?
5. A matsayinka/ki na krista kuma na kabilan Eggon, wane fannin aladan ta’aziyyan kabilan Eggon ne wanda yana da muhimmanci da ake bukata har yanzu?
6. Yanzu zaka iya bayana yadda pastoci ERCC suke yi wa wadanda aka yiwa rasuwa taaziya a tsakanin mutanen Eggon?
7. Akwai kamannin tsakani taimako da kabilan Eggon da Ekklessiyar ERCC suke yi ayau?

Nagode domin gudumawar ka zuwa wannan bincike.



## **Appendix 10a**

### **Questions for The bereaved family**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Monday Engom Affiku, am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I am conducting a research on the topic, “A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a new model of bereavement counseling that will address these concerns.

1. Can you explain the Eggon Traditional meaning of the word Awhiku in terms of helping the bereaved?
2. What was the kind of support you received from the family, friends, relatives and members of the community during your grieving moment?
3. Can you briefly describe the kind of support you receive from ERCC during your grieving moment?
4. What is similar and /or what is different about the kind of support ERCC and the Eggon give during bereavement?
5. What is your advice to either the church or Eggon people on what to do in terms of providing coping mechanism to their members who are bereaved?

**Thank you for your time and contributions towards this study.**

**Appendix 10b**  
**Tambayoyi domin Wadanda aka yi musu rasuwa**

Gabatarwa

Sunana Monday Engom Affiku dalibin digiri na uku a jamiar UKZN. Ina bincike akan “fanhintar pasto akan hanyoyi da Ekklessiyar Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) ke kawo ta’aziya: da tunanin daidatashi da hanyoyi da mutane Eggon ke kawo ta’aziya”. Ina godiya domin sadaukar da lokacinka/ki da amsoshin da zaka/ki kowa ga wadannan tamboyi. Zan saurari wadannan amsoshin da natsuwa domin in yi anfani dasu wurin ginin wannan bincike. Wannan zai taimakemu domin sanin muhimin damuwan da ka/ki ke fuskanta a wannan fanni, a kuma kirkiro hanyoyi mafi inganci na ilmantar da jama’a game da wadannan batu na ta’azantarwa.

1. *Yaya ka/kin fihinci ta’azantarwa a lokacin rashin?*
2. *Ko zaki/ka yi mana bayani akan fahintan ka/ki da kalman nan Awhiku cikin aladan kabilan Eggon?*
3. *Wane irin gudumawa ko taimako,ka/kin samu daga iyali, abokai, yanuwa, da jama’ar gari bayan da aka yi maka/ki rashi?*
4. *Ko zaka/ki bayana mana wane irin gudumawa ko taimako ka/kin samu daga ERCC a lokacin da aka yi maki/ka rashi?*
5. *Ko zaki/ka fada mana wane irin gudumawa ko taimako ka/kin sa rai zaki/ka samu daga Ekklessiyar ERCC da kuma wurin mutanen Eggon?*

Nagode domin gudumawar ka zuwa wannan bincike.

## **Appendix 11a**

### **Questions for the focus group discussions with ERCC Ministers/ Church Elders**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Monday Engom Affiku, am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I am conducting a research on the topic, “A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a new model of bereavement counseling that will address these concerns.

1. What do you understanding by bereavement counseling?
2. Can you explain the methods of bereavement counseling ERCC used?
3. Which methods do you adopt in counseling the bereaved among the Eggon people?

**Thank you for your time and contributions towards this study.**

## Appendix 11b

### **Tambayoyi domin tautaunawa tare da pastorci da dattije Ekklessiyar ERCC**

Gabatarwa

Sunana Monday Engom Affiku dalibin digiri na uku a jamiar UKZN. Ina bincike akan “fanhantar pasto akan hanyoyi da Ekklessiyar Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) ke kawo ta’aziya: da tunanin daidatashi da hanyoyi da mutane Eggon ke kawo ta’aziya”. Ina godiya domin sadaukar da lokacinka/ki da amsoshin da zaka/ki kawo ga wadannan tamboyi. Zan saurari wadannan amsoshin da natsuwa domin in yi anfani dasu wurin ginin wannan bincike. Wannan zai taimakemu domin sanin muhimin damuwan da ka/ki ke fuskanta a wannan fanni, a kuma kirkiro hanyoyi mafi inganci na ilmantar da jama’a game da wadannan batu na ta’azantarwa.

1. Menene ka/kin fahinta da ta’azantarwa a lokacin rashi?
2. Ko zaka/ki fada mana hanyoyin ta’azantarwa da ERCC take yin anfani da shi?
3. Wane hanyayoyin ne kuke mora a lokacin ta’azantarwa a tsakanen mutanen Eggon?

Nagode domin gudumawar ka zuwa wannan bincike.

## **Appendix 12a**

### **Questions for the focus group discussions with Widows & Widowers**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Monday Engom Affiku, am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I am conducting a research on the topic, “A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a new model of bereavement counseling that will address these concerns.

1. Can you explain the meaning of Eggon Traditional word Awhiku in terms of helping the bereaved?
2. What were the kinds of support you received from your family, relatives, friends and the members of the community during your grieving moment?
3. Can you briefly state the kinds of support ERCC gave to you during your grieving moment?

**Thank you for your time and contributions towards this study.**

**Appendix 12b**  
**Tambayoyi domin tautauawa tare da Gwamruwai**

Gabatarwa

Sunana Monday Engom Affiku dalibin digiri na uku a jamiar UKZN. Ina bincike akan “fanhintar pasto akan hanyoyi da Ekklessiyar Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) ke kawo ta’aziya: da tunanin daidatashi da hanyoyi da mutane Eggon ke kawo ta’aziya”. Ina godiya domin sadaukar da lokacinka/ki da amsoshin da zaka/ki kawo ga wadannan tamboyi. Zan saurari wadannan amsoshin da natsuwa domin in yi anfani dasu wurin ginin wannan bincike. Wannan zai taimakemu domin sanin muhimin damuwan da ka/ki ke fuskanta a wannan fanni, a kuma kirkiro hanyoyi mafi inganci na ilmantar da jama’a game da wadannan batu na ta’azantarwa.

1. Ko zaka/ki bayana mana ma’anar Awhiku a fuskkan ta’azantarwa?
2. Wane irin taimako ne ka/kin karba daga iyali, dangi, abokai, da jama’ar gari a lokacin makoki?
3. Ko zaka/ki fada mana wane irin taimako ne ERCC ta baku a lokacin makoki?

Nagode domin gudumawar ka zuwa wannan bincike.

## **Appendix 13a**

### **Questions for the focus group discussions with the Bereaved Family**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Monday Engom Affiku, am doing my Ph.D. study in Pastoral Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the above institution; I am conducting a research on the topic, “A Pastoral Critique of Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Methods of Bereavement Counseling: Retrieving the Eggon indigenous Awhiku Concept of Bereavement Management”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a new model of bereavement counseling that will address these concerns.

1. Can you explain the meaning of Eggon Traditional word Awhiku in terms of helping the bereaved?
2. What were the kinds of support you received from your family, relatives, friends and the members of the community during your grieving moment?
3. Can you briefly state the kinds of support ERCC gave to you during your grieving moment?

**Thank you for your time and contributions towards this study.**

## Appendix 13b

### **Tambayoyi domin tautaunawa tare da Wadanda aka yi musu rasuwa**

Gabatarwa

Sunana Monday Engom Affiku dalibin digiri na uku a jamiar UKZN. Ina bincike akan “fanhintar pasto akan hanyoyi da Ekklessiyar Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) ke kawo ta’aziya: da tunanin daidatashi da hanyoyi da mutane Eggon ke kawo ta’aziya”. Ina godiya domin sadaukar da lokacinka/ki da amsoshin da zaka/ki kawo ga wadannan tamboyi. Zan saurari wadannan amsoshin da natsuwa domin in yi anfani dasu wurin ginin wannan bincike. Wannan zai taimakemu domin sanin muhimin damuwan da ka/ki ke fuskanta a wannan fanni, a kuma kirkiro hanyoyi mafi inganci na ilmantar da jama’a game da wadannan batu na ta’azantarwa.

1. Ko zaka/ki bayana mana ma’anar Awhiku a fuskkan ta’azantarwa?
2. Wane irin taimako ne ka/kin karba daga iyali, dangi, abokai, da jama’ar gari a lokacin makoki?
3. Ko zaka/ki fada mana wane irin taimako ne ERCC ta baku a lokacin makoki?

Nagode domin gudumawar ka zuwa wannan bincike.



## Appendix 14

### Samples of some transcribed interviews

#### A. Transcribed interview with ERCC Ministers

1. **What is your understanding of bereavement counseling?**

Bereavement counselling is a moment of rendering support to individual or group who are emotionally troubled

2. **What are the methods ERCC is using in terms of providing coping mechanism to the bereaved person(s) or families?**

The ERCC methods of providing coping mechanism to the bereaved persons includes: visitating those who emotionally hurt in order to encourage and pray with them, planning of the funeral service program in collaboration with the deceased's family, organizing wake-keeping service, conducting funeral services, collecting and contributing of material condolences and ono-on-one counselling session with the pastor.

3. **Can you briefly explain the methods of bereavement counselling that you use in providing coping mechanism to those who are bereaved among the Eggon people?**

The first thing I do upon receiving the news that a member of the church died is to visit the family in order to encourage and pray with them. If the burial will take place the same day, I would plan the funeral program with the deceased's family, and conduct funeral.

4. **From your experience, can you mention the kind of support the Eggon people give to each other during bereavement?**

Hmm...[some moment of silence] I have not really taken my time since I came to ponder on the kind of support the Eggon people give to each other during bereavement. But when ever death occurs, I do see them coming together to the deceased's resident. Second, the communal participation in digging the grave and also bringing of foodstuff and drinks to the deceased's family.

- 4. Do you sometimes find it helpful to adopt some of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management in your ministry among the Eggon people? If yes, what aspects of their methods do you sometimes adopt?**

Like I mentioned earlier, though I have not taken notice of all the kinds of supports they gave to one another but one of the remarkable things I cherish is the aspect of communal participation in digging the grave and the issue of contributing material condolences.

- 6. Are there any similarities in ERCC methods of bereavement counseling with the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management?**

The only similarities I can recall now are the area of visiting the bereaved family immediately death occurs to encourage them and the aspect of collecting and contributing of material condolences.

- 7. What differences, if any, do you find between ERCC's methods of bereavement counseling and the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* concept of bereavement management?**

There are two major areas of differences I noticed, first, the communal aspect of digging the grave among the Eggon people seemed to be lacking in the ERCC and second, the coming of the relatives and friends to stay with the mourners after the funeral is also lacking in the ERCC. Often, after the burial, many people return to their normal activities and hardly find time to come and stay with the mourners.

## **B. Transcribed interview with Eggon Elderly persons**

- 1. What are the traditional *Awhiku* ways of helping the bereaved?**

When death occurs usually the community will go to the house of the deceased to sit and discuss with the family. The sitting and the discussion during that moment is what the Eggon people refer to as *Awhi-Eku*. It is also important to note that among the Eggon people, any misfortune not necessarily the death of a loved one can also attract the coming of the community to sit and discuss with the person. For instance, when someone's house got burnt, the community will also gather to sympathize with the family for the loss and seek ways to render assistance in every way possible just as did when death befalls anyone.

**2. What were the methods used in terms of providing coping mechanism among the Eggon people before the coming of Christian Missionaries to the Eggon land?**

Before the coming of the Christian missionaries to Eggon land, the methods of providing coping mechanism to each other include: Wailing (crying/weeping) and the coming of the people to the deceased's house; bathing the corpse, dressing of the corpse and the lying-in-state; communal grave digging and burial Rite; drumming, singing of Songs, and dancing; bringing of food stuff and drinks to the mourners; the staying of the relatives and friends during and after the Mourning period and contribution of material condolences.

**3. Have you noticed any changes now from the way it used to be?**

Yes, there are quite a numbers of changes especially when the missionaries first came, for instance, the missionaries seems to discourage the people from expressing their emotions; another change witnessed was Paradigm shift from African worldview of inter-dependency to the Western individualistic lifestyle. Many of the indigenous converts were encourage to disassociate themselves from every indigenous customs and traditions; as it was viewed by the missionaries as demonic or evil. The traditional model of grave digging was replaced by the modern six-foot due to the introduction of casket or coffin. The traditional entertainment of drumming, singings and dancing, with masquerades were forbidden for those in the new faith (religion); the inheritance of widows was also rejected by the Christian missionaries on the ground of the biblical injunction to marry only one wife.

**4. In your own opinion as Eggon Christian, what aspects of the Eggon indigenous *Awhiku* methods of bereavement management do you think is still needed today?**

In my opinion, the following aspects of the Eggon traditional ways of helping the bereaved that should be retained: the Coming of the relatives, community members and friends to the deceased's house when death occurs; second, the communal digging of grave and other funeral preparations; bringing of food stuff and drinks to enable the bereaved persons to feed the sympathizers and other general supports and finally the staying with the mourners during the post-funeral.

**5. Can you briefly explain the methods of bereavement counselling that ERCC pastors give among the Eggon people?**

When death occurs, the pastor and church elders always come around to encourage and pray with the deceased family; thereafter, they organize funeral service in the church if the deceased is a committed member and during the service they used to collect freewill offering for the immediate family of the deceased to assist them provide drinks for the sympathizers that will come to greet them.

**6. Are there any similarities between the kind of support given by the traditional Eggon community and that of ERCC?**

While from my observation, the similarities noted is the aspect of disseminating information when death occurs. In some instances, the Eggon people will blow the local trumpet known as *Egbaru* when an aged person who lived such a decent life died to announce to the neighbouring communities and villages of his/her death. While the ERCC especially in the rural areas, when a member of the church died, the pastor will ring the church bell, the one used to remind the worshippers of their time of meetings but the ringing slightly differs from that of worship services.

**C. Transcribed interview with Bereaved family**

**1. Can you explain the Eggon Traditional meaning of the word *Awhiku* in terms of helping the bereaved?**

*Awhiku* is a moment in which the relatives, friends, and members of the community gather together in the deceased's compound to sympathize and encourage the family over the loss of their loved one.

**2. What was the kind of support you received from the family, friends, relatives and members of the community during your grieving moment?**

The first support I received was the coming of people to our house to console and share with us in the traumatising experience. The second aspect was the issue of bringing of food stuff and drinks to our house, and it took me several weeks to think of cooking any meal; thirdly, the relatives and friends came and stayed with us throughout the period of mourning and after the funeral was over some of my siblings and friends came and spent sometimes with us.

**3. Can you briefly describe the kind of support you receive from ERCC during your grieving moment?**

Hmm...when my husband was confirmed dead, I was completely confused and lack the knowledge of what-to-do but when our pastor and some church elders came and encourage us and pray with us I was calmed and feel released from the trauma; the church assisted us in planning and organizing the funeral service and on the day of the burial many church members who had cars assisted people with transportation from mortuary to the church for the funeral service. The church collected freewill offering for us. This enable us in providing drinks for the sympathizers and in settling other outstanding debts we incurred during the period of his illness.

**4. What is similar and /or what is different about the kind of support ERCC and the Eggon give during bereavement?**

The similar aspect I notice from both the Eggon and the ERCC is their coming to our house when the death occurs. And the differences I noted is that the church organize general collections in the church for us but the Eggon people individually brought foodstuff and drinks to us. Second, after the funeral ceremony was over, hardly do the pastor and church elders take time to visit but among the Eggon people, many people make time to visit and stay with us for some times, this has help us to adjust quickly to the shock and the traumatic experience.

**5. What is your advice to either the church or the Eggon people on what to do in terms of providing coping mechanism to their members who are bereaved?**

While, what can I really say, you know when your husband died and leave alone, is like everything about you is gone, no hope any more. I think both the ERCC and the Eggon people should come up with a strong policy that will guide and protect the rights of the widows and their children from any maltreatment from the relations of the deceased, sometimes, they would literally take away everything leaving the widows and her children stranded.

**D. Transcribed Focus Group discussions with ERCC Ministers/ church elders**

**1. What do you understanding by bereavement counseling?**

Bereavement counselling is a way of sympathizing and providing coping mechanism to those who are bereaved or emotionally troubled.

2. **Can you explain the methods of bereavement counseling ERCC used?**

The methods the ERCC is using to provide coping mechanism to those who are bereaved or emotionally hurt includes: Prompt visitation by the pastor and the church elders to the bereaved family to visit, encourage and pray with them, if the deceased is a member of the church, the women fellowship would come and sing songs in the deceased's house, and assisting in any domestic chores. Another area is the issue of planning the funeral service program; follow by organizing wake- keeping if the burial will not take place the same day. Other aspects include conducting funeral service, collecting special freewill offering for the deceased's family during funeral service and other general support from the individual members of the church and the church itself.

3. **Which methods do you adopt in counselling the bereaved persons among the Eggon people?**

The Eggon people already had their ways of consoling each other when death occurs. Sometimes, if a committed member died the church will provide the casket for the burial and also the offering we do collect during the funeral service to help the family.

**E. Transcribed Focus Group discussions with widows/widowers and bereaved family**

1. **Can you explain the meaning of Eggon Traditional word *Awhiku* in terms of helping the bereaved?**

*Awhiku* is a compound word: *Awhi* means seating/discussion while *Ek* means death; putting the two words together it means seating to discuss with the bereaved persons.

2. **What were the kinds of support you received from your family, relatives, friends and the members of the community during your grieving moment?**

We received different kind of supports ranging from moral, emotional, psychological and physical supports. First, the coming of the people to the house upon hearing the wailing to console and encourage the mourners, bringing of foodstuffs and drinks to the house; the staying of the relatives and friends during the post-funeral and so on.

**3. Can you briefly state the kinds of support the ERCC gave to you during your grieving moment?**

The pastors and some church elders prompt visit to encourage and pray for us [the bereaved families]. The coming of the women fellowship to sing songs, planning the funeral service program; organizing wake-keeping and conducting of the funeral service, alongside collection of freewill offering.

## Appendix 15

### Tables showing distribution of the participants

**Table One: ERCC Ministers**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Academic Qualifications</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ages</b>
1	Masters	Male	55-65
2	Masters	Male	35-45
3	BTh	Male	45-55
4	BTh	Male	45-55
5	BTh	Male	45-55
6	BTh	Male	45-55
7	BTh	Male	45-55
8	Bed	Male	45-55
9	Diploma	Male	45-55
10	Diploma	Male	45-55
11	Diploma	Male	60-80
12	Diploma	Male	60-80

**Table Two: Elderly Eggon Persons**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Academic qualifications</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ages</b>
1	1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	Male	55-70
2	1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	Male	55-65
3	Diploma	Male	60-80
4	Diploma	Female	55-75
5	Adult School	Female	60-80
6	Adult School	Male	60-80
7	Primary School	Female	60-80
8	Adult School	Male	60-80
9	Adult School	Female	60-80



**Table Three: Bereaved Family**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Academic Qualifications</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ages</b>
1	1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	Male	35-50
2	1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	Male	35-50
3	NCE	Male	35-45
4	NCE	Male	40-55
5	SSCE	Female	30-40
6	SSCE	Female	28-35
7	SSCE	Female	30-35
8	Primary School	Female	55-70
9	Adult School	Female	60-80
10	Adult School	Female	60-85

**Table Four: Focus Group Discussions**

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Number of male</b>	<b>Number of female</b>	<b>Ages</b>
ERCC ministers/ Church elders	8 participants	5	3	35- 75
Widows/ Widowers	7 participants	3	4	35- 65
Bereaved family	8 participants	4	4	25- 45