

**PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED MARRIED MEN AND WOMEN ON  
*NKOLOLA* INITIATION CEREMONY IN MAZABUKA AND MONZE  
DISTRICTS OF SOUTHERN PROVINCE, ZAMBIA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I, **Mary Maambo**, hereby solemnly declare that the thesis represents my own work and that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged and that this document has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at the University of Zambia or any other university in order to obtain an academic qualification.

Signed: -----

Date: -----

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my beloved father, mother, uncle and brother, late Samuel Maambo, Eness Siachaluza Maambo, Jonathan Siachaluza and Daniel Maambo respectively. All of you were superb and you educated me. Your untimely demise was the greatest pain and challenge I had to endure in this academic journey.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

This thesis by **Mary Maambo** is approved as fulfilling the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology of Education by the University of Zambia.

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## ACRONYMS

AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	-	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	-	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CSO	-	Central Statistical Office
DVDs	-	Digital Video Decoders
ECZ	-	Evangelical Church of Zambia
FC	-	Female Circumcision
FGC	-	Female Genital Cutting
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussion
FGDs	-	Fundamental Geographic Data set
FGM	-	Female Genital Mutilation
GIDD	-	Gender in Development Division
HIV	-	Human Immune-Deficiency Virus
HSSREC	-	Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
MESVTEE	-	Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education
MHRC	-	Mental Health Resource Centre
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
NAC	-	National Aids Council
RCC	-	Roman Catholic Church
SADC	-	Southern African Development Community
SAFE	-	Student Alliance for Female Education
SDA	-	Seventh Day Adventist

SMT	-	Science Mathematics and Technology
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
STD	-	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
UCZ	-	United Church of Zambia
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	-	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	-	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNZA	-	University of Zambia



## ABSTRACT

The study sought to establish the perceptions of married women and their husbands towards initiation ceremonies among the Tonga speaking people of Mazabuka and Monze Districts in Zambia. This is in light of conflicting perceptions of initiation ceremonies faced by society today. Some sections of society argue that the ceremonies should be abolished or restricted to young women of a certain age group (preferably women about to get married). Other sections of society find nothing wrong with the ceremonies and look down upon all individuals who have not undergone initiation.

The objectives of the study were to find out what initiated women and their husbands think are the positive and negative influences of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony, Examine the perceived effects of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on behaviour of initiated women as perceived by the women and their husbands, assess the perceived significance of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in a married woman's life and Investigate what initiated women and their husbands feel can be done to help make modifications to values taught during *Nkolola* initiation ceremony.

A descriptive survey approach was used to conduct the research as it was best suited in describing the perceptions of married men and women of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. The study made use of 200 participants comprising 100 initiated women and their husbands. The study also used qualitative methods of data collection and the researcher subjected herself to the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony to have first-hand experience and ensure validity of findings. The framework of the study is based on the socialisation theory, the gender socialisation theory and the social identity theory.

The study findings revealed that the ceremony was perceived to influence the initiates' behavioural change in a good way as it made women mature, and instilled virtues of respect, obedience and community life. It was also seen to play a cardinal role in preserving cultural values and traditions. Further it is seen to prepare young girls in their transition to adulthood and teaches them survival skills like income generation. On the other hand, the study revealed that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony exposed sexual knowledge to girls at a young age, this created curiosity among young girls who would be prompted to start experimenting with sex and hence this was perceived to make them vulnerable to prostitution.

The study recommends that those organising the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should adopt an age specific selection criteria when delivering lessons to the initiates. This will help to mitigate the observed trend of teaching young girls marriage lessons which they are clearly not ready for. Furthermore, the lessons taught during *Nkolola* need to include economic independence before venturing into marriage so as to empower women and reduce the prevalence of early marriages. A book on the values and lessons taught in the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should be written so that an account is kept and uniform virtues are taught to would be initiates. This will be an important means of preserving the culture and tradition of the ceremony and other initiation ceremonies for our future generations.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study, it constitutes the background of the study, description of the initiation ritual, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the objectives, the research questions that the study hopes to answer and the operational definitions of the key concepts and not omitting the significance of the study.

### 1.1 Background

Initiation is a rite of passage, marking entrance or acceptance, into a group or society. It could also be a formal admission to adulthood in a community or one of its formal components. In an extended sense, it can also signify a transformation in which the initiate is 'reborn' into a new role.

Initiation is a rite that marks the passage from childhood to adulthood. For females, it usually takes place just after a girl has started her first menstruation. It sets a basis for adult life by developing a new identity for a woman. A young girl also known as 'novice' passes the social boundary from childhood to adulthood (Raising, 2001). During this period, she is equipped with a vast body of social attributes that a woman is supposed to know and deal with throughout her life. At the end of those instructions, the novice graduates at a ceremony referred to as initiation ceremony.

Writing in French in 1909, the European comparative sociologist Gennep delineated in *Les rites de passage* (published in English in 1960) a structure for transformative ritual practices he considered universal and common to all cultures. Gennep (1960) argued that although rites vary greatly in intensity, specific form, and social meaning, rites of passage are ceremonial devices used by societies to mark the passage or transition of an individual or a group from one social status or situation to another. Rites of passage resolve life-crises; they provide a mechanism to deal with the tension experienced by both individuals and social groups during ambiguous occasions including, but not limited to, birth, puberty, marriage, and death.

According to Raising (2001), initiation emphasises reproductive roles within marriage. These include domestic and agricultural duties, respect for elders and her future husband, sexual and food taboos. The young girl is taught how to behave in marriage, how to run a home by performing most of the domestic duties in her mother's home. Most of these cultural attributes on marriage are usually exclusively taught to girls. Boys in most ethnic groups are not taught these things.

Raising (2001) contends that initiation rites or ceremonies are similar among various cultures with few differences across cultures. They express solidarity among women from different generations. Examples of initiation ceremonies might include Hindu *diksha*, Christian baptism or confirmation, Jewish bar or *bat mitzvah*, acceptance into a fraternal organisation, secret society or religious order, or graduation from school or recruit training.

Rites of passage are found in all societies at all times, but they differ, not only from culture to culture, but, over time within a particular culture. They change as societies change and, they are often perceived as traditional. Nearly every culture in the world ritualises the important milestones throughout life. Birth, marriage and death are typically marked by special ceremonies. The passage from childhood to adulthood also figures prominently among various ethnic groups worldwide. Hispanic cultures have quincineras for their daughters. Jews hold *Bar Mitzvahs* and *Bat Mitzvahs* for their children; and in America they celebrate Sweet Sixteen parties.

Genep (1909), argues that facilitating these life course transitions, rites of passage hold considerable emotional importance for both the individual and society. To take on a new social identity, the individual must negotiate an often-arduous status passage. Furthermore, society must assist individual members in accomplishing these rites and, when these occasions are complete, recognise the new standing of the initiate.

Rites of passage are at least as common in modern as in pre-modern societies. Initiation rites are an intrinsic part of traditional societies (Raising, 2001). They have existed for many centuries and can be traced back to at least 400 AD (Roberts and Ahmed, 1976). Jafarey (2004), in his work on initiation, confirms that initiation is as old as human

society and that the age at which one attains this stage varies from society to society and from one individual to the other. According to Jafarey (2004), this is attained at the age of nine years in some societies, while in other societies this is attained at the age of twenty-one.

In terms of the indigenous knowledge system in most African countries, initiation ceremonies are rooted deep in the history of most traditional groupings. For Black African females, ceremonies are perceived as important because the event is seen as an entry into the realm of adults. For example, female initiation ceremonies are held in several countries of Africa. Initiations for girls are marked as important milestones in most societies of Africa. Women initiation ceremonies, much like their male counterparts, provide instructions to females on what society will expect of them as responsible adults. African life revolves around the family and therefore, female African initiation ceremonies tend to focus heavily on the preparation of young girls to be good wives and mothers (Mlama, 1990).

Before formal education became popular in many African countries, initiation ceremonies were usually conducted during the cold season. This was the time just after crop harvest. The food was plentiful and beer could be brewed for the rites. However, nowadays, the ceremonies are conducted during school holidays so that the initiates do not miss school. Equally, the duration is shortened from three to six months to a few weeks or a month.

During initiation, the initiate is instructed by some elderly women who are well vested in this aspect of the culture. The novice has to comply with whatever she is told to do, failure to which, she is whipped or rebuked. Worse still, if she has a reputation of being rude or disobedient, the initiate is whipped as a form of punishment in order to make her change for the better.

As initiation ceremonies are an intrinsic part of traditional societies, they are an important part of most societies and they symbolise a transition period in the life of the people who practice them. Many of these rituals transcend time, and are conserved as part of modern culture. Female African initiation ceremonies, much like their male counterparts, provide

instructions to females on what society will expect of them as adults. Having imitated their mothers from birth, most girls are already fully aware of what will be expected of them as women. The ceremony, however, is the public expression of this expectation by the society, a positive form of peer pressure. In most African cultures, the initiation ceremony is something a young girl eagerly looks forward to, prepares for, and honourably takes part in. In essence, the ceremony is the ultimate expression of her flowering womanhood.

According to Van de Walle & Franklin (1996), women are taught about future duties, about the obligation of fidelity to their counterpart (husband), the rules of etiquette regulating relations with her in-laws and that the proper place is one of subordination and to obey their husband. The forms of initiation may differ according to ethnic groups, but what is common to the practitioners is that the elderly ceremoniously welcome the young adolescents to their status by performing a communal ritual (Milubi, 2000).

Many girls attend such initiation ceremonies to conform with the culture which subsequently leads to admiration and respect from the society. Furthermore, curiosity also plays a major role in the attendance of these puberty rites of passage. For instance, most girls who choose to attend the rituals want to experience what it means to subject themselves to the initiation process. This is so mainly because these rituals are generally characterized by secrecy and confidentiality regarding what happens inside the ceremonies. Women initiation or rites of passage experiences are not discussed in public, particularly in the presence of those who have not undergone the process. This is so mainly to safeguard the traditional norms and values of the initiation process (Beidelman, cited in Molnos, 1973).

Rites of passage are diverse, and are often not recognised as such in the culture in which they occur. Many societal rituals may look like rites of passage but miss some of the important structural and functional components. Typically, the missing piece is societal recognition. Adventure Education Programmes, such as Outward Bound; have often been described as potential rites of passage.

There is a similar ceremonial dance further south in Swaziland known as the Reed Dance. Every year during the months of August and September, every eligible maiden from the Kingdom of Swaziland attends the Reed Dance, locally known as the *Umhlanga*. This eight-day ceremony marks the beginning of adulthood for Swazi girls, and also announces to the Kingdom that they are ready for marriage. The ceremony, which is restricted to unmarried and childless girls, starts when the girls arrive at the royal home of the mother of the King of Swaziland. To protect the girls on their journey, reputable men from their home villages accompany them to the dance. Once they arrive at the royal compound, the girls are separated into younger and older age groups.

Similarly, in Zambia, most ethnic groups practice initiation rites for girls. The Tonga call the novice or girl '*Mooye*', the Bemba call her '*Nachisungu*', the Chewa call her '*Namwali*', while the Lozi call her '*Mwalanjo*'. The basic principles like inculcating morals in girls are the same with only a few variations. During initiation, the girl is instructed by some elderly women who are well vest in the society's culture. Emphasis is placed on reproductive roles within marriage. These include domestic and agricultural duties, respect for elders and future husband, sexual and food taboos. The young girl is taught how to behave in marriage, and how to run a home by performing most of the domestic duties while in her mother's home.

Among the Tonga in the Southern Province of Zambia, initiation is a rite that marks the passage from childhood to adulthood. This initiation ceremony is known as *Nkolola*. It takes place just after a girl has had her first menstruation. This initiation ceremony sets a basis for adult life by developing a new identity for the girl. It is associated with key points in the life cycle: birth, transition from childhood to adulthood, marriage and death. An initiate, or a novice, locally called *Mooye*, is secluded and receives instructions from her tutor called '*Hakamwale*' or '*Kalindizi*' in Tonga, which may be translated as 'traditional midwife' or 'mentrix', (Raising, 2001).

During the process of initiation, a girl is taught a vast body of social attributes that a woman is supposed to know and deal with throughout her life. The social attributes taught to a novice include how to conduct herself in the society, how to behave towards

elderly people and how to receive visitors. *Nkolola* initiation ceremony is a kind of traditional education which preserves the cultural heritage of the Tonga people. It also fosters obedience, unselfishness and endurance of hardship, encourages honesty, self-restraint and respect for the rights of others. At the end of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony, the novice graduates into an adult woman. The girl is now said to be ready for marriage and other social responsibilities that come along with adulthood (Maambo, 2008). Snelson (1970), points out that in a traditional society, education provided a thorough and well balanced preparation for life. This could also be said of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony.

The concern in the study was on the perception of married men and women on *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in Southern Province of Zambia. *Nkolola* is a girls' initiation rite which involves confinement of a girl for a period ranging from three months to six months, even a year in some cases. The ceremony is practiced among the Tonga speaking people of Southern Province of Zambia.

### **1.1.1 Description of the ritual**

As described earlier, initiation is conducted after the girl becomes of age, usually between the ages of eleven and fourteen. The procedures followed are similar in almost all cultures in Zambia. However, this study specifically dealt with initiation ceremony of the Tonga people of Monze and Mazabuka Districts in Southern Province. Once the girl reaches puberty, detected by the first flow of blood from her vagina, she is secluded or isolated from others. The enrolment into this seclusion or initiation is done in three major ways:

- i. One of the ways is that a girl experiencing her first menstruation, reports to her aunt or grandmother who later informs her mother, then a day is set for the girl's seclusion.
- ii. The other way is when the girl experiencing her first menstruation goes to some nearby bush in the evening with a small girl. The small girl is then sent back to the village to inform either the aunt or grandmother who will later organise for her seclusion.

- iii. Finally, when elderly women suspect that a girl has started menstruating, they force the girl into seclusion. They do so because it is traditionally believed that if a girl begins to menstruate before she is put into seclusion or *Nkolola* initiation ceremony, then her menstrual blood would bring bad omen to the family, hence seclusion is forced on her.

The seclusion period ranged from three months onwards and mostly depended on the following:

- The economic strength of the girl's parents. Those who were economically sound did not take too long to organise the graduation ceremony of their daughter.
- It was also dependent on how fast she was able to grasp the lessons she received both practically and theoretically.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Much research has been done on initiation ceremonies in Zambia. Some of the notable ones include studies done by Raising (1996) on 'the passing on the rites of passage,' the case of Girls initiation in the context of an urban Roman Catholic community on the Zambian Copperbelt, and then in 2001 on the female initiation rites in Urban Zambia. Hansen (1997), based his study on keeping the House in Lusaka and Maambo (2008) conducted a study on the effects of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on women in southern province, the case for Monze district. However, these studies have all been concentrating on women without looking at what men feel about their initiated wives. To fully appreciate the perceptions of women traditional ceremonies in society, there was need to look at how initiated women and their husbands perceive this subject and hence this study. The author therefore, sought to build on from the previous research (Maambo, 2008; Masters Dissertation) by factoring in the perceptions of men married to women who have gone through the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. This was one of the recommendations for further studies in her master's Dissertation.



### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to describe the perceptions of married men and women on the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in Mazabuka and Monze Districts of Southern Province of Zambia.

### **1.4 Objectives**

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Examine the perceived effects of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on behaviour of initiated women as perceived by the women and their husbands.
2. Find out what initiated women and their husbands think are the positive and negative influences of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony.
3. Assess the perceived significance of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in a married woman's life.
4. Investigate what initiated women and their husbands feel can be done to help make modifications to values taught during *Nkolola* initiation ceremony.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What is the perception of initiated women and their husbands on the effects of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on the behaviour of initiated women?
2. What are the views of initiated women and their husbands on the positive and negative influences of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony?
3. What is the perceived significance of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in a married woman's life?
4. What do initiated women and their husbands think should be done to help make modifications to values taught during *Nkolola* initiation ceremony?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Many women pass through initiation ceremonies. It is, thus vital to find out the perceptions of women and their husbands on the effects of these ceremonies. A study of this nature might further help in finding out how the ceremonies can be used as a platform in fighting against HIV and AIDS and gender imbalances that

we see in our society today. Therefore, the study of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony is important for women and their husbands.

Educational planners as well as curriculum developers can use findings from this study to take into account the background of initiated girls during the planning stage. Additionally, it can be of benefit to the people of Southern Province in the sense that reproductive health educators, for instance, can take into account the background of initiated women when disseminating information on reproductive health.

### **1.7.0 Operational Definitions of Key Concepts**

- Initiation – This is a process of learning about and entering into a new social status.
- Initiator – The elderly person teaching the young girls who have become of age, about values and attributes of becoming adults. She is referred to as Hakamwale or Kalindizi in Tonga.
- Novice – This refers to a girl that is training to become a woman or the girl who is being initiated.

For a thorough explanation of the defined terms above please see appendix A. It should be noted however, that in this study, *Nkolola* initiation ceremony is discussed in light of socialisation, a ceremony that involves transition from childhood to adulthood or education in the area of imparting moral values in the initiated women. It is discussed in the manner moral education is discussed in the school system.

#### **1.7.1 Glossary of some Tonga terms and phrases used in the Thesis**

1. *Hakamwale* – it refers to the woman who is the principal instructor to a novice. In this thesis, it is used to generally refer to an initiator
2. *Kalindizi* – A young girl who acts as chaperone for the initiate (chaperone means someone who accompanies another person somewhere in order to make sure that they do not come to any harm)
3. *Mooye* – The initiate or novice

4. *Muzilongwe* – this refers to friendship, deep friendship in which you can confide in one another.
5. *Myooye* or *ba Mooye* – plural for *Mooye*
6. *Nkolola* – An initiation rite for Tonga people
7. *Tonga* – A language that is mostly spoken in the Southern Province of Zambia

## **1.8 Organisation of the remaining chapters of the study**

Chapter two presents a review of relevant literature. This will include the theoretical review or theoretical framework and empirical review of studies done on the subject. Chapter three describes the research methodology used in the study. It includes; Research Design, Target Population, Study Sample, Sampling Method and Procedure, Research Instrument, Data Collection procedure, Data Analysis, Data quality, delimitations, limitations of the study and ethical consideration of the study. Chapter four focuses on the presentation of the research findings while Chapter five presents the discussion and analysis of the findings. Finally, chapter six presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This Chapter presents a review of literature on the study in context. The chapter is sub divided into the theoretical literature review and the empirical literature review. Firstly the chapter presents a review of theories relevant in explaining certain phenomena associated with the study. Thereafter, a review of empirical literature follows. Reviewing related literature can portray what has been focused on by researchers and how the current study can benefit from that in terms of what to focus on. The reviewed literature can also help in forming a basis for analysing and interpreting the research data (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

### **2.1 Theoretical review**

A theoretical framework locates a study in a certain theory or theories. Such theories are used to guide the study and make sense of the findings (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). This study is based on the socialisation theory, gender socialisation theory and the social identity theory. This framework, therefore, provides the analytical and interpretive lens for the analysis of the findings.

#### **2.1.1 Socialisation theory**

The theory of socialisation is cardinal to this study because it is through socialisation that attitudes and perceptions are shaped. In the shadow of HIV and AIDS, the kind of socialisation the girls are exposed to can play a fundamental role in the way they regard HIV prevention messages that will ultimately guide their behaviour.

According to Giddens (2006: 163):

*Socialisation is the process whereby, the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which he/she was born. Socialisation among the young allows*

*for the more general phenomenon of social reproduction, the process whereby societies have structural continuity over time.*

Being a process, socialisation is something that occurs over a span of time. During the early years, young ones learn values and norms from the elderly people (Giddens, 2006). Primarily, socialisation theory, as formulated by Oetting (1999) and his associates, emphasises the transmission of societal norms during childhood and adolescence within society's three major socialising agencies: family, school, and small, intimate peer groups (Sommer, 1969). The norms transmitted may be pro social or deviant, with pro social norms more likely to be transmitted through strong bonds to healthy families or schools. Personality traits and other personal characteristics influence negative outcomes, such as deviance or drug use, only to the extent that they interfere with socialisation.

The concept of rites of passage was first formally enunciated by Gennep in his book (published in 1909) 'The Rites of Passage' to denote rituals marking the transitional phase between childhood and full inclusion into a tribe or social group. Gennep's work exercised a deep impact on anthropological thought. He developed three social phases: separation, transition, and reincorporation.

In the first phase, people withdraw from their current status and prepare to move from one place or status to another. (The first phase of separation) comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group from an earlier fixed point in the social structure. There is often a detachment or 'cutting away' from the former self in this phase, which is signified in symbolic actions and rituals, for example, the movement into an initiation ceremony and later on into marriage, he or she is 'cutting away' the former self.

The transition (liminal) phase is the period between states, during which one has left one place or state but has not yet entered or joined the next. 'The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae (threshold people) are necessarily ambiguous.'

In the third phase (re-aggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated by the ritual subject. Having completed the rite and assumed their 'new' identity, one re-enters

society with one's new status. Reincorporation is characterised by elaborate rituals and ceremonies, like debutant balls and college graduation, and by outward symbols of new ties: thus in rites of incorporation, there is widespread use of the 'sacred bond', the 'sacred cord', the knot, and of analogous forms such as the belt, the ring, the bracelet and the crown.

Socialisation theory covers the process of maturing out of deviance, which perhaps results in a reaffirmation of the legitimacy of norms transmitted earlier, and it also covers gender differences in their transmission and legitimisation.

This theory is used by sociologists, social psychologists and educationalists to refer to the process of learning one's culture and how to live within it. For the individual, the process provides the resources necessary for acting and participating within their society. For the society, inducting all individual members into its moral norms, attitudes, values, motives, social roles, language and symbols is:

*The means by which social and cultural continuity are attained*  
(Clausen, 1968: 5).

During the process of socialisation, individuals are assisted in becoming part and parcel of a social group (Grusec and Hastings, 2007). Assisted in the sense that members being socialised are not passive recipients of the characteristics of the social group, but they are active individuals who are also selective in what they accept from the older generation (Grusec and Hastings, 2007). The issue of selectivity can be compared to what Butler (1997) refers to as agency. Selectivity means the ability to choose what is applicable to their lives and drop those that are not. For example, in the *Nkolola* teachings, initiates are socialised into the norm of postpartum abstinence and yet some individuals may not passively assimilate such a teaching, though at the same time, they may choose to make use of other teachings they are comfortable with. Butler (1997) further contends that an individual may, to varying degrees, exercise their own agency, thus constructing one's own identity that may be in opposition to what society may expect.

Grusec and Hastings (2007) further explain that socialisation also includes ways of transmitting culture from one generation to the next as well as ways in which individuals are trained to take up 'specific roles' in society. They further state that socialisation involves a number of outcomes such that the one who is socialised may acquire roles, rules, values and standards across all the domains personal, social, cognitive and emotional.

While some outcomes are intended by the agents of socialisation, others are not, but are rather the result or side effects of some socialisation practices. For example, a study that was done by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2006), in Zambia seems to suggest that some initiated girls may practice sex after they have been taught about it out of curiosity. This obviously was not intended by the initiators who are the agents of socialisation. It is also interesting to notice that certain socialisation practices endure in societies for a long time. For example, the socialisation that happens in the practice of the *Nkolola* has endured from generation to generation.

However, for Feigelman (1980: 53) cited in Munachonga (2009: 8):

*Socialisation is the process by which we can learn to become members of society, both by internalising the norms and values of society and also by learning to perform our social roles.*

There are two types of socialisation: primary and secondary (Giddens, 2006; Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The former takes place with the family as the main agent of socialisation, while the latter happens not only within the family but also when other agents take over some of the family (Giddens, 2006). According to Berger and Luckmann (1966: 130):

*Primary socialisation is the first socialisation an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he/she becomes a member of society. Secondary socialisation is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialised individual into new sectors of the objective world of their society.*

Families socialise young ones in many ways. For example, in the Zambian context, mothers and aunts socialise girls into what are considered feminine roles in the division of labour. The girls are also instructed on how to dress and sit properly. Feigelman (1980) asserts that children learn the cultural norms of the society in which they were born. When secondary socialisation happens during initiation rites, the norms and values of proper dress and decorum for a girl-child are usually emphasised. For example, initiates are expected to either wear long dresses and skirts or wrap a chitenge (a wrapper) around themselves during the seclusion period, so as not to expose their nakedness.

Furthermore, families would not allow girls to come home late while not subjecting the boy to the same standards. Educators are some of those who have been pointed to as agents of early socialisation (Giddens, 1991 and Coleman, 1990). It is therefore, not surprising to find that school clubs such as the Student Alliance for Female Education (SAFE), Youth Alive and Action AIDS, which are usually run by educators, socialise girls into the norm of abstinence before marriage. These clubs have the common mottos of 'abstinence iliche' (abstinence is the best) and 'virgin power-virgin pride'. These slogans are meant to inculcate in the youths that abstaining from sex is the best way one can be protected from contracting the HIV virus.

Once an individual has been socialised, there is a tendency of such a socialised being to identify with the socialisation agent. This aspect of socialisation helps the socialised individual to form a new identity which identifies with the agent of socialisation (Coleman, 1990). This entails a situation where, for example, children would want to identify with the parents as they form their own identities. However, this identifying component does not only occur between parents and children but also in situations that involve other agents of socialisation. In the case of an initiator and a novice, a novice would want to be identified with the good character of the initiator for example, as she forms her own identity. Further, when one is successfully socialised, they develop a self-policing attitude such that even when the agent of socialisation is absent, they will still act according to the way they were socialised (Coleman, 1990). Hence, many are times when the male and female gender takes up roles according to the way they were socialised and according to what society expects (Dressler, 1969). This means that when



socialisation takes place, it tends to be gender specific. Hence, the next sub-heading discusses the position of gender socialisation theory.

### **2.1.2 Gender socialisation Theory**

The gender socialization theory endeavours to explain phenomenon underlying the social construction of roles, responsibilities and obligations associated with being a man or a woman. These socially constructed roles are influenced by a host of factors. In many societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, access to and control over resources as well as decision-making opportunities. The socially constructed roles then translate into accepted norms held by the societies. It is from these norms that perceptions of whom a man or woman ought to behave or conduct oneself are built. These perceptions are usually guided by traditional background. Therefore, using this line of thought, the gender socialization theory helps to guide the explanation on how women perceive the *Nkolola* in as far as preparing them for their roles and responsibilities in society is concerned.

In general, the gender socialization theory can be observed from the moment of birth of an individual. The child's gender influences the opportunities she or he will experience. Within a few years of life, children begin to form their own new ideas about gender that subsequently guide the types of activities they practice, what they find interesting and the achievements they attain. As children develop their gender of self-concepts, beliefs and motives are informed and transmitted by families, peers, the media and schools. These social contexts both reflect and perpetuate gender roles inequalities in the larger society (Leaper, 2000; Wood and Eagly, 2002 cited in Grusec and Hastings, 2007: 561).

According to Sanders (2007), after birth, the process of sex-role socialization begins immediately. There may be small, physiologically-based differences present at birth that lead girls and boys to perceive the world or behave in slightly different ways. There are also well-documented differences in the ways that boys and girls are treated from birth onward. The behavioural differences between the sexes, such as differences in toy and play preference and in the degree of aggressive behaviour, are most likely the product of complex interactions between the way that the child perceives the world and the ways

that parents, siblings, and others react to the child. The messages about appropriate behaviour for girls and boys intensify differences between the sexes as the child grows older.

The gender self-concepts that children have earlier in life are later formed by the socialisation processes, but, before delving into the specifics of what gender socialisation entails, it is important to briefly discuss what the term gender itself stands for. The term gender has come to have different connotations to different people, but for the purposes of this study, only a few definitions are given. According to Butler (1990), gender is an identity that is constructed in time and through the repetition of acts. Further, gender, which is not a static entity, can also be taken on depending on the context in which the subject finds itself (Butler, 1990; Butler and Salih, 2004).

Culture plays a role in the construction of gender, but that does not mean that gender cannot be subverted, disregarding what culture may prescribe (Butler and Salih, 2004). Cultural practices and attitudes towards sex, for example, tend to shape the way women would respond to sexual relationships. Culture may prescribe a situation where men dominate in relationships and thus shaping the identity of men but at the same time denying the women to have a right over their own bodies, a situation that can make women vulnerable to HIV infections (Baxen and Breidlid, 2009). Thus, the study by Baxen and Breidlid (2009) indicates that women are usually scripted in the role of silence and acceptance when it comes to sexual intercourse in that they have to wait for a man to initiate sex and should he do so, they have to yield often without question.

Butler (1990) suggests that gender is a matter of choice that is contextually dependent. That means that there are certain times when social and/or cultural values may override an individual's choice to distance oneself from the gender that seems to be prescribed by his or her sex. Butler (1990) has indicated that initiates are socialised into household roles that are perceived to be exclusively for the female gender. Many modern women would have liked a situation where they chose not to carry out such chores but the context in which they find themselves in may compel them to do them.

Gender, according to Gagnon and Parker (1995) cited in Baxen and Breidlid (2009: 103):

*Refers to the social construction of roles, responsibilities and obligations associated with being a man or a woman.*

These socially constructed roles are learnt through the process of socialisation and are influenced by a host of factors. In many societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, access to and control over resources as well as decision-making opportunities. Decision-making opportunities for women in Zambia at the governance level is still below acceptable levels because the target of 30 per cent women in decision-making as advocated for by Southern African Development Community (SADC) declaration of 1997 has not yet been realised (GIDD, 2004). And as far as these differences are concerned, those who usually receive a low deal are the female gender.

Having discussed what the term gender refers to, it is then appropriate to state that according to Giddens (2006: 199):

*Gender socialisation begins virtually as soon as an infant is born. Even parents who believe they treat children equally tend to exhibit different responses to boys and girls.*

Girls are usually socialised to take a submissive role in society. When women are socialised to be submissive and subordinate to men, it can create an environment of risk because women will not be able to negotiate safer sexual practices (Ouzgane and Morrell, 2005 cited in Baxen and Breidlid, 2009).

Families, for example, at least in the *Zambian* context, tend to discriminate when allocating roles such that girls are relegated to domestic services while boys are left to play in most instances. This kind of discrimination leads to burdening the girls who will later grow up to be wives and mothers with a lot of responsibilities (Visnathan and *et. al.*, 2006). From an early age, girls are taught to take a subservient role to men because of their gender which culminates into secondary socialisation when the novices are then socialised into the roles that are believed to belong to the female gender.

Though gender and culture are not static but dynamic entities, the extent to which gender roles are becoming more equitable in Zambia is still a bit hazy. Granted, there are some

men who take up roles that are perceived to belong to the female gender, but the majority of them are prevented from doing so because of the context. In Zambia, it is still generally believed that when a man performs such roles, then he has been fed with a love potion to weaken his masculinity and make him docile and submissive. Further, initiation rites inculcate in the women that the domestic domain belongs to them and a man should be considered an outsider (Raising, 2001).

According to the findings from the study that was conducted in Zambia by Simpson (2009):

*Men and women commonly observed that your wife is your mother.*

Wives prepared water for men to clean, indeed they often bathed them; cooked or where there were domestic workers, supervised the cooking of meals and announced in a respectful posture, either kneeling or seated, when meals were ready. Wives washed or supervised the washing of husbands' clothes and cleaned or supervised the daily cleaning of homes. Wives and other female household members spent an extraordinary amount of time and energy each day sweeping and mopping floors:

*In receiving personal care and attention from wives and other women, men both acknowledged their need to be taken care of by women and demonstrated their right, as adult men, to such services (Simpson, 2009: 112,113).*

The above statement thus indicates that the gender roles in Zambia are not yet equitable because the above study was carried out in an urban setting.

In most contexts, the sharing or division of labour between females and males is bound up with the meaning of being 'man' or 'woman' and to challenge such gender division of labour is to 'challenge the basis of core gender identities' (Kabeer, 1983: 59). However, Giddens (2006) argues that modernity has had a considerable influence on what may constitute a gender role as opposed to what society has always believed in. As it has already been discussed, some modern men are now taking up roles that were previously associated with women. In certain homes, though such homes are few, men, sons and male dependants share the household chores equitably with the female members of the

household. On a professional level, it is no longer surprising to see men take up careers such as nursing and hair dressing that were traditionally known to be careers for women.

Furthermore, Raising (2001) indicates that gender relations are changing in urban Zambia. This is because the economic situation in Zambia has been changing to the extent that a number of women have become 'breadwinners' contrary to the traditional concept of men being the providers. Hence, tension arises when the husband still expects the wife to do all the household chores.

Gender socialisation is also cognisant of the regime of institutionalised heterosexuality where a female has to make herself 'object' and 'prey' in that she has to cease becoming an independent human being. She has to be always conscious of the existence of man. This means that a woman usually is perceived not to be a human being in her right unless in relation to a man. Since she is no longer a sovereign subject, she has to be conscious that whatever she embarks on must serve and please the other gender (Jackson and *et. al.*, 1993). In addition, Jackson and *et. al.* (1993) explain that a female also puts herself under a form of self-surveillance, which is a form of patriarchy.

Furthermore, Williams and Bendelow, (1998: 7) notes that:

*The gender discourse, for example, perpetuates the binary of divisions.*

These binaries usually entail that power relations are reproduced as a result of gender construction in some contexts. Therefore, women are usually expected to perform the so called womanly roles even when that performativity may put them at risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. In some contexts, women cannot negotiate for safer sex because society expects or demands them not to dare. One such context is in a marital relationship where sex is believed to be a must for the husband regardless of the circumstances (NAC, 2006).

Failure to perform assigned roles is usually met with great consequences and these usually hinder women from exercising their agency. Consequences may range from marital rape and violence, to divorce. Another consequence is that some men may feel justified to engage in extra-marital relationships and, thus the fear of women losing their

husbands to other women may shape the way they perform the assigned roles. Some studies in Zambia also indicate that some women cannot negotiate for use of condoms for fear of their husbands' accusing them of promiscuity and mistrust (NAC, 2009).

In most African countries, the socialisation that starts in infancy culminates in initiation rituals. During these rites of passage, girls are socialised into their gender and are taught sexuality related issues.

### **2.1.3 Socialisation and gender**

The socialisation and gender theory guides the explanation of phenomenon underlying the perceptions of women towards their male counterparts. It brings together a mixture and interaction of different social aspects that reveal how women view themselves in front of men and how they use cultural traditional initiation ceremonies to bridge the gender gap between them and men. This theory is important to the study as it helps to understand the perceived value that women place on the *Nkolola* to their social well-being.

Socialisation is the process by which individuals learn the culture of their society. In western society, other important agencies of socialisation include the educational system, the occupational group and the peer group. For example, groups whose members share similar circumstances and are often of a similar age. Socialisation is not, however, confined to childhood, but it is a lifelong process (Haralambos and Heald, 1980).

The relational theory contends that women have traditionally built their sense of identity and self-worth on activities that involve caring about and giving others. These roles are not given value which gives women a pervasive sense that what they do is not as valuable as what men do. Let us look at what women go through during initiation; they succumb to the cutting of the clitoris and extension of their labia minora only for men's sexual pleasure. It has been researched that women cannot even value their own feelings, actions and thoughts leading to tolerate the negation inherent in physical and emotional abuse. The researcher's perception about socialisation is that girls and women often deny their own aggression, confidence, and assertiveness. The need to be independent seems

unfeminine and females' fear of acting powerfully may alienate them from traditional and cultural norms and beliefs system.

During the initiation socialisation, the initiates are forced to succumb to abuse; they cannot raise their voices. If they dispute the instructions, they are rejected, insulted and humiliated. The reason behind the quietness is that no woman talks back to her husband or in-laws. The same rules and conditions are applied to those who discuss with the 'outsiders' what happens during initiation (Haralambos and Heald, 1980).

Social, cultural and contextual factors allow patterns of behaviour generally associated with girls or boys, women or men, to emerge (Nkateko, 2010). The term gender rather than non-sexism also provides a deeper understanding of how the initiation system treats females differently from males (Nkateko, 2010).

Gender is a socially acquired characteristic, and includes psychological, social and cultural characteristics, such as ideas about 'masculinity and femininity'. Gender is at times defined as the characteristic practices that are regarded by society to be appropriate to women and men.

Due to the expectation of the adult role, the education of girls in early society is different to that of boys, although initially they both dwell in the same primary and secondary domestic educational milieu. Boys are socialised to be independent and to brave their future on the public sphere. However, girls are socialised and taught their main perspectives on life by older female participants in the primary educational milieu, which is also to be their future adult milieu.

Gender socialisation teaches people that males and females are responsible for different tasks. For example, males are breadwinners, responsible for the family's monetary and physical survival. They are warriors and should be able to protect themselves and their families. They hold the position of authority in all social institutions; in religion and work. In contrast, females are homemakers and nurturers. They manage and direct the affairs of the household by cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children.

Walle and Franklin (1996) state that women are taught about; future duties, about the obligation of fidelity and their partners (husbands), the rules of etiquette regulating relations with their in-laws and that the proper place is one of subordination and to obey their husbands. The idea of gender difference, not characteristic of women and men in position, helps keep the reality of male domination in place. The challenges that females being initiated face are not individual problems but institutional and intended to oppress women.

During the process of socialisation, young girls are taught morals and family values, for example, how to relate and respect the people and their family members. The emphasis is about learning life skills and a right to passage in participation in the social, political and juridical activities of the community. Rites of passage are proposed to serve as the strategy devised by human societies to mediate whatever social upheaval and personal turmoil associated with life's transitions (Walle and Franklin, 1996).

The graduates (initiates) of initiation schools perceive initiation to be a high degree of solidarity, brotherhood and sisterhood. The importance of socialising with one another brings unity towards each other. During the process of initiation, the initiates accept and treat each other with respect. Respect is understood as a spirit of unity and humanity towards each other in respect of their particular schools. The initiates believe that initiation teaches them tolerance, discipline and responsibility.

Some people in Southern Province view initiation as a culture and an initiation school as a place of socialisation. It is perceived as a safe place for women to learn about their cultural beliefs and to admire and understand their respective roles, learn to develop a sense of self, receptive, responsive and initiated girls learn to gain power and position through their personal relationships within their communities and during the initiation ceremonies.

#### **2.1.4 The social identity theory**

The theory of social identity was also found useful for this study which sought to find out why the *Nkolola* rite of passage continues to be practiced in the presence of abundant Western education and amidst accusations of encouraging early sexual debut among



those who undergo it. The social identity theory also explains phenomenon of being part of a group with a common identity in this case the undergoing of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. It helps to guide the explanations of perceptions of married men and women of the *Nkolola* on uninitiated women. In this way, women that have not undergone the initiation ceremony get encouraged to do so just for the sake of obtaining an identity that bestows a sense of belonging to the elite group of initiated women.

As Hogg (1988) argues, social identity theory is concerned with placing people into categories. According to the author (Hogg, 1988: 20):

*The categorisation process produces stereotypical perceptions that is the perception or judgement of all members of a social category or group as showing some characteristics which distinguish them from some other social groups.*

The self is cardinal to the categorisation as classification can be on the basis of similarities and differences to self. It is also the self that can help one to have a sense of social identity to a certain category (Hogg, 1988). Lending strength to this assertion, Giddens (1991) explains that an individual can understand the self when he/she relates to a social network.

Social categories tend to compare each other on the perceived differences and similarities between them. Those who share the same beliefs, passions and ideas tend to identify with each other and at the same time, distance themselves from those who are perceived to be different. These comparisons are important for Jenkins (2004) who argues that without these frameworks of comparisons, it would be difficult to relate to other members of society in a 'consistent and meaningful manner'. Thus, social identity is crucial in the creation of a human world.

Social identity calls for one to recognise or perceive that he or she belongs to a social group, this is, two or more people who share a common identification and that the concept of social identity is a psychological phenomenon (Hogg, 1988; Stets and Burke, 2000). Hogg's writing on social identity is relevant to this study as rites of passage are usually a matter of social identity. The informants believe that the *Nkolola* initiation rite is a social group unique from other ethnic groups. The continuation of the rite ensures the

preservation of a social identity of the wider Tonga group. The women who have been initiated tend to identify with those who have been initiated as well and marginalise those who have not been initiated. The initiated women perceive themselves as having a common social identity. They share the same values and beliefs they can always draw on in their lives.

Layder (2004) is yet another crucial voice to this study. The self is intertwined with social identity and though they are subjects, they have abilities to exercise their own agency. Though power and gender relations tend to constrain the ability to exercise agency, there are certain times when women defy the constraints. This study has shown that some women are able to reject the prescribed behaviour and the dominant discourse of the *Nkolola* that scripts women in accepting the sexual advances of men without question. It has been indicated that women usually refuse to have sex with their husbands if they are not in the mood to do so, contrary to the way they were socialised.

Finally, Maalouf (2000) also explores the theme of identity. He states that groups usually influence other people by trying to make them into whom they are and also socially exclude others. The ‘apprenticeship’ begins in childhood when people are moulded (Maalouf, 2000). Those who are initiated tend to exclude those who are not initiated as it was evidenced by the former’s refusal to allow the latter to attend the initiation sessions, thus socially excluding the uninitiated. Even in day-to-day activities, it is unlikely for the initiated girls to have a close relationship with the uninitiated.

In conclusion, this study makes use of the Socialisation theory to explain phenomenon of developing perceptions towards *Nkolola* depending on the kind of socialization that a woman has been exposed to. It also explains the process of learning ones culture and how to live within it. In similar fashion, the study uses gender socialisation theory and the socialisation and gender theory to understand the value that women put in preparing themselves in taking up their prescribed roles and responsibilities in society and why it is important as a woman to know how to live in society in as far as performing your sex roles is concerned respectively. These theories have contributed widely to understanding the perceptions that married men and women could place on the *Nkolola* ceremony.

Lastly but not the least, the study makes use of the social identity theory to guide the explanation of the phenomenon of seclusion and segregation among women that are initiated against those that are not. This has encouraged the perpetuation of the *Nkolola* as it is seen as an elite group that many women would want to be a part of, hence they undergo the initiation ceremony seeking a social identity.

### ***2.1.5 Theoretical Framework***

After reviewing all the relevant theories, this study adopts the socialization theory as it explains more explicitly on how attitudes and perceptions can be formed. The theory uses such factors as culture, growth, development, and a more general phenomenon of social reproduction to explain structural continuity among societies over time. Socialization plays a cardinal role as young people interact with the environment they are born into and it is through this process that they adopt the norms and form attitudes and perceptions of the cultural values that are imparted into them by elders over a span of time.

## **2.2 Empirical literature review**

Initiation ceremonies though widely practiced are perceived to affect society in different ways. Under the empirical review, the study looks at different literature developed by different authors particularly from two perspectives. The perceived positive side and negative side of initiation ceremonies. The positive perspective looks at initiation as an education tool for good behavioural change and its significance in a woman's life. On the other hand the negative perspective takes into account the sex inequalities brought up by traditional initiation rites as well as the promotion of gender discrimination. Under the same perspective, the study also reviews literature on practices perceived to be harmful in initiation ceremonies.

### **2.2.1 Positive perceptions on initiation ceremony**

According to Hastings (1989), African indigenous education was quite adequate in so far as it met the requirements of the society at the time. Like any good system of education, it had its objectives, scope and methods which clearly reflected the ways of life or cultural patterns of the clan or chiefdom. Traditional African systems of education were, and are still so effective that a total rejection of the African heritage will leave African societies in a vacuum that can only be filled with confusion, loss of identity, and a total break in intergenerational communication (Boateng, 1983). Boateng (1983) further claims that:

*The essential goal of traditional education is still admirable and remains challenging (1983: 336).*

Dwelling on the positive side of initiation rites, the next subdivided passages bring out the contribution of initiation to behavioural change as perceived by many scholars and also highlight on the perceived significance of such rites in traditional African society.

### **2.2.2 Initiation an education tool for good behaviour**

It is widely perceived that the initiation school serves a useful purpose in so far as it teaches good behaviour. Most men present the rite as a cultural practice that upholds the African culture. They describe it as a school where women other than their own mothers

teach initiates the facts of life. They are taught Ubuntu (communitarianism), respect for elders and for one another. According to the International Confederation of Midwives and World Health Organisation (2000: 6);

*Puberty rites also prepare girls for acceptable behaviour as perceived by their culture.*

Turner (1977) further contends that ‘there is inculcated sense of respect for elders, of brotherhood among members of the age set in question, and of skill in practical matters such as the use of arms.’ The parallel may be wildly remote in context and content, but one is irresistibly reminded of the English public schools. Even visiting Tiriki mums are said to be like their English counterparts, alarmed for their offspring but jealously proud of their progress.

A component of the training is also dedicated to instilling moral values and inscribing a gender identity on the teenage girls, that is, what femininity entails. Children attend the initiation on two accounts. Firstly, that they have attained the age of puberty or about to attain that age and the parent (specifically the mother or other female guardian) makes arrangements for the child to undergo training., Secondly, children who, though having attained puberty, are not well disciplined are sent for the initiation to instil good morals, values and discipline (Tong, 1989).

According to Ampim (1909), initiation rites are seen as fundamental to human growth and development as well as socialisation in many African communities. He further argued that these rites function by ritually marking the transition of someone to full group membership. It also links individuals to the community and the community to the broader and more potent spiritual world. Initiation rites are a natural and necessary part of a community, just as arms and legs are natural and necessary extensions of the human body. These rites are linked to individual and community development. Sommer (1969) observed that in rites, there are norms and taboos that try to address the need of the individual human person for security of life and property.

Rites of passage serve a double purpose; preserving the on-going community as a symbol of collective immortality and permanence as well as providing a clear and guided

means for transition from one life stage and sphere of responsibility to another. They thus confirm the hierarchies of values of the community and project an ideal sequence of personal development the individual can look forward to and upon reaching each stage, evaluate his or her maturation against a collective standard. Rites of passage provide the African with the foundation of his or her being: Identity. Sexual identity and the roles of gender identity are enshrined through rites of passage: The males are prepared for their responsibilities in the community as men, and the women prepared for their responsibilities in the community as women, with no confusion. Ampim, (1909), argues that:

*These rites are critical to individual and community development, and it should not be taken for granted that people automatically grow and develop into responsible, community oriented adults.*

Sommer (1969) holds that the vast majority of norms, taboos and prohibitions are directed towards protecting the community and promoting peace and harmony. Communal farmland, economic interests like the market-place, stream, or shrine are generally surrounded with taboos, including who may or may not enter, and when and under what circumstances people are permitted or not to enter such places.

According to Mönnig (1967: 112):

*Men perceive the initiation of the youth among the Bapedi as a sacred institution that is the cornerstone of the whole social and political organisation.*

He argues that it is a way in which the individual acquires the status of citizenship of the tribal community, which will allow her full participation in the social, political and juridical activities of the community.

An ethnographic survey of Cape Town by Schapera (1946) in his study of the Bantu speaking tribes of South Africa revealed that:

*Initiation ceremonies for women managed to inculcate obedience, discipline and general good behaviour among the initiated. The focus of puberty rites was a social, rather than a natural change. Initiations are public affairs, though the activities and knowledge gained are kept secret. The purpose of all*

*initiations was to transmit knowledge and powers that are exclusive to the initiated.*

Lincoln (1981: 90) viewed the initiation as:

*A way of transforming a girl and radically separating her from her childhood existence.*

Furthermore, initiation for girls endows the lives of women with a sense of the meaning and dignity of their status in the community. The emphasis in the initiation is on learning new skills.

The area of morality is yet another relevant avenue through which traditional Africans try to form people and reinforce in them the important idea and value of harmonious community-living. Every social group evolves its distinct ethical code. Every society has its norms of acceptable behaviour, taboos and prohibitions. Many traditional African groups have, in addition, motivational features and incentives through which compliance to the norms of approved behaviour and social ideals are encouraged. There are equally rituals of purification, as well as punitive measures that try to deter and curb the tendency to deviate (Schapera, 1946).

Myerhoff (1986) in her writing, observed that while rites of passage may appear to be the product of tradition and seem to represent consensus about the way things ought to be done in a particular society, they are in fact ways of coping with the ambiguities, uncertainties, and conflicts inherent in any social order. When life flows smoothly and there are no contradictions, there is no need for these cultural interventions. But in all societies, there are certain moments in the life of the individual and the group which seem to require something more, something that will mediate the apparent contradictions and restore a sense of order. Rituals allow this to happen smoothly and unthinkingly. As such, ritual inevitably carries a basic message of order, continuity, and predictability.

As typical oral (rather than formalised) texts, African traditional prayers are very contextual. They fiercely reflect the concrete needs, aspirations, values and relevant life-situation of people making the intercession. The individual's need for protection, good

health and material wealth has its full meaning within the context of the need of the entire community for overall well-being.

According to Brown (1963), the educational purpose of initiation rites is one that has often been stressed by ethnographers, who see in these ceremonies the equivalent of the schooling received by children in Western societies. A very large number of rites do indeed contain periods of instruction and/or tests of competence for the initiate, and this fact certainly lends support to the idea that the purpose of these ceremonies is educational. He argues that during the initiation ceremonies, the girls being initiated are taught many things that are important in one's life. These lessons are seen to help in development and prevention of certain diseases. For example, a girl who is being initiated is taught how to be hygienic during her menstruation periods and how to keep herself healthy during pregnancies. These can help in the prevention of diseases that are caused by dirty and also reduce infant mortality rates (Colson, 1962).

Similarly in Malawi, education is highly valued according to a study conducted by Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC). It was the feeling of most Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants that children must be forced to go to school because it is their future. However, people indicated that in spite of free primary education, many children are out of school. In almost all the areas, more girls drop out of school than boys. Some respondents associated the girls' failure to continue with school to the type of initiation they went through. They pointed out that once the girls underwent the initiation rites, they no longer took school seriously (Women's Voice, 2000).

### **2.2.3 Significance of initiation ceremonies**

Initiation ceremonies are perceived to play a cardinal role in preparing women in many spheres of life. Benneta (1980) states that the importance of women's ceremonies is associated with the division of labour within a community. He emphasises that while some aspects of women's work change radically in the transition from an agrarian to an urban or semi urban existence, the responsibilities of child rearing and care of the household remain remarkably similar. A group may value these responsibilities in the same way that it did previously. According to Benneta's case-study on a Lusaka shanty



town, residents wished to retain as many of the organisational aspects of their villages as possible. For example, they ate in a dare or closed dirt courtyard in front of their houses and preferred to entertain visitors there rather than in a sitting room within their homes.

Stardate (2003) emphasises the ceremony's promotion of group cohesiveness at the expense of individualism. He states that individuals end up becoming loyal to the initiation groups and remain loyal for the rest of their lives. He further stresses that if they have some sort of agenda, they are more likely to adopt that agenda as their own so as to maintain and promote the group and help it to work to achieve its goal. For Stardates (2003), initiation is a tool for social unity of the people in the same cohort. He argues that since individuals are loyal to the initiating groups, they tend to unite them to achieve the intended goals of the group.

Bruce (1981), in his work on initiation, shares the same views as those of Stardates. He also confirms that initiation is a mark of solidarity in which women set themselves apart from men, affirming themselves and their differences from males around them. Rather than an act of oppression, initiation becomes an act of unity among women just as in the theory, participation in socialisation grants access to social rewards that were previously unavailable which leads to unity among women.

Benneta (1980) states that the emergence of women's initiation practices in an indigenous Christian church suggests an attempt to hold the domestic circle intact by retaining critical aspects of the woman's traditional status. Despite new pressures toward autonomy and occupational diversification, these church ceremonies emphasise the continued importance of the bride's virginity and her contribution as a producer of offspring and labour for her husband's lineage and her own in the urban context. Women's initiation becomes a vehicle of cultural preservation in conditions of social flux. Voluntary associations seeking to revitalise parts of the traditional community do so largely through the restoration of the family in new forms. Initiation as an indicator of the preservation of the domestic unit thus becomes a key to the process of cultural change.

Another illuminating work to this study is the one by Murphee (1969), who stipulates that initiation is marked by observance of a number of taboos associated with the initial

menstruation. Such taboos are there to teach the girl hygienic practices associated with menstruation.

UNFPA (2005) looked at initiation as an institution that teaches girls how to deal with menstruation and how to be good sexual partners with their future husbands. For this reason, certain foods believed to affect fertility are prohibited and the instructress during seclusion teaches the girl the importance of good sexual intercourse in marriage and how this should be done. The initiation ceremonies are rooted in deep, conservative traditions. For African females, ceremonies marking their entry into the realm of adults are also a public announcement to the community that she is ready to take up responsibilities as an adult African woman.

African life revolves around the family and therefore, female African initiation ceremonies tend to focus heavily on the preparation of young girls to be good wives and mothers. The mother of a young girl selects a '*ritual mother*' for her daughter. Like a favoured aunt, the ritual mother prepares the young girl for her future role as a wife and mother. The young girl learns the art of cooking and household management (a skill she has been performing beside her own mother since she started walking), music and beautification. The girl is encouraged to leave behind her jaunty, carefree childhood ways and adopt the stature of a woman full of dignity and grace (Colson, 1962). Encouraging a girl to leave behind her jaunty and carefree way of life helps to reduce immorality in the traditional society, which can consequently help to reduce the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV and AIDS.

It is increasingly being recognised that development approaches in the areas of health, specifically Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) in the case of sub-Saharan Africa, are not having the desired effects. HIV rates remain high, despite the substantial financial and human resources invested from governments and donors and the level of effort made in awareness raising campaigns. A new approach which takes into account the lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs and traditional practices, such as marriage rites, initiation rites, funeral rites, that form the basis of a community's perception of health and illness, life and death,

and sexuality has come to be recognised as a potentially more effective way to intervene in matters related to SRH.

Aruia Issufo, a ‘Halifa’ (religious leader and performer of initiation rites) in Nampula Province, Mozambique stated:

*We are concerned with the health of our children, and it is in culture and tradition where this will be resolved.*

In the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)-F Joint Programme for Strengthening Cultural and Creative Industries and Inclusive Policies in Mozambique, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) are working to promote greater integration of a culture, gender and human rights based perspective in national development plans, processes and programmes on SRH (UNFPA, 2003).

Raising (2001) in her study on initiation in urban Zambia, dwelt on issues of reproductive health, marriage, domestic and agriculture duties, respect for elders, her future husband, sexuality and food taboos. She argues that initiation ceremonies for women help them to learn issues concerning reproductive health. This reduces death caused by complications that come about because of failure for women to remain healthy during their pregnancies. Agriculture duties learnt also help women to be productive and increases food security in the households.

Snelson (1970) brings out the economic benefits of the ceremony to the initiates as well as to the society. The novice is taught how to make household utensils and equipment. These are the ones the lady would use in her home when she is married. Crafts made included things like mats, baskets, brooms, pots and many others. Snelson (1970) also states that the education provided at the initiation ceremony is thorough and well balanced in the preparation of the girl for life. He points out that initiation ceremonies are a kind of traditional education that is regarded as one preserving the cultural heritage of the community. It also fosters obedience, unselfishness and endurance of hardship, encourages honesty and self-restraint and respect for the rights of others. All these

attributes are inculcated in the young women that undergo initiation. The novice is taught some difficult tasks that will help shape her into becoming a hardworking woman.

Benneta (1980) states that the girl is also taught endurance in life, for instance, she may be asked to pick up beads with her foot. All these symbolise that she will have to do difficult things in life. She is going to be married and marriage is difficult. She will remember this, so that she does not give up on her marriage easily.

Mwanakatwe (1968) concludes that the whole essence of seclusion is to strengthen the individual at a time of crisis in her life. This will sanction her new status in society after a period of exclusion and instruction and also to assert the authority of society over the individual through the solemnity and rigour of the ritual.

According to Raising (1996), the high rates of teenage pregnancy in many modern societies are attributed to a lack of initiation rites. They do not know how to face the world and so they end up being prey to the vices in society. It is assumed that initiation rites may help prevent unmarried girls from participating in sexual relationships, which can lead to pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV and AIDS.

According to Benneta (1980), the practice of women initiation ceremonies in many societies has recently begun to disappear and with it a confidence in the stability of marriages among many traditional families. Benneta's (1980) findings attribute increased adultery and the apparent rise in divorce rates to the failure to initiate young women and train them gradually in wifely duties and the spiritual dangers of infidelity. He argues that initiation ceremonies help to reduce divorce rates and also dangers of infidelity in societies.

Ocholla-Ayayo (1976) in his study on traditional ideology and ethics among the Southern Luo, states that among other things that girls learn at the initiation ceremony is the importance of being hospitable and generous to relatives and even to strangers. The girl is also taught virtues like avoiding telling lies, abstaining from theft and aggressiveness.

A similar study by Gittinger (1982) revealed that rites are educative because they are forums for fostering attitudes. The initiate is taught to think with the community and to

see the world as the community sees it. The initiate is given a cultural frame of work or grammar, a configuration of images and meanings with which to confront the experience. Gittinger (1982) stressed that this is a form of experimental teaching/learning that conforms to the best theories of pupil centred life; centred education today.

Shorter (1987) argued that this type of education was gradual and experimental not simply conceptual, it transformed the initiates from their attitude and transforms them from their earlier inferior status to a higher one; from childhood to maturity, there was a radical change in thinking, talking, feeling and doing, based on a world view.

Benneta's (1980) study on initiation ceremonies focuses on the importance of practical demonstrations of all the teachings and instructions given to the novice at such ceremonies. He cites a few examples. For instance, the instructor would demonstrate a cooking lesson by actually cooking, beginning with the first part of the cooking process up to the end.

Another ritual that is fading, to the approval of many women's rights groups, is that of female circumcision. This practice is still quite common among the Masai and Himba people of southern Africa (Turner, 1987). As in most African societies, a young girl is considered an adult once she is eligible to marry. For the Masai and Himba, a young girl will not be suitable for marriage unless she undergoes the circumcision ceremony. Female African initiation ceremonies, much like their male counterparts, provide instructions to females on what society will expect of them as adults. Having imitated their mothers from birth, most girls are already fully aware of what will be expected of them as women. The ceremony, however, is the public expression of this expectation by the society - a positive form of peer pressure. In most cultures, the initiation ceremony is something a young girl eagerly looks forward to, prepares for, and honourably takes part in. In essence, the ceremony is the ultimate expression of her flowering womanhood (Turner, 1987).

Children are taught the necessary skills for adulthood including among other things; problem solving, rules and taboos of the society, social responsibility, what is considered appropriate behaviour for women and men and can receive further clarification of his or

her purpose or life mission. Oftentimes, successful completion of the rite of adulthood is publically celebrated with a 'coming out ceremony' or reintroduction to society.

Often, much attention, emotion and politicking is placed on circumcision as a part of adulthood rites in African societies, particularly circumcision of women. What is lost during this debate is that it is not the only aspect of becoming an adult and while with modernisation, it is necessary to revisit the purpose and effects of such 'controversial' rituals; this should be done only through African agency.

As children mature physically and therefore, sexually, a special puberty rite of passage, initiation, is meant to help them move smoothly from childhood into adulthood. The purpose of initiation is, above all, educational. Through initiation, young adults further learn about the traditions and expectations of their community and will therefore, be able to contribute to the maintenance of social order.

They must die to their child self in order to be reborn into an adult self, one characterised by greater knowledge of the world, deeper consciousness, insight and wisdom. The notions of symbolic death and resurrection are central to the initiation process. Also, those undergoing initiation must take a vow of secrecy. Initiation rites vary from community to community. However, they follow a general pattern. The first step is the separation of a group of adolescent novices from their usual surroundings to be secluded in an isolated place away from the community. There, they will be tested and taught by elders. The testing usually involves demonstrating physical endurance, mental strength, and intelligence. It is often the time when males are circumcised and females are excised. They must undergo the whole operation without showing any sign of fear and without expressing any discomfort. Failure to demonstrate fortitude would bring shame and dishonour to them and their family (Turner, 1987).

After the period of seclusion is over, the initiates are reincorporated into their community, and this marks the time of their rebirth. Their hair may be shaved off, their old clothes may be thrown away, and they may receive new names, all symbolic gestures indicating that they have become new, mature individuals. The reunion of new initiates

with their family and community is a collective festive time. All rejoice now that the new initiates are ready to assume their new place in the community (Turner, 1987).

One of the responsibilities and prerogatives associated with the completion of initiation is marriage. Initiation, in fact, prepares the young adults for marriage. Indeed, in most African societies, one can get married only after having been initiated. This is often the time that young people receive information and instruction regarding marriage, sex, family life, and procreation. Among the Masai, for instance, the Eunoto ceremony, which lasts for a whole week, is the rite of passage that marks the transition from childhood into adulthood for the males. It is an elaborate ceremony that marks the end of a relatively carefree life and the beginning of greater responsibilities. The initiates are then expected to watch over the community's cattle (which are highly regarded as God's unique gift to the Masai), participate in cattle raids, and kill a lion. At the end of the Eunoto ceremony, the young man's hair is shaved, thus formally indicating the passage to manhood. In addition to having their hair shaved, they also have their skin painted with ochre in preparation for marriage. They then marry and start families. Those who have slept with circumcised women are denied this rite of passage, as in Masai culture this is taboo (Mazama, 2009).

In Ghana, the most well preserved puberty rites are the Dipo of the Krobo ethnic group and the Bragoro of the Ashanti's. These ceremonies mark the entry of young women into adulthood. Only a small section of ethnic groups usually found in the northern parts of the country have initiation rites for men and where they occur they are done in secret and not given as much prominence as that for young women.

In the Akan culture, women represent the beauty, purity and dignity of the society and are guarded against corruption by traditional laws and regulations. The most lasting impressions about life and the character of children are built during their early and formative years, which they spend mostly with their mothers. So the Akans believe that they need properly trained mothers with good morals to bring up good children. It is, therefore, little wonder that the initiation of women into adulthood is given more prominence in the Akan society than that of men.

Under the supervision of the queen mother of the town or village in collaboration with some female opinion leaders, young women who have had their first menstruation are secluded from the community for a period between two and three weeks during which they are taught the secrets of womanhood. During this period of seclusion the girls are given lessons in sex education and birth control. They are also taught how to relate to men properly so that they can maintain a good marriage and their dignity in society.

After the period of seclusion, a *durbar* is held which is attended by the chief and almost everybody in the community. The newly initiated women are dressed scantily with very beautiful African beads and cosmetics, showing off their vital statistics. Young men of marriageable age troupe there to feast their eyes on the young women and to select their prospective wives.

Amidst drumming and dancing the rituals are carried out with the spirit of Oynankopong Kwame, Asase Yaa and the departed ancestors invoked to bless the participants and ensure their protection, blessing and fertility during their period of motherhood.

According to traditional law, no woman is allowed to get married without having gone through the puberty rites and every young woman must remain a virgin prior to this. These laws ensure that young women grow up disciplined enough to control their sexuality and to prevent them from premature motherhood and unwanted babies. So important are these laws that any woman who gets pregnant or breaks her virginity before the rites are performed is sometimes ostracised together with the man responsible for it. A heavy fine is then imposed on the guilty party. Thereafter, purification rites are performed to rid the society of the negative repercussions of their actions (Osei-Adu, 1982).

Gordon (1982) contends that the elders have unquestioned authority over the novices, based on their personifications of tradition. It is absolute authority calling for absolute obedience:

*The elders represent the absolute value of society where the common good and the general interest are supreme (Turner, 1982: 100).*



What is at stake is not individual comfort and welfare but the cultural norms that society deems requisite for a woman in their understanding of this status. The obedience of novices to the elders, represent their total obedience to the society the elders represent.

The above attitude is relevant in a contemporary society where one is striving to achieve his goal. In a ceremony that is presided by a bishop during ordination, the priest lays down prostrate to show his unquestionable attitude towards his ordinance. The religious man pronounces his vows in absolute obedience. The bishop represents the absolute value of the society and common interests are supreme (Turner, 1982).

All Fundamental Geographic Data sets (FGDs) conducted in Malawi in the north mentioned *chinamwali* as a practice that all girls underwent to mark the transition between childhood and adulthood. Known as *Amasundo*, *Ugeza umwali* or *Usungu* among the various ethnic groups in the northern parts of Chitipa District, and *Umwali* among the Tumbuka of Southern Chitipa and Mzimba, and the Tonga of Nkhata Bay and Ngoni of Mzimba Districts, *chinamwali* is a practice whose principal purpose is instruction or counselling for girls. *Chinamwali* begins with attainment of puberty, that is, it begins when a girl experiences her first menses. In Mzimba, on attaining puberty, the girl usually informs an aunt or grandmother about her new experience. The girl is then taken for confinement for the entire period of her menses (usually a week). Elderly women counsel the girl in many matters including how she should take care of herself every time she menstruates. For example, she is advised not to put salt into food; to regularly wash herself and her underclothes, and the proper way of sitting in the presence of other people (MHRC, 2005).

The girl is counselled on good manners especially when interacting with adults. She is expected to show respect for elders. She is told to avoid sexual relationships with men and boys before marriage or risk pregnancy out of wedlock. She is also told to stop playing with girls that have not yet attained puberty to show that she is now grown up and must, therefore, begin behaving like an adult by associating with fellow grownups.

The girl is taken back for confinement on commencement of her second menses. The elderly women continue to give her instructions. She leaves the house of isolation after a week and after being shaven of all hair, including pubic hair.

In some areas in Malawi, the local name for girls' initiation varies from place to place, depending on the age of the girls in some cases. In Mulanje for example, it may be known as *chidototo*, *zoma* or *masosoto*. In Mangochi, the girls' initiation takes different names such as *msondo*, *thimbwidza* or *chindakula*, while in Nsanje, it is generally known as *maseseto*. In the Central region, it is commonly referred to as *chinamwali*, and the terms *kukula chinamwali*, *kutha msinkhu*, *kugwa mdothi*, or *kuyamba kusamba* are commonly used (MHRC, 2005).

Like in the Northern region, in the Central region, when a girl has attained puberty she informs her friends, mother or grandmother. An elderly woman known as *phungu* in turn approaches *nankungwi* (the girls' counsellor) who verifies that indeed the girl has attained puberty, after which the village headman is notified about the development. The *nankungwi* then takes the girl into confinement where the girl is advised and counselled for seven days. A girl who has good manners is applauded and encouraged to maintain her good behaviour before and after getting married. A girl with bad manners is strongly rebuked, and in extreme cases can be beaten by the *nankungwi* (MHRC, 2005).

During this period of retreat, the girl is not allowed to see boys and men. She is not allowed to perform the daily household chores such as drawing water or collecting firewood. After the advice, the girl's parents are required to give '*nkhuku*' (chickens) to the *nankungwi* as a mark of appreciation. Among some ethnic groups such as the Ngoni of Ntcheu, the girl is shaven to show the community/village that she is now an adult (MHRC, 2005).

The girls are advised to avoid the following: Having sexual intercourse with men before marriage because they can get pregnant or can die as a result of maternal complications; associating with girls who have not yet undergone this rite; eating eggs for fear of becoming barren and entering their parents' bedroom.

In addition, the initiates are taught how to carry out household chores such as cooking, washing, gardening, maize pounding, and fetching firewood, *kuzira ndi kukulungiza nyumba* (Smearing and smoothening the floor of a house). They are also taught about etiquette and good behaviour towards their husbands once they are married, and to dress respectfully by wearing clothing that covers their bodies, particularly from the knees up (MHRC, 2005).

Ngonis and Chewas of Ntcheu, Mchinji and Dowa were of the view that this is an acceptable cultural practice which should be maintained because '*ndi chikhalidwe cha makolo*' (it is our culture) (MHRC, 2005).

For many girls, the 'training' they receive during initiations is more relevant to a girl's life as it extends to the roles and responsibilities she has been used to throughout her young life. Instead of caring for younger children, she is encouraged to have a baby of her own. Instead of helping to head her family household, she is encouraged to marry and take care of her own home and family. The worry is where does academic schooling fit into this scenario. The process of initiation appears to have a negative impact on girls' education, and arguably perpetuates the negative attitudes that exist regarding the importance of academic education. Not only this, but uncovering the truth behind cultural beliefs and practices demonstrate that gender issues are deeply embedded within culture and society in Malawi and show that the issue of gender in relation to education extends far beyond the confines of the school environment (MHRC, 2005).

The Xhosa of South African culturally have a strong emphasis on traditional practices and customs inherited from their forefathers. Each person within the Xhosa culture has his or her place which is recognised by the entire community. Starting from birth, a Xhosa person goes through graduation stages which seek to recognise his growth, and hence assign him a recognisable place in the community. This results in a number of stages that one must go through, each one of which is marked by a specific ritual aimed at introducing the individual to their counterparts and hence to the ancestors (Osei-Adu, 2002).

Starting from '*imbheleko*' which is a ritual performed to introduce a new born to the ancestors to '*Umphumo*'; from '*Indodana*' (young elder) to '*Ixhego*' (elder). These rituals and ceremonies are still practiced today, but many urbanised Xhosa people do not follow the rituals rigidly. The '*Ulwaluko*' and '*Intonjane*' are also traditions which separated this tribe from the rest of the Nguni tribes. These are performed to recognise the transition from boyhood to manhood and from girl to woman respectively. Zulus once performed the ritual but King Shaka stopped it because of war in the 1810s. In 2009, it was reintroduced by King Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu not as a custom, but as a medical procedure to curb HIV infections and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's). This topic has caused many arguments and fights among Xhosas and Zulus. That is because both sides see themselves as superior to the other because it practices or forsakes certain customs (Osei-Adu, 2002).

All these rituals are symbolic to one's development. Before these are performed, the individual gets to spend time with elders in the community in a bid to teach them of the 'Dos' and 'Don'ts' in preparation for the next stage. The '*Iziduko*' (clan) for instance, which matters most to the Xhosa identity (even more than names and surnames) are transferred from one to the other through word of mouth. Knowing your '*Isiduko*' is vital to the Xhosas and it is considered a shame and '*Uburhanuka*' (lack-of-identity) if one does not know one's clan. This is considered so important that when two strangers meet for the first time, the first identity that gets shared is '*Isiduko*'. It is so important that two people with the same surname but different clan names are considered total strangers but two people from the same clan but with different surnames are regarded as close relatives. This forms the roots of '*Ubuntu*' (neighbouring), a behaviour synonymous to this tribe to extending a helping hand to a complete stranger when in need. *Ubuntu* goes further than just helping one another. It is so deep that it even extends to looking after and reprimanding your neighbour's child when in the wrong. Hence, the saying 'it takes a village to raise a child' (Osei-Adu, 2002).

One traditional ritual that is still regularly practiced is the manhood ritual, a secret rite that marks the transition from boyhood to manhood (*Ulwaluko*). After ritual circumcision, the initiates (*abakhwetha*) live in isolation for up to several weeks, often in

the mountains. During the process of healing, they smear white clay on their bodies and observe numerous taboos (Osei-Adu, 2002).

In modern times, the practice has caused controversy, with over 300 circumcision- and initiation-related deaths since 1994, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV via the practice of circumcising initiates with the same blade.

Girls are also initiated into womanhood (*Intonjane*). They too are secluded, though for a shorter period. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Female Genital Circumcision (FGC) is not practised (Osei-Adu, 2002).

Among the Masai of Kenya, circumcision is regarded highly as a mark of distinction and a symbol of valour and/or manhood and there are specific periods during which the circumcision rite is performed. Boys must prove themselves ready by performing certain manly tasks, including attending to cattle before they can be circumcised. When the boys feel they are ready, they approach junior elders and ask them to open a new circumcision period. For the Masai, circumcision determines the role a boy will play throughout his life, as a leader or a follower. A boy who cries out during the procedure is branded a coward and shunned for a long time and his mother is disgraced, whereas a boy who is brave and who has led an exemplary life becomes the leader of his age group. It takes months of work to prepare for circumcision ceremonies among the Masai. The exact date of such an event is rarely known until the last minute (Osei-Adu, 2002).

Both male and female circumcisions have cultural and religious significance in some African societies. For example, if the request for a new circumcision period is approved, the Masai boys begin a series of rituals, including the *Alamal Lenkapaata*, preparation for circumcision or the last step before the formal initiation. Before Masai boys are circumcised, they must have a *liabon*, a leader with the power to predict the future, guide them in their decisions. The boys decorate themselves with chalky paint and spend the night out in the open. The elders sing, celebrate and dance throughout the night to honour the boys. It is worthwhile to note that, once a circumcision period ends, it may not be opened again for many years. The circumcision rite is taken seriously in African culture and religion (Osei-Adu, 2002).

### **2.3.0 Negative perceptions of initiation ceremonies**

The perceived ideal roles and characteristics of women and girls influence how girls and boys are socialised in the home, community and school. Because girls and women in general are considered physically weaker and less capable than men, they are often overtly protected and supervised to keep them from what is considered threatening to their safety, which is physical, sexual, mental and emotional safety. Oetting (1999), points out that in some rites, after a certain age, girls are not expected to look at men directly in the eye and are expected to appear humble and respectful before their elders. This attitude and the subsequent socialisation of girls, has a number of effects. One is that it makes it difficult for girls to fully benefit from the participatory, discovery methods that are recommended because they will be reluctant to ask questions, participate fully in discussions or work in groups with members of the opposite sex. The next passage brings out the sex inequalities that are perceived to arise as a result of traditional rites and initiation. Thereafter, the passage looks at the perceived gender discriminatory aspect of initiation rites and the promotion of harmful practices.

### **2.3.1 Inequality in sex roles and responsibilities**

According to Oetting (1999), Parents and community attitudes are mainly influenced by traditional rites regarding the ideal roles of women and girls in society. Traditionally, the only roles available to women were those of wives and mothers. Women were, thus, seen as nurturers and mainly as providers of support to men who worked to provide for the family. Being physically weaker, women were therefore, also perceived as being less capable and requiring the protection and guidance of men.

In traditional Tonga culture, the more wives and girlfriends a man has, the greater his status in society. The wives and girlfriends are regarded as tools of production. Children are symbols of that production and status. Hence, the more children a man has, the greater his status.

The wider impact of this traditional view of women in Tonga society is that women are unfulfilled. Sex within marriage is reported as not often being an enjoyable experience for women, rather an act submitted to upon demand, and the inequality in the home leads

to women feeling that they are suffering in their marriages. This often causes women to seek emotional and sexual fulfilment with other men, and the result is that both husband and wife end up having extra-marital sexual relationships. This obviously increases the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDS.

In traditional Tonga land, there were strict preparations undertaken by boys and girls who were coming of age and reaching sexual maturity. These traditional preparations were done in privacy by the tribal clan and these were the methods through which boys and girls were taught about sex and relationships.

*Gobelo* was a short preparation undertaken by boys to explain to them the roles, duties and rights in marriage. *Nkolola* is a much longer preparation period, of a few months, undertaken by girls to teach them how to satisfy their husbands sexually and their role in marriage. *Nkolola* literally means, 'in the hut', which is where girls are taken for these preparations. On completion, girls' new sexual 'maturity' is celebrated with *Nkolola* ceremony, involving the wide community.

Over the last few decades, this kind of traditional preparation has been decreasing and *Gobelo*, for boys has nearly died out. Because talking about sex and relationships is completely culturally inappropriate outside of *Gobelo* and *Nkolola*, the decline in these traditional preparations have left a gap in young people's education which is having an impact on cultural attitudes and expectations of sex and relationships. With no culturally appropriate alternatives, young people are left to form their ideas about sex and relationships from the media: from television, more recently, videos and DVDs and through access to pornography. What these portray about sex and relationships are not an accurate or helpful representation, and only serve to fuel myths, misconceptions and attitudes that promote unrealistic expectations of sex, promiscuity and ultimately lead to unfulfilling sexual relationships (Kogelenberg, 2009).

These attitudes have prevailed even in current times when socio-economic changes have resulted in changes to roles women are now expected to undertake. Socio-economic changes have made education necessary, not just for the purposes of providing income earning opportunities, but also for the potential to contribute to the improvement in the

standards of living of individuals, families and communities. The initiation ceremonies consolidate the cultural notion that women hold an inferior position to men in society. Girls are taught to be responsive to the needs of their male counterparts, reinforcing the belief that men are powerful within society, which consequently is believed to increase the likelihood of violence and exploitation against women and girls. This is believed to be heightened in poorer areas-poverty exacerbates gender-based violence as poverty disempowers people and the worry is that men who feel disempowered look for ways to feel empowered. One of the ways they do this is to exploit weaker people, who are unavoidably the women and children.

This notion is nonetheless fading slowly with the emergence of women's rights and advocacy groups. Further, government policies aimed at empowering women to seek positions of influence as well as preferential employment have elevated the status of women today.

Initiation ceremonies are seen to mark the transition from girl to woman, and they can have a significant impact on the mind-sets of young girls. Initiation ceremonies have a seriously detrimental effect on education because often, once going through the initiation process, girls no longer value its importance. According to Gajraj and Schoemann (1991) in Malawi, gender roles are clearly defined in all aspects of society. Young girls are expected to fulfil household chores and to care for younger children from a very young age, whereas boys are left to play with their peers. Women are expected to fulfil many roles such as taking care of the home, caring for the children, fetching water and firewood, working on the farms, whilst at the same time taking care of the daily needs of her husband. The situation in rural Zambia specifically is not different from the Malawian case (Gajraj and Schoemann, 1991).

### **2.3.2 Gender discrimination**

Traditional initiation rites are perceived to promote gender discrimination in many aspects of life. The MHRC (2005) observed that the initiation practice and *chisamba* impinge on a number of rights of the girl child such as the right to education, the right to health, and the right to personal liberty and dignity. It makes a number of



recommendations including the need for sensitisation programmes targeting *anamkungwi* and chiefs on the disadvantaged situation of girls in the communities and the effects of harmful cultural practices on the lives of young girls.

Ntata and Sinoya (1999) examined customary law and the UN Conventions on Women and Children's rights and found that there were more cultural practices that contradicted or were in conflict with CEDAW and Committee on the right of the Child (CRC) than those which complemented the Conventions.

Women's Voice (2000) investigated traditional practices and their effects on women and children's rights and found that a number of cultural practices account for gender disparities in Malawi. It found that gender discrimination starts right from birth. When a boy is born, there is *nthunguru* (ululation) in the room where the child is born. The attendants are too happy because he is the owner of the land (King). When a girl is born, there is only information. A girl's birth does not go with *nthunguru* ...and they only say that *mwanakazi munyithu wababika* (our fellow woman is born) (Ntata and Sinoya, 1999).

During group discussions and interviews which Gajraj and Schoemann (1991) had with head teachers and teachers in Malawi, it was revealed that low enrolment and high dropout rates for girls at all levels of education were stated as some of the main reasons for the relatively low numbers of girls participating in Science and Mathematics . It was the opinion of many of those who participated in the study that one of the main reasons for this low enrolment and high dropout is the negative attitude that many parents have towards the education of girls. This negative attitude was attributed to traditional socio-cultural beliefs regarding gender roles and abilities.

When a *Mursi* girl has reached puberty and to mark the change of identity from girl to woman, she becomes a *bansanai*. To mark this change, teens begin the process of stretching their lower lip (similar to in process to ear stretching so prevalent in western culture today). They do this by cutting a centimetre long incision in their lower lip and plugging it with a wooden peg.

Once the initial cut is healed, it is replaced with a larger peg and as stretching takes place is replaced with increasingly larger pegs. Once the hole is large enough, the first clay or wooden plate (approx. 4 cm across) is inserted. Over a year, plates become progressively larger. Women choose how far to stretch, but final plates can measure from eight (8) to more than twenty (20) centimetres with some lower teeth being removed to accommodate them. It is traditional for only *Mursi* men to make wooden plates to be worn by unmarried women about 6-12 months prior to being ready for marriage.

In African tradition and culture, women were expected to exclusively assume the roles of mothers and wives. Women were seen as nurturing beings and as such were expected to be the home makers and take care of the children. They were also expected to be obedient and subservient to the men. Women were seen as less capable, physically, mentally and in all areas outside their accepted roles, than men. As a result, women were seen as requiring protection, guidance, supervision and leadership from men. It was thus accepted that men would fill decision making leadership capacities in society, while women played a mainly supportive/nurturing role. With time, socio-economic changes have resulted in an expansion of the roles that women play, out of necessity and sometimes choice.

However, the perception of women and their accepted roles and perceived capabilities have remained the same, that is traditional. Many people therefore, have difficulty accepting that there is a need to equip women with the skills and knowledge necessary, through education, to enable them to take up their new roles and function effectively in the modern world.

In a UNESCO commissioned study on the statistical issues among the excluded from primary education, conducted by Gajraj and Schoemann (1991), it was revealed that some parents were reported to be reluctant to send their daughters to school because of the belief that education and school could be a corrupting influence. In some communities, there was the view that in co-educational schools, as most primary schools are, girls' morals would be corrupted because of the amount of time they would spend with boys. There was also fear for the physical and sexual safety of girls in school due to cases of physical and sexual harassment and abuse from peers and teachers in the school.

Where schools are situated long distances away, parents also worry about their daughters' safety while travelling to and from school. This view was also the reason why many parents were reported to be reluctant to allow their daughters to attend extra-tuition after school as in most cases the teachers involved are men and as these sessions are usually held in the evening. Parents are also reluctant to let their daughters travel late.

Plan UK (2011) observed that Girls and also boys, throughout the world are subjected to many violent and discriminatory practices which include initiation rites. They argued that such harmful practices are performed in the name of culture, religion or tradition and even sanctioned by customary laws. Harmful practices, also called social and cultural practices, have a significant impact on the well-being of girls and young women. Such behaviours, customs, attitudes or practices are generally based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles.

Plan UK (2011) also observed that although boys and girls suffer from harmful practices, the girl child is more vulnerable to the socially-constructed discriminatory gender roles. Furthermore, girls may experience discrimination based on their age. The dominant view in most societies is that children occupy an inferior position both in the family and in society at large. With the multiple levels of discrimination that they experience, girls and young women are relegated to the bottom of power structures and power relations in the family and in the community, thus limiting their influence, if any, on decisions which affect their well-being and making them vulnerable to violence and abuse.

Plan UK (2011) study found that in the majority of child marriages, however, there was often an element of coercion involved: parents, guardians or families put pressure on children or force them into marriage. Early marriage is accepted as the norm in many countries and girls may give their consent as a duty and sign of respect to their family and community. However, where one of the parties in a marriage is under the age of eighteen (18) years old, consent cannot always be assumed to be 'free and fair' and is rarely in the best interest of the girl.

Greenland (1983), at UCLA school of public health, Los Angeles, California in United States of America in his study on control-initiated case-control studies felt that another

issue is that because girls are expected to be obedient and socialised to feel that boys and men are in some ways their superiors, many are vulnerable to physical and sexual harassment and abuse and lack the confidence, skills and knowledge of such situations. This exposes them to the risk of pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) and the resulting consequences, including school dropout. This harassment has also been proved through research to have a negative effect on girls' attitudes towards school and their ability to focus on and perform well in their academic activities.

Traditional African education, like any system of education, had and still has its own weaknesses and strengths. In the modern context, however, and in light of Africa's moves for rapid economic, political, technical and cultural developments, traditional African education falls far too short of what Africa needs to accomplish. Traditional education was confocal and, therefore, exclusive of others who did not belong to the particular ethnic group. If it were not so, the various inter-ethnic wars in Africa would have been less. Granted, there were many other reasons that gave rise, and still do, to ethnic antagonisms, the educational process and content are not immune and cannot be discarded out of the variables or reasons that cause ethnic antagonisms.

According to Hastings (1989), the weaknesses in traditional African rites were explicitly revealed with the advent of Christianity and the European formal school system. Tribal education was not an education for change. It demanded conformity, but not individuality, creativity or individual uniqueness. It taught strict obedience to the elders' rules and authority, which were not always necessarily founded, so that when the missionaries brought their schools into Africa, it became a 'refuge' for those Africans who wanted to be different from other members of the group. The old system assumed that human nature was constant; that there was no revolution to upset the status quo of the old order. To this old order's amazement, Western schools in Africa became places to go to earn diplomas and degrees, and therefore, social prestige, fine clothes, cars, houses, economic and political power. As such, it is often argued that this type of education has alienating effects on its subjects.

The ability of African traditional religions to promote the community ideal of peaceful and harmonious co-existence in contemporary African society is in a state of progressive decline. The trend is much more noticeable in urban cities like Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire), Accra (Ghana), Nairobi (Kenya) and Yaoundé (Cameroon) than in rural towns and villages. The rate of displacement of the traditional religion by the forces of radical social change in Africa is generally slower in rural areas than in urban cities (Hastings, 1989).

Brown (1963) states that ritual mother will also school the young girl in the art of seduction during the initiation ceremony. The ability to please a man in every way is an art taken seriously by the initiating women. A special string of beads may be worn loosely about her hips as a visual gift to her husband. This focus on seduction, however, can lead to a high-rate of promiscuity. The girls after being initiated can start practicing the skills they learnt and even start involving themselves in sex before marriage to see if the lessons had changed their way of handling men in bed during sex. This can be a recipe for increase in the levels of sexually transmitted diseases and even early marriages and the number of school dropouts. All these have an adverse impact on the development process of the individual and the society as a whole.

According to Plan UK (2011), one in every three girls in the developing world is married by the age of 18. Early and forced marriage is most prevalent where poverty, birth and death rates are high, there is greater incidence of conflict and civil strife and lower levels of overall development, including schooling, employment and healthcare. Although the average age at first marriage is gradually increasing worldwide, the pace of change is slow.

Oxenbergh and Wolper (1996) have argued that women's rights are violated in many ways every day but these violations are ignored. They claim that the mere extension of existing human rights protection to women is insufficient. Women rights protection must also take into consideration the traditions that tend to reduce women's power to make decisions. This involves traditional ceremonies.

On the impact on HIV and AIDS, a study by Mbozi *et. al.* (1998) raised a different dimension on initiation ceremonies. They believe that the emphasis on submissiveness of

a woman to a man and sexual satisfaction partly accounts for the disempowerment of the woman. The woman fails to negotiate for safe sex in order to please the husband. The idea of 'dry sex' is emphasised and is regarded as another widespread culturally inspired sexual habit in Zambia. But with HIV and AIDS, concerns have been raised linking it to HIV transmission due to genital ulceration of both male and female organs during sexual intercourse. This in turn facilitates the exchange of blood agents, including HIV.

A research done by UNIFEM (2003), stipulates that women are initiated to practice dry sex, this involves women using herbs to tighten their vaginas and absorb the vaginal fluids. The consequences are that dry sex makes most women become more vulnerable to cancer and HIV infections. This comes about because bruises are caused in the vagina since the man has to force his way in. Blood contact enhances the easy spread of HIV and AIDS.

Benneta (1980) observed that rites instruct young women in their customary familial responsibilities and loyalties. He argued that while the situation of men as labour migrants and wage earners may change extensively, the same could not be said of their female counterparts. Rites symbolically propose that the responsibilities of the wife and mother will remain intact. This perpetuates the inequalities in the society between men and women. Women are not seen to be wage earners but only as wives who are supposed to be at home taking care of the children. This reduces the power of women as decision makers since the majority will have low levels of education and will not have the sources of income. Women will then remain vulnerable to the abuse of the male counterparts.

Another study by UNFPA (2005) on UNFPA and government decentralisation: a study of country experiences in Africa, also confirms that initiation rites reinforce gender stereotypes, encouraging young men to assume dominance and young women to accept their lower status. Therefore, after initiation it has been proved that most girls take less interest in school. All they think of is marriage or simply having sex with men so that they can practice the skills learnt. This results into early marriages, unwanted pregnancies and increases on the number of girls who drop out of school.

In Zambia, the timing of sexual activity initiation and the societal control of sexual relations among adolescents varies across ethnic groups. The Bemba, for example, expect teenage females to be chaste before marriage. The Chewa, on the other hand, tolerate limited and discrete sexual relations among the young. One of the most common traditional methods of imparting family life education among Zambian ethnic groups is through initiation ceremonies. The Bemba, a large Zambian ethnic group, seclude the teenage woman from a few days to a month at the commencement of her first menstruation. Elderly women, chosen by the initiate's parents, instruct and test the ability of the teenager to perform the '*Cimwangalala*' dance. This is a dance every Bemba woman is expected to know (Peltzer and Likwa, 1991). This can lead to girls engaging in sexual practices at tender age.

Although the goal of the rites is to celebrate a young girl's new maturity, it is also a forum for attracting a husband. To afford the best possible selection, the girl will travel with her female mentor to nearby villages to perform the rites. This also encourages early marriages (UNFPA, 2005).

### **2.3.3 Negative practices in initiation ceremonies**

Some initiation ceremonies in certain societies are also perceived to encourage prevalence of negative practices that impinge on the well-being of men and women but more especially women. One such practice at initiation ceremony is the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The practice of FGM destroys sexual pleasure. The health risks associated with FGM are undisputed. These include immediate complication of haemorrhage, infections such as septicaemia, tetanus, psychological distress, increased vulnerability of contracting HIV, damage to adjacent organs, violent pain which cause collapse and sudden death. This is relevant to my study in that it tries to elaborate how the rights of women are infringed due to traditional beliefs and practices.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) involves the cutting off of the tips of the girls' clitoris using finger nails. An egg or a wooden penis is forced into the girl's vagina to widen it so that it can accommodate any size of penis. The size of the wooden penis could be compared to the size of a Fanta bottle. Some communities have stopped practicing genital

mutilation after witnessing several deaths due to this practice. Many people have advocated for its total abolition because of the risk the practice poses.

However, boys tend to have less elaborate rites of passage. The Mental Health Resource Centre (MHRC, 2005) found that some structured mode of instruction for boys was done at the onset of puberty. Puberty was said to be marked by a disease called *sila* (a high fever accompanied by general body weakness and onset of wet dreams). Boys going through such an experience are given a chicken (usually white in colour) cooked with a bitter herbal mixture. Instructions in connection with people's expectations of an adult, including what the boy should expect when he gets married, are delivered on the single day when he is supposed to eat the chicken prepared with the bitter mixture.

The boys' undergo circumcision where instruments which are crude and unsterilised are used. A big knife or sharp fingernails were used for the operation. Sometimes one tool was used on all participants. This practice is amenable to the spread of STIs including HIV and AIDS.

The fact that boys were asked to take a concoction made from a mixture of foreskins and herbs is very unhygienic. On the other hand, cooking of food for the boys from water, which was used to wash the private parts of the wife of the one who administers the circumcision, puts the health of the boys at risk.

It can also be said that encouraging boys to indulge in sexual activities after initiation (*kutaya mafuta*) with any girl as soon as they get home promotes sexual abuse of both boys and girls. These acts not only exposed young boys and girls to STIs including HIV and AIDS, but could also lead to teenage pregnancies and eventual drop out from school. Thus, the practices as much negatively affected the children's right to health as they did the children's right to education. Advising the boys not to sleep with girls who were menstruating and those who had recently given birth did not assist the young boys to abstain from sex. This was quite risky in the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. In fact, it was encouraging boys to be promiscuous (MHRC, 2005).



In some communities in Mali, Senegal, Niger it is believed that the sexual organs, especially the clitoris, of a young uncircumcised girl is a shameful deformity which gives her the semblance of a man. At birth, every individual is supposed to be endowed with a male and female soul, which affects the organs of procreation. The female soul of a man is located in the foreskin, while the male soul of the woman is located in the clitoris. To be integrated into the society, man should lose his foreskin through circumcision and the woman should lose her clitoris through excision (Reproductive Health Outlook, 2002).

The belief in many African countries is that a non-excised girl will run loose from high sexual desire, hence cutting part of her body will reduce the tendency to promiscuity and enhance her loyalty to the husband. Ensuring fertility and cleanliness are also justification in the practicing countries. The underlying reasons could be summarised as economic vulnerability of women and their dependence on marriage for survival as well as ignorance about the functions of their body. The socialising processes reinforce self devalorisation on the part of women to a point of rejecting part of their healthy body.

Ignorance is a major factor for the persistence of the practice. Parents subject their children to FGM with the best intentions not knowing a better alternative to marriage. Additional factors which perpetuate FGM are: (i) Benefits and status of excises and (ii) Lack of strong government policy and actions (WHO, 2007).

In Zimbabwe, Moyo (2004), in a weekly newspaper, had this to say about the practice:

*...a rigorous training to enable girls to give a man so much pleasure when he slept with them that he would never bear the thought of losing her less much leaving her, because, wherever he might happen to be, throughout the day, the thought of going back to spend the night with her would be uppermost his mind. After their training, those women were able to make a man literally scream with pleasure in bed.*

The older women gather the oil of the ‘*pfuta*’ tree (castor bean tree), which is supposed to act as a lubricant. At the initiation, girls are then instructed to take the oil and apply it to their labia minora whilst stretching them. This is supposed to make the labia swell a little but when the swelling subsides the labia minora will look longer. The elongation is supposed to be about the length of a matchstick. The initiates have code named it

‘number 11’ because when the elongated labia stand out, they look like the number 11. Additionally, for girls who would have missed *chinamwari* (initiation rite), they are given a different type of lubricant which itches, the itchiness causes the labia to extend but she cautions that they only use it on fast track cases, usually when a girl is about to get married and she had not attended the initiation.

The extended labia are supposed to serve a two-fold purpose of preventing air from entering the vagina during sexual intercourse. They are also supposed to be used during foreplay by the husband. It seems both purposes duly exist to serve men’s selfish interests but no part of the equation seems to be benefitting women.

As regards the rationale for extending the labia minora, it is believed that, a woman cannot call herself a woman when she does not possess the qualities that make one a woman. Without ‘number 11’ a woman is not worth to be called a woman.

Echoing sentiments also in support of the practice, women would say, ‘If you are a woman and you do not have them (i.e. the elongated labia) you should strive to address that inadequacy. You see if your husband then meets a woman with them, he will not come back to you.’

The World Health Organisation (2000) in the fight against female genital mutilation has under Type IV FGM listed pulling of the labia minora as a form of female genital mutilation and, thus it constitutes FGM and qualifies as a harmful cultural practice under article 5 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Article 5 of the African Women’s Protocol. The Domestic Violence Act outlaws FGM under s3 (1) (ii) and could be interpreted to include pulling of the labia minora. Debate, however, has been raging on whether the practice qualifies as a form of FGM or not. The side effects of elongated labia minora have been identified as being painful during exercise or sexual intercourse or when women just wear tighter fitting clothes such as jeans. However, a different school of thought is emerging and this latter group argues that mutilation carries negative connotations. This is, therefore, problematic because mutilations have the effect of affecting pleasure and violating women’s integrity and rights and prefer that the practice be referred to as genital modification. Their

conclusion was reached after study of Rwandese women who alleged that the elongation facilitated ejaculation and orgasm (Galileo, 2003). The World Health Organisation is said to be releasing an amendment that will treat the practice differently but until then, the position remains that it is a harmful cultural practice.

From the reviewed literature, it is clear that many initiation ceremonies have positive and negative effects. The study, therefore, sought to establish the perceptions of married men and women of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony.

#### **2.4.0 Studies on initiation ceremonies in Zambia**

In Zambia, all the seventy-three ethnic groups have their own way of handling girls and young women attaining puberty and those being married off. These initiation ceremonies have different names in different ethnic groups, for example in Tonga the initiation ceremony is known as *Nkolola*, in Bemba it is known as *Icisungu*, the *Luvale* call it *Wali*, *Sikenge* in *Lozi*, *Namwali* in *Nsenga* and in *Kaonde* it is called *Cisungu* (Richards, 1956).

Richards (1956: 122) in her research among the Bemba of Northern Province of Zambia gives a detailed description of an initiation rite in a village. She observed that initiation rites for girls set a basis for adult life. It symbolically means passage from childhood to adulthood. The girls' initiation, *Cisungu*, has the explicit purpose of changing a girl into a woman by transforming her in the course of the experience. This marks a very important phase in a girl's life, and Richards (1956: 127) adds that the significance of this rite is that the social values expressed and maintained by the ritual are far more important than the change of status of the initiated.

Raising (2001: 126) adds that:

*Girls' initiation rites are dominant kinship rites concerned with socialisation and gender identity. They mark the transition from childhood to womanhood.*

She further explains that the transition comprises a variety of rituals accompanying the crossing of boundaries, changes in time and social status. Initiation rites usually go with biological changes, for girls often the onset of menstruation or growing of breasts.

Raising (2001:128) states that:

*The rite consists of three parts: the first takes place in the bush; the second is performed in the house; and the third part is in the yard near the house.*

These stages show the structure of initiation rites and the educational value attached to them. Raising (2001: 136) further refers to these stages as seclusion, segregation or coming out, signifying the importance of the rites. Analysing the meaning of initiation rites and ceremonies is not easy because they have various representations; however, for the purpose of this study, emphasis is placed on the social obligations and the secret language of married life.

Initiation ceremonies are full of rituals which are full of symbolic meaning and have instructional or education value. An example of such a ceremony is the ‘*Cisungu*’ practiced by the Bemba of Northern Province. Richards (1956) explains that the explicit purpose of the *Cisungu* is to transform a girl into a woman when she attains puberty. Emphasis is placed on marriage and a woman’s responsibility. Some prominent elements of this ritual are the teaching of the initiate to maintain cleanliness when she is menstruating. For instance, the initiate is told not to come in contact with fire and to stay away from children and from any sexual activity during this period.

Raising (2001) explains that the initiate is informed that she should wear red beads or put a red cloth on the bed to inform the husband or sexual partner that she is having her periods. This in effect empowers the woman to decide when to have intercourse. Another notable ritual relevant to this study is the picking of the stone and placing it in the leaves of the *Musuku* tree by the initiate, which symbolises marriage. The meaning is that marriage should be strong like a stone and a woman should keep her husband and not let him sleep with other women. It is important to mention that there are a lot of other rituals practiced during initiation ceremonies. The ones mentioned here are only a very small part and are meant to show the instructional and educative value of initiation rites.

Among the Bemba speaking people, married life is considered as the only possible existence for a man and a woman. Sexual intercourse is considered necessary to the well-being and pleasure of every person. Raising (1996) explains that the Bemba look at

parenthood as the basis of social status. Men are usually divided into groups as married and unmarried. Married women are given status according to their children. Those women who are past child-bearing have certain ritual privileges and duties based on this act. Girls according to Richards (1956) are also divided into those who have reached puberty and those below that age.

The Bemba-speaking clan view procreation as an important aspect of the psychological and social adjustment of children into adults. They treat sexual intercourse in marriage as being the most treasured asset. According to Richards (1956), sexual intercourse within a marriage is believed to have spiritual force and can be used for the benefit of the community if performed in the right manner. Marital relationship is thought to be subjected to special dangers and, therefore, it is protected by specific taboos. It is believed that sex can be dangerous unless it is surrounded by certain rituals; sexual intercourse can produce physical illness or disaster unless the necessary precautions are taken. Therefore, it is necessary to teach and empower these young men and women about these dangers and this can be done through initiation ceremonies.

The *cisungu* is an integral part of the marriage ceremony and Richards (1956) points out that these ceremonies serve roughly four functions; these can be summarised as legal, magical, moral teaching and social linking. From the time of the *cisungu* ceremony, the bridegroom acquires legal rights over the bride and accepts legal obligations. She does the same to him and both sets of duties are ritually expressed. The bridegroom makes a payment to the girl's people at the time of the *cisungu* and also to the mistress of the ceremonies. His people contribute to the marriage feast and those at the initiation ceremony itself. These payments, according to Richards, give the man legal rights over the sex life of the girl.

The *cisungu* ceremony also appears to have magic functions. It contains elements that can be described as magic of growth, magic of fertility and magic of beauty or of purification. When the Bemba mother makes her girl jump over a hoop of pliable branches standing from three to four feet high at the end of the *cisungu*, this is done to make the child grow.

There are many symbols used throughout the ceremony, for example, a mock imitation of fish catching with a leaf trap since fish bear many children at a time and pictures of fishes painted on the walls of the initiation hut, a serpent of clay on the floor of the hut; the ritual of lighting of fire by the father's sister who exerts special influence over the fertility of a young girl and can curse her with barrenness. There is also an intimate connection in the symbolism between the fertility of the woman and the fertility of the plants she sows and reaps.

Richards (1956) explains that the Bemba women describe the function of the *cisungu* as teaching the girl what they should know. The *cisungu* is supposed to impress on the girls marriage and civic morals rather than any technical skills. Most important, they are taught to respect their seniors by means of constant singing of songs in their honour, offering them ritual objects in order of precedence, and suffering all sorts of teasing penalties and abuse without murmuring. Marriage morality is further impressed on the initiates at the time of the teasing. The girl who has been too free with men is shouted at and tormented. She is made to wear a ball painted clay and stuck with spikes around her neck. The spikes prick into her as she dances.

The fourth function of ceremonies is social linking. Apart from its lessons, the *cisungu* ceremony initiates the girl into the rank of young married women and makes her one of a local company of women very carefully graded according to precedence. The characteristic of the *cisungu* can, therefore, be considered from three points; the richness and complexity of the ritual, the importance of the magic element especially of the magic of fertility in matrilineal community where children are said to belong to the woman and not the man and the hierarchical order of grouping of the women that is based on it.

Work by UNFPA (2005) collaborates with that done by Raising (2001). The UNFPA also looks at initiation as an institution that teaches girls how to deal with personal and household responsibilities. For this reason, certain foods believed to affect fertility are prohibited and the tutor teaches the girl the importance of good sexual intercourse in marriage and how this should be done. The initiation ceremonies are rooted in traditions.

For African females, ceremonies marking their entry into the realm of adults are also a public announcement to the community that she is ready to take up responsibilities as an adult African woman. African life revolves around the family and, therefore, African female initiation ceremonies tend to focus heavily on the preparation of young girls to be good wives and excellent mothers. During the initiation period, most girls who are having their periods for the first time have not indulged in sexual intercourse which is the most common source of infection for most people. As such, it is a very critical period to introduce HIV and AIDS prevention strategies in their lessons.

Research by Raising (2001) has discovered that initiation rites are similar from one ethnic group to another with few differences across cultures. During the initiation, norms and values concerning gender, production and reproduction as well as cosmological ideas are passed on. Values, norms and behaviours taught to girls are similar in most Zambian societies. A study by UNFPA (2005) carried out in North-Western Province revealed that initiation ceremonies occur in all sites to varying degrees. In Solwezi, among the Kaonde, there were two different ceremonies, one for young girls when they reach puberty (Kisungu), and the second for those about to get married. In that study, it was suggested that initiation ceremonies for girls would be improved if changes were made to the initiation 'curriculum' to reflect modern awareness on sexual reproductive health. Raising (2001) also explains that initiation rites have everything to do with gender issues and that most women are very much aware of gender issues. It is this fact that makes the initiation ceremony a possible way to pass on information about HIV and AIDS.

Raising (1996), for example argues that the high rates of teenage pregnancy in many modern societies are attributed to lack of initiation rites. Young girls who do not undergo initiation ceremonies do not know how to face the world and end up being prey to the vices in society. It is assumed that initiation rites may help prevent girls from participating in sexual relationships, which can lead to pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases particularly, HIV and AIDS.

However, other studies seem to have different observations, they point out that other values taught to women have adverse effects on their lives. For example, research

conducted by Mbozi (1998) raised concerns about the values inculcated into a woman with regard to sex and sexuality during the sex ritual. It is believed that the emphasis on submissiveness of women to men and sexual satisfaction partly accounts for the disempowerment of women. During the initiation ceremonies, women or girls are socialised to believe that women should do everything possible to make men happy at the expense of their own happiness. In this way, a woman is educated to see herself as a sex object. The latter fail to negotiate for safe sex in order to please the husband. Men also control use of protection and are not likely to agree to wives using condoms. This means it is difficult, or impossible for women to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection.

Raising (1996), however, argues that although initiation rites contain elements one could call oppressive, there are many elements, not immediately apparent that can be used to empower and liberate women especially with regard to HIV and AIDS. Raising states that initiation rites are the tools for acquisition, learning of habit, based on harmony with the spouse, parents, in-laws, older people in general and mastering of conflict resolution mechanisms. Raising (1996) further argues that initiation rites teach proper attitudes towards girls' gender role and help passing on knowledge and values such as harmony between husband and wife, based on sexual interdependency and harmony between young and old people.

Raising (2001) further notes that initiation rites equip maturing individuals with a vast body of special attributes that a woman is supposed to know and deal with throughout her life. It is this stage that equips a woman for life's responsibilities. A study she conducted in Malawi revealed that social practices are emerging among the youths that can adversely influence the spread of HIV and AIDS. She points out that those girls who previously went through practices like initiation ceremonies were well behaved. Because in most of these ceremonies girls were taught not to engage in sex before marriage, they came to know about sex and practiced it at the time they were getting married as virginity was highly emphasised during the teachings. It is, therefore, argued that if cultural practices like initiation ceremonies are encouraged, they could play an important complementary role in preventing the spread of HIV. Another UNESCO/UNAIDS



research (1999) report argued that a number of organisations working on HIV and AIDS consider issues of culture as very important to complement other preventive measures and care of HIV and AIDS.

A study carried out by Pillai *et. al.* (1993) revealed that 46 % of girls in Zambia reported having learnt about sex through traditional initiation ceremonies. Nonetheless, traditional counsellors and initiation rites have been left out of HIV and AIDS campaigns in spite of them being the most important avenue of transmitting traditional information. In Zambia, HIV and AIDS is mostly spread through heterosexual intercourse. Therefore, initiation ceremonies can be used to further prevent HIV infection as young girls are taught sexual issues while being prepared for marriage. Kapungwe (1992) stated that most Zambian parents shun discussing sex matters with their children. This implies that the socially and culturally approved source of information about sex matters for a girl will be from women who conduct initiation ceremonies, mainly in initiation rites and also from grandmothers, aunts and teachers. Initiation rites provide a powerful tool for women to educate these young girls about HIV prevention.

If behaviour is to be changed, therefore, young people must be the highest priority target group. It is often said that Zambia's youth offer the nation a 'window of hope' -the hope of an AIDS-free future. In recognition of the fact that adult sexual habits are developed largely during adolescent, this period of time should be targeted for intense HIV education and behavioural modification. Nearly half of all Zambians are between five and fourteen years old; relatively few of these young people have HIV; and they are all eager to learn about issues of HIV and AIDS prevention (Zambian Ministry of Health 2005: 7). Effective education, therefore, has the power to change attitudes and behaviour for life and this should be through effective communication strategies within programmes that will support and facilitate positive behavioural change. Leaders of initiation ceremonies who are traditional counsellors (*Alangizi* in Nyanja or *Banacimbusa* in Bemba) should be actively involved in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Through them, cultural practices that put girls and women at risk of contracting the HIV can be corrected.

In conclusion, the above section brings out a lot of issues perceived on initiation ceremonies. On one hand, initiation ceremonies are perceived to contribute to the education of good morals in young boys and girls that are held to influence behavioural change in a good way. Authors like Hastings (1989), Boateng (1983) and Turner (1977) contend that, there is inculcated sense of respect for elders as well as a gesture of good morals in initiated girls and boys. Other authors like Benneta (1980), Murphee (1969), Snelson (1970) and Raising (1996) have presented numerous arguments in support of the significance of initiation ceremonies. Among other arguments mentioned was the perception that initiation rites are important because they promote group cohesiveness at the expense of individualism and they serve as vehicles for preservation of cultural norms and values in society.

On the other hand, some scholars (Oetting (1999), Kogelenberg (2009), Gajraji and Schoemen (1991)) have presented a negative perception of traditional initiation ceremonies. According to these authors, initiation ceremonies promote inequalities in as far as sex roles and responsibilities are concerned. In most traditional rites, the only roles available to women are those of wives and mothers. Women are thus, seen as nurturers and mainly as providers of support to men who worked to provide for the family. In another dimension, Brown (1963), and Benneta (1980) argue that initiation rites contribute to gender discrimination among boys and girls. Girls are expected to be obedient and socialised to feel that boys and men are in some ways their superiors. They are usually not empowered and only prepared to serve their husbands which has hugely undermined their decision making authority in homes. Lastly, the World Health Organisation (2000) is against certain traditional initiation rites in some traditional societies like the FGM. These practices are perceived to affect women's sexual pleasure and are a violation of their integrity and rights. As seen from the literature, there are numerous perceptions on initiation ceremonies. This study, therefore, looked at these variables and how they were perceived to affect the women who have undergone the initiation ceremony with emphasis on the women and men of Southern Province.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study. It constitutes the research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedure, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis, data quality, delimitations limitations of the study and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

A descriptive survey approach was used in conducting this research. Kerlinger (1973) asserts that descriptive studies are not only restrictive but may equally lead to formulation of important principles of knowledge and coming up with solutions to significant problems.

A survey usually involves collecting data by interviewing a sample of people selected to accurately represent the population under study (Sidhu, 2005). Survey questions concern people's behaviour, their attitude, how and where they live, and information about their backgrounds. The study opted to use this method because it intended to find out how the initiated women and their husbands perceived and interpreted the effects of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony among married men and women of Mazabuka and Monze Districts in Southern Province of Zambia. This approach was preferred because the study involved beliefs, attitudes and behaviour which are not easy to quantify. This study used mainly qualitative methods of data collection.

#### **3.3 Target Population**

The study population consisted of all initiated women and their husbands in Mazabuka and Monze Districts. Only married women were targeted since it was not easy to establish the initiation status of the women in the two Districts.

#### **3.4 Sample Size**

The sample comprised 200 respondents consisting of 100 initiated women and their husbands in Mazabuka and Monze Districts. This was so that the study findings reflect

the views of both the women and their husbands in accordance with the research objectives.

### Level of Education of the Respondents

The researcher sought to establish the educational backgrounds of both the women and their husbands as this was perceived to have an effect on their views of the topic under discussion. The responses to this are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Respondents' Level of Education**

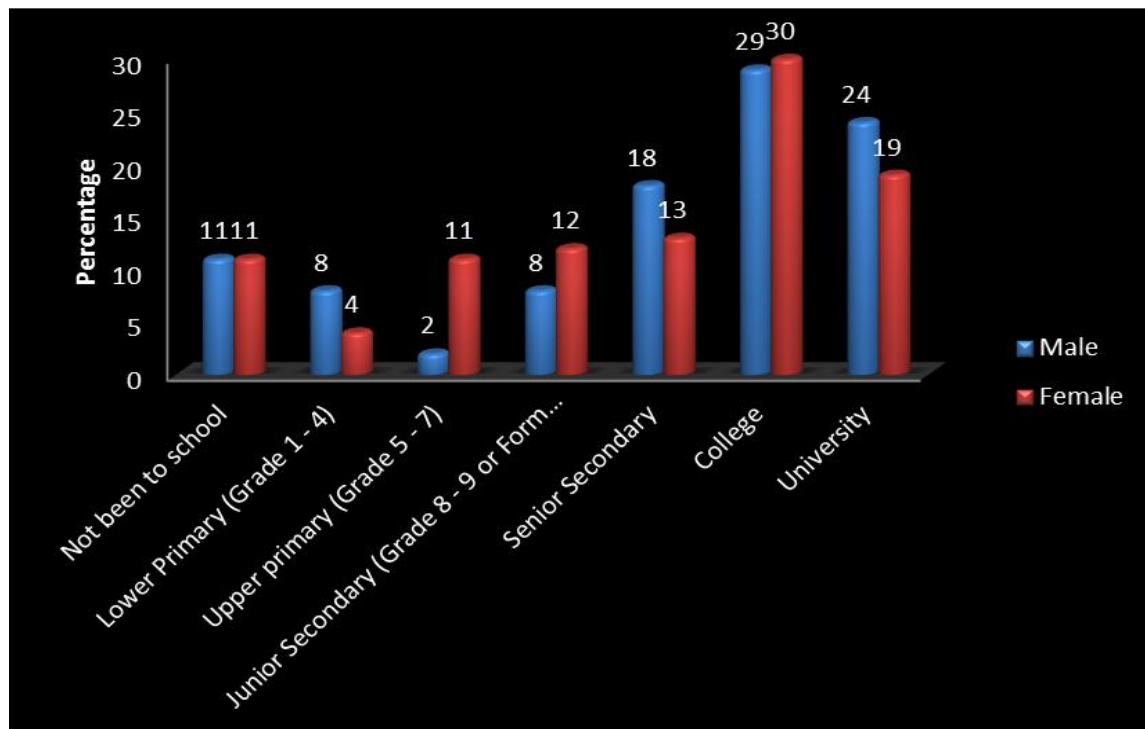


Figure 1 above shows that 22 (11%) men and women in the sample had never been to school. In this study, 8 (4%) of the female respondents had lower primary education while 8 (8%) of the male respondents had achieved a lower primary education. Furthermore, 30 (30%) of the female respondents had attained college education compared with 29 (29%) of the males. However, 24 (24%) of the sampled male respondents had attained university education, while only 19 (19%) of the female respondents had a university education. This is in accordance with the current country literacy situation as depicted by the 2010 census of the population.

### **3.5 Sampling procedure**

In selecting the participants for the study, purposive sampling procedure was used. This is because the targeted respondents were not in any way registered in form of record that could facilitate for a sampling frame. Again it was not easy to locate them for possibilities of using probabilistic methods of sampling.

The study sought to describe the perceptions of selected men and women of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. Therefore, to ensure homogeneity of characteristics among respondents, homogeneous purposive sampling was employed and only married women that had undergone *Nkolola* initiation ceremony and their husbands were targeted. The study opted for this technique because it sought to capture people with rich and relevant information reliable for an in-depth analysis of the study. This is in accordance with Kombo and Tromp (2006: 82) who states that:

*The power of purposive sampling lies in selecting participants who will provide the richest information for in-depth analysis related to central issues being studied.*

In selecting the respondents, the study used the snowball technique to identify women who knew women, who knew women who had undergone the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. The author underwent the initiation ceremony to know of the women that had had undergone the ceremony, these then identified other women, who also led to other women and other women until 100 women were reached. The husbands to these 100 women were automatically included to make 200 respondents.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

The data collection tool that was used was the interview schedule (Appendices B and C). The interview schedule was preferred because it allowed respondents to express their views freely. This was appropriate for the study because some (14%) of the participants, especially elderly ones, had low education background. Therefore, a research assistant was engaged to help interpret the questions in Tonga, the local language. This method also helped to clarify questions in order to reduce ambiguity. It also provided an open discussion with the respondents. The face-to-face interview was conducted individually,

in privacy and answers to the questions were recorded in writing there and then. This was preferred to the questionnaire so as to avoid the low return rate of questionnaires.

### **3.7 Data Collection Procedure**

Data was collected from the initiated women and men married to them. Women were initially asked of their marital status and their initiation status. Once this was established, the women would be interviewed and an appointment to interview their husbands would be made. The interviewed women were found in public meeting places like churches, schools, clinics and markets. This was because it was challenging to identify forthrightly who was and was not initiated. Data was collected in a period of five months. Two groups of respondents were interviewed-the initiated women and men married to them. In the initial stage, the researcher asked for the company of an elderly woman who knew the initiated women.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse quantitative data from the interview schedules to generate frequencies and cross tabulations that were used in describing distributions of the variables which were presented in form of tables or figures. On the other hand, qualitative data which was obtained through interviews was analysed by coding and grouping the emerging themes.

### **3.9 Data quality**

The threats to validity of this study are only internal. The internal threats include selection bias, this study employed purposive sampling which in all honesty does not give an equal chance to all potential respondents of being included in the study. This may attract some bias to the selection of respondents. Similarly, the selection of the sample was done while underlining the common characteristics of undergoing the *Nkolola* and married regardless of other things. There could be some bias in the background characteristics of these women and men that may influence their perception on the *Nkolola*. Instrumentation bias is another internal validity threat, this applies to the way each respondent understood and answered the questions from the interview schedule.

Nonetheless, to ensure quality of the information or the data, the researcher added a small component of an experimental design to the study by subjecting herself to the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. This helped to validate the findings of the study as participant's responses were compared to her own experience of the *Nkolola*. This was a deliberate attempt to reduce the threat to internal validity. In similar fashion, the threat to external validity was accounted for by choosing a larger sample of 200 respondents to ensure the generalisation of findings to the populations of Mazabuka and Monze districts.

### **3.10 Delimitations**

Delimitation refers to the restrictions of the study in terms of what is being investigated, where the investigation is taking place and the population group targeted. This study was investigating the perceptions of selected married men and women of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony and it was only done in two districts namely Mazabuka and Monze out of all the districts in Zambia. Similarly, it also focused on one tribal group (Tonga speaking people) out of the 73 tribes.

### **3.11 Limitations of the Study**

During the formulation of the proposal up to writing of the report, the researcher faced limitations. It was not very easy for the researcher to carry out this study because of the confidentiality on the part of initiators and it was deemed a taboo to disclose what was taught during the ceremony. Nevertheless, the required data were collected after a long discussion with the initiators, initiates and men married to them who were assured that the study was purely for academic purposes.

The study focuses on one initiation ceremony (*Nkolola*) practiced by one tribal group (The Tongas of Southern Province, Zambia) and no comparisons are made with other similar initiation rites practiced by other tribal groups in other regions of the country. Therefore, it is limited in that, some of its findings may not explain perceptions held for initiation rites from other tribal groups in other parts of Zambia.

### **3.12 Ethical Considerations**

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 62):

*Ethical issues go through the entire process of an interview investigation, and potential ethical concerns should be taken into consideration from the start of an investigation to the final report.*

Since ethical considerations have to be borne in mind during the whole process of research, it is common nowadays to have the approval of an ethics committee well ahead of commencement of field work that deals with human subjects (Scheyvens, *et. al.*, 2003). In Zambia, however, it is only necessary to get clearance from the ethics committee if one is researching a sensitive subject like initiation ceremony. This study involved a lot of confidential data, therefore, the researcher was cleared by Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) from the University of Zambia. A researcher's written consent to the respondents was produced (Appendix D). Verbal permission was also sought from the respondents before conducting interviews. The purpose and benefits of the study were explained to the respondents in order to receive maximum cooperation. The respondents were assured that the information obtained would be treated with confidence. However, this does not mean that everything goes when it comes to any other area of research. Ethics have to be observed at all times and at every stage of research especially when one is dealing with human subjects. Therefore, this study dealt with human subjects and it adhered to ethical issues so as to protect the privacy, safety and dignity of participants (Merriam and Simpson, 1995; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).



# CHAPTER FOUR

## PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It first discusses the meaning and definition of *Nkolola* and what is taught during the ceremony. It then presents the results according to themes which are based on the objectives of the study.

### **4.2 Respondent's definition of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

The respondents were asked to define *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. The essence of this question was to derive a direct link to their perceptions of the *Nkolola*. The underlying assumption was that, respondents would give a description of the *Nkolola* based on what they view it to be. Therefore, how the respondents describe the *Nkolola* would paint a brighter picture of how they perceive it to be. The researcher would then compare it with views from literature to draw out the similarities and disparities in perceptions.

The respondents' responses were as shown in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Definition of initiation ceremony**

Definition of initiation ceremony	Respondent's gender		Total
	Male	Female	
A ceremony that prepares a boy/girl for marriage	21 (10.5%)	20 (10.0%)	41 (20.5%)
A ceremony that celebrates a boy/girl's coming of age where they are taught how to manage their bodily changes and about adult life	39 (19.5%)	41 (20.5%)	80 (40.0%)
A ceremony that indicates the initiation of puberty and trains the young adult in life skills	20 (10.0%)	10 (5.0%)	30 (15.0%)
A traditional training of boys or girls when they come of age	15 (7.5%)	8 (4.0%)	23 (11.5%)
Being kept in a house for a defined period of time to receive counsel on life issues and community living	4 (2.0%)	19 (9.5%)	23 (11.5%)
Don't know	3 (1.5%)	0	3 (1.5%)
Total	100(50.0 %)	100 (50.0%)	200 (100.0%)

The majority 80 (40.0%) of both male and female respondents defined an initiation ceremony as a ceremony that celebrates a boy/girl's coming of age where they are taught how to manage their bodily changes and about adult life. Only 3 (1.5%) of the respondents could not define initiation ceremony. More women, 19 (9.5%), than men, 4 (2.0%) defined initiation ceremony as a process of being kept in a house for a defined period of time to receive counsel on life issues and community living. However, 41 (20.5%) of the respondents held the view that an initiation is a ceremony that prepares a young woman or man for marriage.

#### **4.2 Respondents' response to what is taught during *Nkolola***

The responses to the question on values taught during *Nkolola* initiation ceremony were summarised as follows: The respondents accounting for 40 (20%) were of the view that the ceremony was conducted to teach the initiate on body preparation, personal hygiene

and how to care for oneself during menstruation. Then 70 representing (35%) of the sample were of the view that the ceremony taught the initiate about the tenets of marriage and how a woman is to conduct herself. They stressed that:

*An initiate was taught how to respect and care for her husband especially in the bedroom.*

However, 20 (10%) felt that the initiate was taught on how to show respect for elders and all people in the community and particularly the in-laws. 32 (16%) respondents were of the view that:

*Initiation ceremonies taught initiate's behavioural change during the transition from childhood to adulthood. An initiate was taught how to be a good mother, wife and a member of the community.*

According to the respondents;

*An initiate who was further taught about cultural and traditional values expected standard behaviour.*

Furthermore, (16% of the respondents) revealed that initiates were taught income generating activities, sex roles and survival skills within the family framework.

Moreover, 34 (17 %) respondents stressed that the initiate was taught home management and how to cook traditional meals. In their view:

*The gist of the ceremonies was to ensure that the initiate was well endowed in the virtues of respect, obedience and community life.*

However, less than 1% of the male and female respondents claimed to have no idea on what was taught during the ceremony. One respondent actually revealed that she noted an adverse change in behaviour of initiates as they became more intolerable with regard to men following the initiation ceremony.

#### 4.4 Respondents' responses to whether the ceremony changes the initiates' behaviour

The researcher also wanted to know the respondents' opinion on the effect of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on the behaviour of the initiates. The findings were as shown in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2: Respondents' opinion on the effect of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on the behaviour of initiates**

Gender of respondents	Whether <i>Nkolola</i> initiation ceremony affects behaviour of initiates		Total
	Yes	No	
Male	88 (44.4%)	11 (5.6%)	99 (50.0%)
Female	89 (44.9%)	10 (5.1%)	99 (50.0%)
<b>Total</b>	177 (89.4%)	21 (10.6%)	198 (100.0%)

Table 4.2 above shows that generally, 177 (89.4%) of the respondents felt that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony had an effect on the behaviour of initiates, while 21 (10.6%) of the respondents were opposed to this view. Further using gender as a variable, the table shows that 88 (44.4%) of the males and 89 (44.9%) of the women supported the claim that *Nkolola* initiation ceremony had an impact on the behaviour of the initiate.

#### 4.5 Respondents' responses to how *Nkolola* initiation ceremony changes the behaviour of initiates

According to the respondents, the initiates' behaviour changed positively because they were counselled on how to manage a home and conduct themselves in the community. The initiates exhibited positive attributes such as respect for elders, husbands and in-laws, the ability to prepare well-cooked traditional meals and socially accepted norms and behaviour. In their views, the respondents stressed that:

*The initiation ceremonies prompted behaviour change which resulted into best practices in marriage.*

Some (59) respondents believed that those uninitiated in *Nkolola* were rude, uncultured and generally inferior wives to those who had been initiated. They (59 respondents) believed that such women did not have successful marriages and were a community nuisance.

However, 72 respondents still held that the ceremony inculcated good morals which were abused by the initiates since many of them are taught at a young age. Particularly, the sexual lessons learnt from the ceremony prompted many young girls into promiscuity as they wanted to practice what they learnt. This led to early marriages and teenage pregnancies and increased school drop-out rates among young females.

However, not all the respondents felt that the ceremony affected the behaviour of the initiates positively, 37 respondents held that there was no relationship between an individuals' behaviour and their initiation status. They believed that all persons sought their own paths and standard of behaviour owing to their background and upbringing. They argued that:

*The ceremony played no significant role in influencing the behaviour of the initiated positively.*

#### **4.6 Distribution of respondents' responses to whether values taught during *Nkolola* initiation ceremony have any relevance to the community and the individual**

The respondents were asked to indicate whether values taught during *Nkolola* Initiation ceremony had any relevance to the community and the individual. The responses are recorded in Table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3: Relevance of values taught during *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on the community and the individual**

Gender of respondents	Are values taught during the ceremony of any		Total
	Yes	NO	
Male	89 (46.1%)	7(3.6%)	96 (49.7%)
Female	92 (47.7%)	5 (2.6%)	97 (50.3%)
Total	181 (93.8%)	12 (6.2%)	193 (100.0%)

Table 4.3 shows that 181 (93.8%) respondents viewed the values taught during the initiation ceremony as being relevant to the community and the individual. Both the women and their husbands held the same view, thus, 89 (46.1%) men and 92 (47.7%) women respectively. Only 12 (6.2%) of the respondents were opposed to the view that values taught during the ceremony were of any relevance to the community and the individual.

#### 4.8 Respondents' views on behavioural change after initiation

The study sought to establish the respondents' views on difference in behaviour between the initiates and those not initiated. The responses are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Respondents' views on difference in behaviour between the initiates and those not initiated ( $n=199$ )**

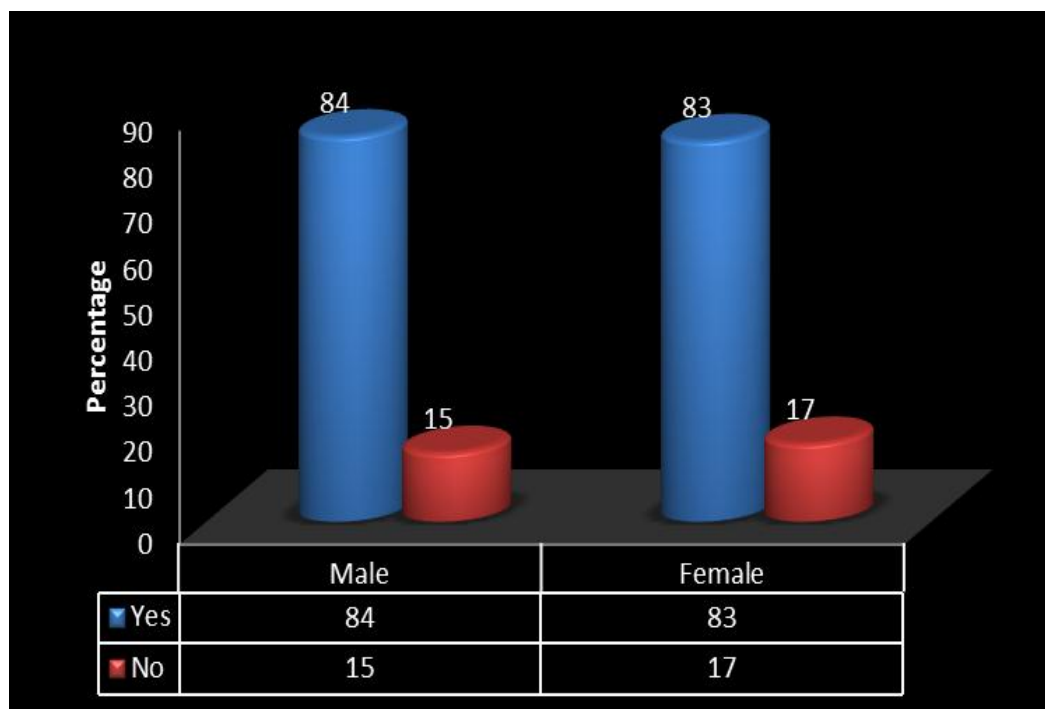


Figure 2 above shows that both the sampled women and their male counterparts felt that there were significant and notable differences in behaviour for the initiates and those not initiated. The figure shows that 83 (93.3%) of the females and 84 (94.4%) of the males agreed with the notion that there was a difference in the behaviour of those initiated as opposed to those who were not.

#### **4.9 Perceived behavioural differences between the initiates and non-initiates**

The respondents felt that uninitiated women did not exhibit adequate respect towards their husbands, elders, in-laws and the community at large. According to 52 respondents:

*Initiated women portrayed good family values, dressed decently and had a better language*

The uninitiated women, on the other hand, tended to have abusive language and poor morals. It was further noted that the initiated managed their marital affairs such as disputes with discretion and hence, had respect from the community as opposed to their counterparts. The respondents stated that:

*Uninitiated women don't know where, when and how to discuss their marital problems, they easily resort to discussing even bedroom issues with their colleagues and neighbours.*

However, 123 (63%) of the respondents felt that the ceremony ensured that the initiates had good family values and this resulted into reduced divorce rates. It was further alleged that those uninitiated failed to handle their bedroom issues as competently as their counterparts.

However, one respondent was of the view that:

*Initiation ceremonies made women to exaggerate the respect they had for their husbands, treating them like 'gods.*

This, according to the respondent:

*Implied a continued perpetration and oppression of women in society.*

#### **4.10 Respondents' responses to why women get initiated**

When asked to state the reasons behind the initiation of women, both the women and their husbands were of the view that it was mainly because the ceremony was a critical part of tradition and custom. However, 49% of the respondents, held that women got initiated because the ceremony was meant to better their lives and instil good behaviour.

Furthermore, 70% of the female respondents held the view that women undertook the ceremony to ensure that they acquired good hygiene practices, particularly during their menses and behave more appropriately towards the opposite sex. Both the women and their husbands in the sample still argued that the ceremony prepared the initiates for marriage and taught them to become responsible wives and mothers, respectful to their husbands, parents and community.

A further observation by 41% of the respondents was that women got initiated so that they could learn income generating activities. According to these respondents:

*Initiation ceremonies teach women some hand crafts such as knitting, sewing, baking that contribute to their entrepreneurial skills as well as basic home care and the upbringing of children.*

One respondent, however, felt that:

*Women undertook initiation ceremonies to avoid bad omen.*

#### **4.11 Respondents' responses on their perception of women who are not initiated**

Perceptions according to 73 female respondents held that uninitiated women were lacking maturity and hence, could not perform well in their marriages, 52 respondents felt that these women lost track of their culture and traditional values as a result of not undergoing the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. They thus suggested that these women be sensitised in group meetings, churches and *muzilongwe*-meaning very good friendships.

However, 20% of the female respondents said they perceived the uninitiated women no better than themselves. It was mentioned by 33 female respondents that:

*Any perceived differences would be minimal as girls share whatever they learn in their play groups.*

This implies that some of the knowledge would be passed on to the uninitiated. They further alleged that the initiation ceremonies echoed the same teachings that were made at kitchen parties. Thus, it did not matter whether or not one was initiated. One respondent, in fact, stated:



*I do not encourage the Nkolola ceremony but rather I would opt for religious sensitisation and a continued reliance on the providence of God.*

When asked for their perception towards uninitiated women, 90% of the sampled husbands said that they thought of such women of being uncultured and lacked good traditional morals that are important in a good wife and a mother. They felt that such women were often rude, selfish and arrogant and lacked the skills needed to run a home and attend to the needs of their husbands. Other 8 male respondents perceived these women as being inferior to their initiated counterparts. They also were of the view that such women needed help from the community so as to impart the traditional values in them. Some men further claimed that the uninitiated women are easily modernised and were probably in the forefront of the fight for equality with men.

Nonetheless, some of the male respondents held that not being initiated was a choice of a woman and it needed to be respected. This is because people had different norms and beliefs and this is more so in the case of Christians.

#### **4.12 Respondents' responses on their husbands' view about initiation status**

The study wanted to find out about the husbands' views on their wives' initiation status. Their views were as shown in Table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4: husbands' view towards initiation status of their wives**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
She is well taught and hard working	17	17.0
I am very happy with my Wife	21	21.0
She is understanding, very respectful and God fearing	12	12.0
I am proud of my wife	7	7.0
She is loving and caring	20	20.0
It does not matter	5	5.0
Distrusting of the initiates and questions virginity	1	1.0
A woman needs to be initiated for the benefit of her family and society	2	2.0
It is a better thing for a woman to be initiated	1	1.0
Those who go for <i>Nkolola</i> do not go to church	1	1.0
No response	13	13.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.4 above shows that 21 (21.0%) of the males indicated that they were very happy with their wives' initiation status while 20 (20.0%) were of the view that their wives were loving and caring. Furthermore, 17 (17.0%) of the respondents were of the view that their wives were well taught and hardworking whereas, 12 (12.0%) stated that their wives were understanding, very respectful and God fearing. The rest of the respondents were as depicted in the table.

#### **4.13 Respondents' responses on whether *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should continue to be taught to those of age**

The study sought to find out whether the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should be continued or not. Their responses were as shown in Table 4.5 below.

**Table 4.5: Whether all values taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should continue to be taught**

Should all values taught in <i>Nkolola</i> initiation ceremony continue to be taught	Respondent's gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Yes	81 (41.1%)	81 (41.1%)	162 (82.2%)
No	18 (9.1%)	17 (8.7%)	35 (17.8)
Total	99 (50.3%)	98 (49.7%)	197 (100.0%)

Table 4.5 above shows that the majority of the respondents, 162 (82.2%) indicated that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should continue to be taught to the young generation. Among those who were of this view 81 (41.1%) were males and 81 (41.1%) were females. However, 35 (17.8%) of the respondents were of the view that it should be discontinued. Among these, 18 (9.1%) were males and 17 (8.7%) were females.

When asked to give reasons for their responses, 70% of the respondents held that the values taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony needed to continue being taught because they helped mould the initiates into responsible adults, mothers and wives. According to them:

*This is evidenced by the good morals and ethics possessed by the women who have undergone the initiation.*

Thus, society would gain from these good attributes.

The respondents further claimed that the initiation ceremony helped in creating stable homes and marriages while also ensuring that traditional values and norms are passed on from one generation to the next. The respondents held that the initiation ceremonies only needed to be conducted after a girl child completes her education to avoid some of the negative effects that may arise from the ceremony.

The respondents who were opposed to the continued teaching of *Nkolola* held the view that the ceremony exposed young girls to sexual knowledge at a young age, which spurred curiosity and hence, prompted young girls to start experimenting with sex.

According to the respondents:

*This increases promiscuity and leads to teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.*

Furthermore, 5% of the respondents claimed that the whole ceremony was just a sheer waste of time and that change is inevitable as the times have changed and so have people's perceptions. Those opposed to the initiation ceremonies advocated for kitchen parties to be the instrument of imparting knowledge into the new generation of would be brides so as to avoid spoiling young children as is the case with *Nkolola*.

#### **4.14 Respondents' views on the significance of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

After finding out what the respondents felt on whether *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should continue to be taught to those who become of age, the researcher further asked the respondents about its significance.

**Table 4.6: significance of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

<b>Significance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Good grounds of bringing up good wives	42	21.0
Helps individuals to grow with good morals	20	10.0
It prepares young women to be responsible	4	2.0
It teaches good morals	46	23.0
It is part of the tradition	12	6.0
Knowing that the woman has attained a grown up age	2	1.0
Maturity	32	16.0
No idea	4	2.0
Prepares one for adult life	36	18.0
When a girl wants to get married	2	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.6 above shows that 46 (23.0%) of the respondents were of the view that *Nkolola* was significant because it taught good morals to the women in society while 42 (21.0%) of the sampled respondents were of the view that the initiation ceremony provided good grounds for bringing up good wives. Furthermore, 36 (18.0%) of the respondents, however, claimed that *Nkolola* was significant as it prepared a girl for adult life. Only 4 of the respondents viewed *Nkolola* as significant in as far as preparing a young woman for her responsibilities.

#### **4.15 Respondents' response to the follies of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

The study wanted to establish the follies of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. Therefore, respondents were asked what they perceived to be the follies of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony

**Table 4.7: Follies of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

<b>Follies</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
It disturbs school goers and encourages early marriages	66	33.0
Marriage values are taught to young girls	48	24.0
There are no follies	12	6.0
They think its dirty game and it corrupts young minds	24	12.0
Those who were taught start to practice hence encourages promiscuity	50	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.7 above shows that 66 (33.0%) of the respondents felt that the initiation ceremony disturbed school goers and encouraged early marriages whereas, 50 (25.0%) of the respondents were of the view that initiates start to practice what they are taught, hence the initiation ceremony encourages promiscuity. Only 6 (3%) of the respondents observed that *Nkolola* had no follies.

#### **4.16 Respondents' responses on the strategies to be employed to make modifications to Values taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

Respondents were asked to give strategies that they thought should be employed to make modifications to the values taught in the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. Their responses are summarized in the table (4.8) below

**Table 4.8 Strategies to modify values taught in *Nkolola***

<i>Nkolola would be more useful if</i>	Frequency		Percentage	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
It is taught to individuals of a specific age	152	48	76%	24%
Selective teaching style to suit initiates needs	126	74	63%	37%
Avoid giving beer to the initiators	80	120	40%	60%
Initiators should be decent and married women	78	122	39%	61%
Increased parental sensitisation through workshops	30	170	15%	85%
Incorporation of Christian Values in the ceremony	104	96	52%	48%
Incorporation of Health Education lessons in the ceremony	28	172	14%	86%
Cross cultural comparison of <i>Nkolola</i> to enrich lessons taught	82	108	41%	59%
Conduct Ceremony during school holidays	106	94	53%	47%
Writing books to document lessons and preserve culture	8	192	4%	96%
Chiefs, headmen and community leaders to embolden communities to support <i>Nkolola</i> initiation	72	128	36%	64%
Modernise the ceremony to tackle current issues	94	106	47%	63%
Encourage initiates to finish their education	90	110	45%	55%

According to 76% of the sampled respondents, *Nkolola* would be more relevant and useful if only individuals who are of a given age are initiated. These respondents opposed the initiation of young girls and argued that doing so undermined the essence of the exercise, particularly if these young girls were taught marriage material as this was perceived to be beyond them.

However, 63% of the respondents were of the view that the ceremony should have a selective teaching style that addresses the needs of the initiates. These respondents who were particularly male argued that the same teachings should not be given to initiates of varying age but rather tailor the teachings to suit the requirements of the beneficiaries.

About 40% of the sampled women respondents said that avoiding giving beer to the initiators would improve the quality of the teachings. It was perceived that being drunk during the ceremony contributed to the dilutions of the lessons taught by the initiators. Furthermore, 39 % of the respondents said that only decent and married women should be recognised as initiators so that they inculcate sound advice to the initiates.

Only 15% of the respondents claimed that the ceremony could be improved by increased sensitisation of parents through workshops so that the right things are taught in the process. Furthermore, 4% of the respondents felt that some books should be written to document the lessons and values of *Nkolola*. This will help the future generations to know and appreciate their culture. Nonetheless, 52 % of the respondents felt that *Nkolola* would be made more valuable by the incorporation of Christian norms and values as this would negate the negative effects of *Nkolola* and complement formal education appropriately. Another 14% of the respondents felt that the initiation ceremony should incorporate and integrate a health education aspect so that the initiates learn and appreciate the full benefits of the ceremony.

On the other hand, 41% of the respondents were of the view that the *Nkolola* traditional ceremony should be compared with other cultures to see whether or not it is adequately covering all relevant pieces of information. This would enable *Nkolola* to be a rich cultural tool for the younger generations.

It was further alleged by 53% of the respondents that the initiation ceremony needed to be conducted during the school holidays to ensure that it does not disturb the initiates' school programme. They further stated that the period of the *Nkolola* programme needed to be reduced to only a few days. This it was felt would encourage more children to participate.



Some of the sampled respondents (18%) called on parents to be sensitised so that they too appreciate the value in taking their daughters for the initiation ceremony. This sensitisation was to be done through community meetings, churches and even schools. The respondents were of the view that government too should take an active role in promoting the values of *Nkolola*. This role according to the respondents was to restructure the education system so that it includes the values taught in the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in its curricula. The government according to 8% of the respondents should have workshops and seminars aimed at increasing the integration of the traditional values both in the education system and in the society as a whole.

Only, 15% of the respondents felt that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should actually be extended to male children so that they too share in the rich cultural values that are entailed in the ceremony. Furthermore, 62% of the respondents said that there was a need to emphasise life skills and survival skills during such ceremonies. This would help the initiate to survive in society both socially and psychologically. Such skills, it was argued formed the premises for having the initiation ceremonies extended to the male children as well.

#### **4.17 Respondents' comments and contributions on the current study**

When asked for their comments on this study, 63% of the respondents were of the view that the ceremony should be continued as it has many positive attributes and helps shape initiates into responsible members of society:

*This was evidenced by the good and admirable attributes possessed by those initiated from the ceremony.*

However, 68% of the respondents cautioned against the content of the lessons delivered in the ceremony. They argued that:

*There was need to avoid all sex lessons during the ceremony in order to avoid initiates being contaminated in their thoughts, such lessons should be reserved only for those ready for marriage.*

Moreover, 36% of the respondents encouraged chiefs, headmen and community leaders to embolden their communities to support the initiation ceremony. They urged parents to recognise the importance of initiating their children as this ensures cultural continuity.

This is considering the dilution of our cultural and traditional morals by the western world. Fifty-three % of the respondents, however, suggested a different time frame of holding the *Nkolola*, according to them:

*The Nkolola initiation ceremony be conducted during the school holidays to encourage the participation of school going children.*

However, 47% of the respondents highlighted the need to modernise *Nkolola* so that it should become relevant to the current living conditions and state of society. They cited such practices as wearing beads to be done away with. This is because such practices were perceived as outmoded and retrogressive. Furthermore, 45% of the respondents reiterated the need for the initiators to emphasise the importance of the initiates to finish school and become independent before considering marriage. This is so as to empower the girl child and give them the ability to fend for themselves as opposed to being completely reliant on marriage. It was believed by the respondents that such lessons would reduce cases of gender based violence in homes as the initiates would have the ability to stand against oppression if they had economic freedom.

#### **4.18 Summary**

From the results reported above, one side of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony gives advantage to the women that undergo it. This is because they benefit from many teachings on sexual reproductive health, income generating activities and cultural values, this in itself is one way of empowering women and helping them to establish themselves to the helm of society. It is increasingly perceived to enhance women's ability to execute their gender roles and responsibilities in society. However, the other side of *Nkolola* is perceived to demean women's status in society. It is overly one sided as most of the teachings are intended to prepare women to serve men, this further perpetuates gender imbalances. Sexual teachings are explicitly done without regard to the age of the girls, this is perceived to be detrimental to their morals.

Having said this, the study can conclude that a lot of things are learnt and taught in initiation ceremonies. What is taught benefits all the different categories of women and men. However, it affects them differently. Most women who go through initiation rites change their behaviours positively. They tend to behave maturely, responsibly and

become well disciplined. If they happen to marry, they really make good and submissive wives. However, other women misuse the information got from the rite. They start practicing prostitution if they do not marry; some make professional prostitutes who end up destroying many people's marriages.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. It endeavours to link the findings to the empirical and theoretical literature. The chapter also presents a section of an in-depth experience of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. This is in a bid to meet the objectives of the study and answer the research questions. The objectives of the study were to; establish how *Nkolola* initiation ceremony affected the behaviour of initiated women as perceived by the women and their husbands; find out what initiated women and their husbands thought were the positive and negative impacts of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony; assess the significance of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in a married woman's life as perceived by initiated women and men married to them and investigate what initiated women and their husbands thought could be done to help make modifications to values taught during *Nkolola* initiation ceremony.

### 5.2 Definition of initiation ceremony

According to the study findings, the majority (40%) of both women and their husbands defined an initiation ceremony as a ceremony that celebrates a boy/girl's coming of age where they are taught how to manage their bodily changes and about adult life. Only 2% of the respondents could not define the concept of initiation ceremony. More women than men defined the initiation ceremony as a process of being kept in a house for a defined period of time to receive counsel on life issues and community living. According to the findings of this study, 25% of the respondents held the view that an initiation is a ceremony that prepares a young woman or man for marriage.

This shows that the majority (97%) of the respondents did understand the definition of the term, initiation ceremony. Indeed, Gennep (1960) found in his study of rites of passage done in France that an initiation ceremony conveys three sub-meanings, namely; separation, transition and incorporation. These dimensions are best seen holistically from the viewpoint of social transition where unique, individual transitions interact with the development of the different (i.e. rural and urban) contexts which are constantly

evolving. These changes are life crises from birth until death. However, 'rites of passage' in many cultures are used to mark the socially recognised transition to sexual maturity as ascertained by Walle and Franklin (1996).

Moreover, Lincoln (1981) describes female initiation as a process that women go through resulting in a change of status and becoming 'fertile' productive, experienced and whole where the terms 'initiation' and 'rite of passage' can be seen as a ritual, marking a transition in the life of an individual from one cultural status to another.

Milubi (2000), of the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal in South Africa in his study, 'the silenced voice of initiated Venda', found that the forms of initiation may differ according to ethnic groups; however, what is common to the practitioners of these rites is that the elderly ceremoniously welcome the young adolescents to their status by performing a communal ritual.

### **5.3 Lessons taught during the initiation ceremony**

Indeed the respondents were able to describe eloquently the lessons and values that were taught in the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. The respondents stated that the ceremony was conducted to teach the initiate on body preparation, personal hygiene and how to care for oneself during menstruation. Others were of the view that the ceremony taught the initiate about the tenets of marriage and how a woman was to conduct herself. They stressed that the initiate was taught how to respect and care for her husband, especially in the bedroom. Some felt that the initiate was taught how to respect elders and all people in the community and particularly the in-laws.

In the socialisation theory, one of the aspects discussed is that socialisation is used by sociologists, social psychologists and educationalists to refer to the process of learning one's culture and how to live within it. Like in the discussion of findings, one of the positive effects that *Nkolola* initiation ceremony had on women was encouraging unity in society. Socialisation theory states that socialisation provides the resources necessary for acting and participating within the society for the individuals. Similarly, the findings of this study showed that 41 % males and 41 % female respondents supported the view that

the values taught in the initiation ceremony should continue to be taught because they help mould the initiates into responsible adults, mothers and wives. This is evidenced by the good morals and ethics practiced by the women who have undergone initiation. In the theory, it is indicated that for the society, inducting all the individual members into its moral norms, attitudes, values, motives, social roles, language and symbols is the means by which social and cultural continuity are attained (Clausen, 1968: 5), while the respondents also felt that because of the good morals that the initiates were taught during the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony, they were able to see what was good and bad. This helped them to avoid bad behaviour, which consequently helped in building a strong and united society. It also brought unity among women because during the initiation ceremony, women came together to teach values to the initiates and this led to solidarity among women. This initiation also built the sense of belonging in these women. This is in line with the study of Stardates (2003), which emphasised that rites promoted group cohesiveness at the expense of individualism. He stressed that the individuals end up becoming loyal to the initiation groups and remained loyal for the rest of their lives. He further stressed that if they had some sort of agenda, they were more likely to adopt it as their own and maintained and promoted the group and helped it to achieve its goals. From the findings of this study and the study of Stardates (2003), it can be concluded that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony had a positive effect in terms of uniting women.

Social identity theory is concerned with placing people into categories:

*The categorisation process produces stereotypical perceptions that are the perception or judgement of all members of a social category or group as showing some characteristics which distinguish them from some other social groups* (Hogg, 1988: 20).

The self is cardinal to the categorisation as classification can be on the basis of similarities and differences to self. It is also the self that can help one to have a sense of social identity to a certain category (Hogg, 1988). Lending strength to this assertion, Giddens (1991) explains that an individual can understand the self when he/she relates to a social network.

Social categories tend to compare each other on the perceived differences and similarities between them. Those who share the same beliefs, passions and ideas tend to identify with each other and at the same time, distance themselves from those who are perceived to be different. These comparisons are important for Jenkins (2004) who argues that without these frameworks of comparisons, it would be difficult to relate to other members of society in a 'consistent and meaningful manner'. Thus, social identity is crucial in the creation of a human world.

Social identity calls for one to recognise or perceive that he or she belongs to a social group, this is, two or more people who share a common identification and that the concept of social identity is a psychological phenomenon (Hogg, 1988; Stets and Burke, 2000). Hogg's writing on social identity is relevant to this study as rites of passage are usually a matter of social identity. The informants believe that:

*The Nkolola initiation rite is a social group unique from other ethnic groups. The continuation of the rite ensures the preservation of a social identity of wider Tonga group.*

The women who have been initiated tend to identify with those who have been initiated as well and marginalise those who have not been initiated. The initiated women perceive themselves as having a common social identity. They share the same values and beliefs they can always draw in their lives.

Other respondents were of the view that initiation ceremonies taught initiates on behavioural change during the transition from childhood to adulthood. An initiate was taught how to be a good mother, wife and member of the community. An initiate, it was felt, was further taught on the cultural and traditional values and expected standard behaviour. Furthermore, some respondents were of the view that initiates be taught income generating activities, sex roles and survival skills within the family framework.

Some respondents stressed that the initiate was taught home management and how to cook traditional meals. They further held that the gist of the ceremonies was to ensure that the initiate was well endowed in the virtues of respect, obedience and community life. However, there were a few respondents who claimed to have no idea on what was

taught during the ceremony. One respondent actually held that she noted an adverse change in behaviour of initiates as they became more intolerable with regard to men following the initiation ceremony.

According to Walle and Franklin (1996), women are taught about future duties, about the obligation of fidelity to their counterpart (husband), the rules of etiquette, regulating relations with her in-laws and that the proper place is one of subordination and to obey their husband.

During initiation, the initiated is secluded and receives instruction on the sacred wisdom of the rituals and ethical norms. These include respect, dignity and sex education from the rightful and accepted people who have already passed the stage. It is in recognition of these changes that communities took away girls for a period of seclusion to teach them about sexuality, femininity and the responsibilities that come with being a grown matured woman (Gennep, 1960).

According to Mayaka (2012), the initiated women are also taught how to respect their husbands and the elderly people. They are taught how to dress. It is believed that there are certain clothes that a woman is not supposed to wear. For example, a woman is not allowed to wear a pair of trousers, short dresses, short skirts or any cloth that exposes their thighs. These are assumed to be provocative by certain sections of society.

#### **5.4 Effects of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on behaviour of initiates**

The study revealed that 89.4 % of the respondents felt that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony had an effect on the behaviour of initiates. Only 10 % of the respondents were opposed to this view. The study further showed that 89 % of the males and 90 % of the women supported the claim that *Nkolola* initiation ceremony had an impact on the behaviour of the initiate. This showed that both the women and their husbands believed that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony did affect the behaviour of the initiates.

It was widely held by the respondents that the initiates' behaviour changed because they were counselled on how to manage a home and conduct themselves in the community. The initiates exhibited positive attributes such as respect for elders, husband and the in-



laws, the ability to prepare well-cooked traditional meals and portray themselves in norms and behaviour that are socially accepted. The respondents felt that the initiation ceremonies prompted behaviour change which resulted into best practices in marriage and hence reduced divorce rates among the initiated women. This is in accordance with what Walle and Franklin (1996) highlighted on the lessons taught in initiation ceremonies under their study on sexual initiation and transmission of reproductive health. The findings were further supported by a study conducted by Ocholla-Ayayo (1976) of Nairobi University in Kenya, on culture as a lived experience which argued that among other things that the girls learnt at the initiation ceremony, was the importance of being hospitable and generous to relatives and even strangers.

Some respondents believed that:

*Those uninitiated in Nkolola are rude, uncultured and generally inferior wives to those who have been initiated. They believed that such women do not have successful marriages and are a community nuisance.*

This further confirms the findings of Ocholla-Ayayo (1976) on culture as a lived experience which stated that some of the values taught in initiation ceremonies included avoiding telling lies, abstaining from theft and aggression. This is because the uninitiated women would lack the virtues of those who were initiated.

Other respondents still held the views that the ceremony inculcated good morals which were abused by the initiates since many of them were taught at a young age. In particular, the sexual lessons learnt from the ceremony prompted many young girls into promiscuity as they wanted to practice what they learnt. This led to early marriages and teenage pregnancies and increased school drop-out rates among young females.

However, not all the respondents felt that the ceremony affected the behaviour of the initiates. Some respondents held that there was no relationship between an individuals' behaviour and their initiation status. They believed that all persons sought their own paths and standard of behaviour owing to their background and upbringing. They thus, argued that the ceremony played no significant role in influencing the behaviour of the initiated. This however, goes against the socialization theory which says that people grow through

the stages of life and become responsible in society by learning from elders in various ways. The lessons include cultural values and norms among other things. The *Nkolola* is to society a form of educational tool that imparts a prescribed set of values and skills necessary in preparation of women to the demands of the community they grow into and the society at large. Hence the *Nkolola* is part and parcel of a woman's background and upbringing. Their argument is therefore, precludes the *Nkolola* as an educational tool from adding any kind of value to a woman's social well-being.

### **5.5 Relevance of values taught to the community and an individual**

As regards to relevance of values taught to the community and individuals, the study showed that 93 % of the total respondents viewed the values taught during the initiation ceremony as being relevant to the community and the individual. Both the women and their husbands held the same view accounting for 93 % and 95 % men and women respectively. This is in accordance with Turner (1977) and Tong (1989) who contend that there is inculcated sense of respect for elders, good morals and discipline. Only 6 % of the respondents were opposed to the view that values taught during the ceremony were of any relevance to the community and the individual.

### **5.6 Differences in behaviour between initiates and non-initiates**

The study revealed that, both women and their male counterparts felt that there were notable differences in behaviour between the initiates and those not initiated. The findings of this study showed that 83 % of the females and 84 % of the males agreed with the notion that there was a difference in the behaviour of those initiated as opposed to those who were not. Only 15 % of the males and 17 % of the females were opposed to this view.

The respondents felt that those who were not initiated did not exhibit adequate respect towards their husbands, elders, in-laws and the community at large. It was felt by 89 % men and 90 % women respondents that the initiated women portrayed good family values, dressed decently and had better language. The uninitiated, on the other hand,

tended to have abusive language and poor morals. This further confirms the findings of Ocholla-Ayayo (1976) in Kenya on culture as a lived experience.

It was further noted that the initiated managed their marital affairs such as disputes with discretion and hence, had respect from the community as opposed to their initiated counterparts who could easily discuss bedroom issues with their colleagues. The research findings showed that many of the respondents felt the ceremony ensured that the initiates had good family values, resulting in reduced divorce rates. It was further alleged that those who were uninitiated failed to handle their bedroom issues as competently as their initiated counterparts.

However, one respondent was of the view that initiation ceremonies made women to exaggerate the respect they had for their husbands, treating them like 'gods'. This according to the respondents implied a continued perpetration and oppression of women in society. This is in conformity with Walle and Franklin (1996), who stated that women were taught that their proper place was one of subordination and to obey their husbands. The idea of gender difference helps keep the reality of male domination in place. The challenges that females being initiated face were not individual problems but institutional and intended to oppress women.

#### **5.7 Respondents' responses to what initiated women and their husbands thought are the positive and negative impact of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

According to the findings of this study, women got initiated mainly because the ceremony was a critical part of tradition and custom. Many, however, stated that women got initiated because the ceremony was meant to better their lives and instil good behaviour. These findings reemphasised Hastings' (1989) views as well as the World Health Organisation (2000) who stated that:

*Puberty rites also prepare girls for acceptable behaviour as perceived by their culture.*

Furthermore, the women respondents held that women undertook the ceremony to ensure that they acquired good hygiene practices, particularly during their menses and behave

more appropriately towards the opposite sex. Both the women and their husbands in the sample still mentioned that the ceremony prepared the initiates for marriage and taught them to become responsible wives and mothers, respectful to their husbands, parents and community. UNFPA (2005) supported this view and looked at initiation as an institution that teaches girls how to deal with menstruation and how to be good sexual partners with their future husbands. Colson (1962) also stated that a girl is encouraged to leave behind her jaunty, carefree childhood ways and adopt the stature of a woman full of dignity and grace.

This study also revealed that 14% of the respondents were of the view that women got initiated so that they could learn income generating activities, home care, and the upbringing of children. This was held by Snelson (1970) who argued that initiation brings out the economic benefits of the ceremony to the initiates as well as to the society. The novice is taught how to make household utensils and equipment. He adds on that these are the ones the lady would use in her home when she is married.

### **5.8 Respondents' responses on their perception towards women who are not initiated**

The findings of this study established as perceived by the respondents that the uninitiated women lacked maturity and, hence could not perform well in their marriages. It was further established that the uninitiated women lost track of their culture and traditional values as a result of not undergoing the *Nkolola*. In support of this view, Benneta (1980) states that the emergence of women's initiation practices in an indigenous Christian church suggests an attempt to hold the domestic circle intact by retaining critical aspects of the woman's traditional status. He further alleges that Women's initiation becomes a vehicle of cultural preservation in conditions of social flux.

However, some of the female respondents said they perceived the uninitiated women no better than themselves. Some felt that any perceived differences would be minimal as girls share whatever they learn in their play groups, which implies that some of the knowledge would be passed on to the uninitiated. They further alleged that the initiation ceremonies echoed the same teachings that were made at kitchen parties and so it did not

matter whether or not one was initiated. It was noted by some respondents that in fact they did not encourage the *Nkolola* ceremony but rather opted for religious sensitisation and a continued reliance on the providence of God.

The husbands of initiated women perceived the uninitiated women as being uncultured and lacking in good traditional morals that were important in a good wife and a mother. They felt that such women were often rude, selfish and arrogant and lacked the skills needed to run a home and attend to the needs of their husbands. Some perceived these women as being inferior to their initiated counterparts. They also were of the view that such women needed help from the community so as to impart traditional values in them. Some men further claimed that the uninitiated women were easily modernised and were probably in the forefront of the fight for equality with men.

Sibomana and Meulenbeek (2011) point out that most Zambian men want a woman who is initiated. 'Did you not go through training?' is a commonly heard remark from men scolding their wives. In some cases, disappointed husbands even end up sending their wives back to be taught more, one of the worst embarrassments for the family.

Lincoln (1981: 90) views initiation as:

*A way of transforming a girl and radically separating her from her childhood existence.*

Furthermore, initiation for girls endows the lives of women with a sense of meaning and dignity of their status in the community. The emphasis in the initiation is on learning new skills.

Nonetheless, some of the male respondents concluded that not being initiated was a choice of a woman and it needed to be respected. This is because people had different norms and beliefs and this is more so in the case of Christians.

## **5.9 Husbands' view about their wives' initiation status**

The findings of this study showed that 25 % of the respondents felt that their husbands were loving and caring, whereas 21 % of the women and 21 % of the men in the sample

were happy with their wives initiation status. This study revealed that 11 % of the sampled respondents said they were proud of their wives' initiation status, while only 11 % of the sampled respondents claimed that their husbands thought of their status with understanding, respectful and God fearing. Some respondents said their husbands did not care about their status at all (5 % of the women and 1 % of the men). This was quite conflicting with the views expressed earlier about the initiation and the role it plays in the marriage and culture of the Mazabuka and Monze communities.

#### **5.10 Views on the continuation of teaching *Nkolola* values**

The findings of the study showed that 82 % (41 % males and 41 % females) of the respondents supported the view that the values taught in the initiation ceremony should continue to be taught. Only 18 % of the respondents were opposed to this conception. This implies and seems to suggest that many women and men value *Nkolola* and still felt it was a relevant part of culture and a prerequisite for marriage in many cases. This finding is in line with Mayaka's (2012) study on initiation ceremonies as an entry point to HIV and AIDS prevention in Zambia: a case study of traditional counsellors, girls and young women in Lusaka urban who argued that values learnt during the initiation ceremonies were extremely important to the community in that they helped to uphold morality in these communities.

Furthermore, Stardates (2003) argues that initiation is a tool for social unity of the people in the same cohort. He argues that since individuals are loyal to the initiating groups, they tend to unite them to achieve the intended goals of the group.

It was established in the findings of this study that many held that the values taught at *Nkolola* needed to continue being taught because they helped mould the initiates into responsible adults, mothers and wives. This was evidenced by the good morals and ethics possessed by the women who had undergone the initiation. Thus society would gain from these good attributes. Snelson (1970) agrees with this assertion and also states that the education provided at the initiation ceremony is thorough and well balanced in the preparation of the girl for life. He points out that initiation ceremonies are a kind of

traditional education that is regarded as one preserving the cultural heritage of the community.

In this study, it was further claimed that the initiation ceremony helped in creating stable homes and marriages while also ensuring that traditional values and norms were passed on from one generation to the next. In Colson's (1962) view, African life revolves around the family and therefore, female African initiation ceremonies tend to focus heavily on the preparation of young girls to be good wives and mothers.

The respondents who were opposed to the continued teaching of *Nkolola* held that the ceremony exposed young girls to sexual knowledge at a young age, which encouraged curiosity and prompted young girls to start experimenting with sex. This increases promiscuity and leads to teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. According to Brown (1963), the girls after being initiated can start practicing the skills they learnt and even start involving themselves in sex before marriage to see if the lessons had changed their way of handling men in bed during sex. The respondents held that the initiation ceremonies only needed to be conducted after a girl child completed her education to avoid some of the negative effects that might arise from the ceremony

Some of the respondents further claimed that the whole ceremony was just a sheer waste of time and that change was inevitable as the times had changed and so had people's perceptions. Those opposed to the initiation ceremonies advocated for kitchen parties to be the instrument of imparting knowledge into the new generation of would be brides so as to avoid spoiling young children as is the case with *Nkolola*.

### **5.11 Significance of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

The study showed that the respondents were of the view that *Nkolola* was significant because it taught good morals to the women in society. Further, it was established that many of the respondents were of the view that the initiation ceremony provided good grounds for bringing up good wives. Thus, both the women and their husbands were strongly advocating for a continuation of the initiation ceremony as they saw it as adding valuable attributes to society. Similarly, Ampim (1909), argues that initiation rites are

seen as fundamental to human growth and development as well as socialisation in many African communities.

### **5.12 Negative effects of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

The biggest draw-back of *Nkolola* as established from the findings of this study was that it disturbed school going children and encouraged early marriages. This is because the initiates acquired sexual knowledge, which they felt the need to put into practice as is the case with all new information people come across. It was further established that marriage values and virtues were taught to young girls, which meant that their minds were corrupted, hence prompting their curiosity. Senior chief Nzamane's wife noted that:

*When the initiation was finished, the initiate wants to try out what she has learned. It is, thus common to hear of a girl becoming pregnant within a few months. The men in the village will all know that she has been initiated, which is almost like an advertisement for them to approach her (www.irishtimes.com/blogs/villageinafrica/2010/09/28/).*

In an attempt to discourage early marriage and teenage pregnancy (harmful traditional practice), chief Nzamane has ordered that initiation ceremonies in his chiefdom be delayed until a girl child finished her education, or at least reached eighteen years of age.

### **5.13 Strategies to modify values taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

The research findings showed that *Nkolola* would be perceived as more relevant and useful if the initiates were only those of a particular age. These respondents opposed the initiation of young girls and argued that doing so undermined the essence of the exercise, particularly if these young girls were taught marriage material as this was perceived to be beyond them. This was in line with the views of chief Nzamane who said:

*Girls are reaching puberty earlier than they used to. Years ago, a girl would begin menstruating at sixteen and it was normal for her to marry around that age, hence the initiation ceremony was appropriate. But nowadays, it can happen as early as twelve or thirteen years. This is too young to learn*



*about sex and marriage. We want the girls to finish their education before they get married or get pregnant. (Retrieved from, [www.irishtimes.com](http://www.irishtimes.com) 2010/09/28/).*

The findings of this study established that women and their husbands were of the view that the ceremony should have a selective teaching style that addresses the needs of the initiates. It was argued that the same teachings should not be given to initiates of varying age but rather tailor the teachings to suit the requirements of the beneficiaries.

In some instances, avoiding giving beer to the initiators was thought to improve the quality of the teachings. It was perceived that being drunk during the ceremony contributed to the dilution of the lessons taught by the initiators. Furthermore, some respondents said that only decent and married women should be recognised as initiators so that they inculcate sound advice to the initiates.

The findings showed that the ceremony could be improved by increased sensitisation of parents through workshops so that the right things are taught in the process. Furthermore, it was suggested that books should be written to document the lessons and values of *Nkolola* as it would help future generations to know and appreciate their culture.

The findings further established that *Nkolola* would be made more valuable by the incorporation of Christian norms and values. It was felt that this would negate the negative effects of *Nkolola* and complement formal education appropriately. Others still felt that the initiation ceremony should incorporate and integrate a health education aspect so that the initiates learn and appreciate the full benefits of the ceremony. Mayaka (2012: 53) suggests that:

*The initiation ceremonies could be used as a platform to communicate key HIV and AIDS messages.*

She notes that critical issues to be included should include HIV mode of transmission, prevention strategies such as abstinence and faithfulness to one sexual partner or condom use, voluntary counselling and testing, prevention of mother to child transmission through testing of pregnant mothers and more importantly, seeking treatment if one contracts the virus.

It was also established that the *Nkolola* traditional ceremony should be compared with other similar ceremonies to see whether or not it was adequately covering all relevant pieces of information. This would enable *Nkolola* to be a rich cultural tool for the younger generations.

Furthermore, some respondents alleged that the initiation ceremony needed to be conducted during the school holidays to ensure that it did not disturb the initiates' school programme. They further stated that the *Nkolola* programme needed to be reduced to only a few days. This, it was felt would encourage more children to participate. This view was reflected by chief Nzamane who noted that taking a girl out of school for a month to be initiated is unacceptable ([www.irishtimes.com/2010/09/28/](http://www.irishtimes.com/2010/09/28/)).

It can still be inferred from the findings that the community requires the collaboration and support of parents, churches and schools to ensure increased sensitisation and participation in the ceremony. Government too was to take an active role in promoting the values of *Nkolola*. This role was to restructure the education system so that it included the values taught in the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in its curricula. The government should have workshops and seminars aimed at increasing the integration of the traditional values both in the education system and in the society as a whole.

The findings suggested that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should actually be extended to male children so that they too share in the rich cultural values that are entailed in the ceremony. Equally, there was an observed need to emphasise life skills and survival skills during such ceremonies. Such skills were perceived to help the initiate to survive in society both socially and psychologically. The skills, it was argued, formed the premise for having the initiation ceremonies extended to the male children as well. These findings were in support of Mwanakatwe's (1968) views who concluded that, the whole essence of seclusion is to strengthen the individual at a time of crisis in her life.

## **5.14 Summary**

### **5.14.1 Emerging themes from the study**

Menstruation or new life celebration means that the woman has grown to be a matured woman, it marks the commencement of preparations of initiation. The researchers' findings were that menstruation was highly honoured by the female initiated elders. It symbolised the beginning of womanhood and confirmed the girl's identity. It characterised the girl's leap from being a young girl to being a matured woman with the abilities to be married and bear children.

The elders inform the girl about the transition from being a girl into growing up to be a woman. The elders teach the girl a code of conduct in relation to menstruation and how to behave in order to avoid an unplanned pregnancy. Apart from celebrating the girl's biological development, the girl is introduced to womanhood by having a mother or any other female kin to teach her the roles of being a woman. Young (1965) concurs with the idea of taking part in the performance of rites as serving to cultivate in the individual sentiments.

Matlin (1987) postulates that menarche (pronounced 'men-nar-kee') is the first menstrual period. When a girl has 'seen the moon' is meant when she reaches her first menstruation. Menstruation is defined as a period when a woman bleeds. It is commonly referred to as a menstrual period. Menstruation is called just a period. Literature posted by both Ussher (1989) in his book *the psychology of the female body* and Beidelmans' *the cool knife* (1997); state that, the onset of menstruation is marked with disempowering messages on the possibility of unplanned pregnancy, promiscuity, contraction of HIV and AIDS, as opposed to messages that affirm one's newly acquired status as a woman who has power to give life. Menarche allows accommodation and assimilation of these changes to take place, as it is an event which cannot be ignored and for many mothers and daughters, symbolises the beginning for womanhood.

The researcher agrees with the fact that menstruation is perceived as a new transition for a girl to womanhood. Some girls associate menstruation with physical discomfort and emotional pain due to menstruation cramps. If they miss their menstruation, it becomes traumatic as they think they might be pregnant, especially if they had had sexual

intercourse. Some young women become anxious and feel stressed because they are scared to go to the initiation schools.

Participants in the current study also reported that young girls and young women believe that menstruation makes them feel they had reached the stage of womanhood. Some women reported that a girl who does not see her menses is not a woman. They believe that a girl or woman with no menstruation would not have children. In contrast, some of the girls still hide and do not tell their friends when menstruating because they are scared of mockery and that they would be forced to attend initiation, or they are teased about sleeping around with boys.

### **Elderly women's perception on menstruation**

All women participants from Mazabuka and Monze Districts of Southern Province reported that menstruation was a graduation to promote a little girl to being a grown up; a cross which takes a child to an adult transitional phase of maturity. The elderly continuously reported that menstruation was a sign of being sexually matured. The elderly women would inform the parents that the child is now a woman. They said that this stage was regarded as a prelude to preparation for adulthood, a transitional period of life between immaturity and maturity. They perceived menstruation as a period of personal discovery and identity formation, a time of transition to make informed decisions and most importantly, a stage when the girl becomes integrated into the society of adults by embracing 'the *Nkolola*' initiation ceremony. This confirms Ampim's (1909) arguments who stated that, initiation rites are seen as fundamental to human growth and development as well as socialisation in many African communities.

### **Menstruation**

The researcher discovered that a girl's menstruation is a cause for celebration. It is the time for the mother to educate the girl about life and womanhood. It is a phase that allows for initiation preparation to welcome the girl into womanhood. First menstruation in some girls is traumatic as they are not knowledgeable about how to react to it. Some reported that it was depressing because of the myths around it. For example, menstruation

was negatively associated with sleeping with boys, meaning the girl has become of age due to the sign of blood.

### **Cultural beliefs on initiation**

Initiation allows learning of respect, discipline, responsibility and solidarity. Culture increases group solidarity and a sense of belonging. The researcher discovered that during initiation, the elderly women were the ones who were knowledgeable about the Tonga cultures. They taught the young girls how to respect, be disciplined and behave responsibly. During initiation, the researcher realised that women who were initiated speak the same language and used special dialects that could not be understood by those who were not initiated. For example, women who went through initiation understood and respected one another and it was different from women who had not attended initiation. The uninitiated women were viewed as ‘others’, this means they did not form part of the initiated.

The researcher realised that the influence of tradition and culture could lead to both positive and negative attitudes towards people who turn a blind eye on the initiation rituals. It is evident that culture determines how members of the community think or feel about their belief systems, which are meant to define their outlook on life. Women and men who comply with the rituals are accepted and embraced by the elders and traditional leaders, while negative attitudes towards the rituals would create tension and rejection by the elders and community. The researcher concurs that culture provides the ‘lens’ through which we view the world and make sense of it.

The researcher also learnt that it was important for girls to attend initiation because there were certain things that girls needed to know which were not included in the school curriculum. Cultural practices such as initiation in schools are validated in contributing to the young girls’ well-being and social integration.

## **Psychological trauma and initiation**

Most participants reported first hand or vicarious experience of initiation as traumatic. Most participants in this research reported feelings of helplessness and worthlessness with possible psychological damage.

From the interviews and discussions held with initiated women, it became clear that women who went through the process of genital mutilation considered initiation as traumatic. They did not want to share their experiences regarding the operation. Although the researcher did not go through the mutilation process, it was also clear that other activities that were performed at the initiation schools were painful and traumatic. Women who go through the process of genital mutilation suffer psychological and physical distress.

## **Socialisation**

The researcher discovered that initiation within the Tonga community was important. It was perceived as safe places where women learn about their cultural beliefs, admire and understand their respective roles, and learn to develop a sense of self. They were receptive, and responsive. Initiated girls learnt to gain power, deal and cope with hardship and respect the elders no matter how well educated a person was. As ascertained by Haralambos and Heald (1980), initiation enhances a person's emotional intelligence. By emotional intelligence is meant better inter- and intra-relation with self and others.

Using the social identity theory, the researcher acknowledges the fact that as a woman, it is difficult to survive in a Tonga community if you are not initiated (an outsider). People in the community would know if you had not been initiated and no one would be interested to interact or socialise with you. One would feel lonely and no one wants you near them. They would call you names which refer to being half a woman, because one did not go right through the initiation school. Nobody wants to hear your side of the story. You cannot initiate or give any input in any gathering. Even if you try hard, no one would take you seriously. One is continuously abused emotionally and often harassed. The researcher also experienced the same treatment before she was initiated.

## **Tradition and secrecy with initiated elderly women**

Kelly (2000) loosely defined secrecy as deliberately hiding information from other people. This was experienced by the researcher when she struggled to synthesise the information regarding the initiation of women. The researcher agrees that it is difficult to access the data of the initiation ritual if not initiated and conferred as a taboo.

The research topic is sensitive and not easily accessible unless one has graduated from the initiation. The researcher consulted different people trying to find their opinions about women initiation. It was difficult because she was asked if she had been through initiation. The researcher was informed beforehand that it would be difficult to access information from the initiates if not initiated. The researcher went to different villages in the Monze and Mazabuka Districts hoping that she would get the information but, unfortunately, she was told the same thing that she needed to go through the initiation first.

It was amazing to hear how the initiated elders responded when asked about what made it difficult for the initiated women to share the initiation experiences and what happened during the ceremony of initiation. The response from one of the elders was that:

*Where does this woman come from who does not know that initiation rites are not shared or talked about.*

Other senior females stated that it is a taboo to talk about the initiation ritual. Indeed, one of the respondents remarked, 'I kept it a secret because I was told not to tell anyone. My secret has haunted me for so long because of 'fear of the unknown''.

The researcher insisted on clarity about the secrecy, but other elders wanted the topic to pass. They stated that it was a taboo and they did not talk about it because it is a rule that needs to be respected. Others reported that they did not share with others because it meant an insult.

When the senior elders were asked if the ritual was educational and used to empower women with life skills, they said that it was important that all the girls and young women passed the stage by attending the ritual. They further reported that it was like formal

education where people needed to go to school and attend in order to pass. The researcher admitted that it was not easy to share with uninitiated people, but only with those who had had a similar experience.

The practice of initiation is done behind closed doors and the rule is that everything should remain inside the initiation school. Uninitiated women are not allowed to enter into the initiation activities unless accepted to participate. The information and the activities performed are strictly confidential and secretive. Sharing the information with the uninitiated is believed to be a taboo.

The elderly women from Mazabuka and Monze Districts reported that they were against the people who discussed initiation information with uninitiated women. They further reported that there were sanctions that were imposed on individuals who did not conform to the traditional rules.

### **Tradition and secrecy**

The researcher went through initiation and she was specifically told that talking about women initiation was a taboo. Initiation schools are secret ceremonies and knowledge acquired there is not supposed to be shared with the uninitiated because to speak about traditional practices is strictly prohibited. The reason is that much has been speculated about women's initiation and they want women to come and experience the truth by themselves. After being initiated, the researcher believed and admitted that it was not easy to share with uninitiated people.

### **Researchers' first-hand experience**

During the study, the researcher was subjected to the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony as a requisite for extracting information and she willingly complied. On a personal level, the initiation ceremony brought to light so many important cultural values that traditional societies have held on from generation to generation. The researcher cherished the experience as it helped her to appreciate the role of a woman in the society. Women have a sacred role to play in a well-balanced marriage and society. According to the lessons from the initiation, men might be viewed as the heads of the households but women are



the owners of the households, they run all the affairs of the house and so much depends on them. Women fail in their marriages because they shy away from their responsibilities and leave everything for men to decide. The initiation interestingly helped to define in detail, customs, values and sex roles. The experience revealed how tradition has been able to use initiation rites as tools for shaping norms and values in the community and society at large.

The researcher also found out that:

*A happy life in the bedroom makes a happy wife and a happy wife makes a happy home.*

This is why the *Nkolola* endeavours to prepare women for their sex life. And for sure, the initiation ceremony added some value to her sex life. The researcher however, noted that the approach of the teachings might be physically and mentally overwhelming for girls below a certain age group (for instance below the age of 16). Nonetheless, the most important lesson that the researcher picked up was the fact that in its essence, the initiation ceremony prepares and instils a sense of empowerment among women. As such there is an added sense of pride in their womanhood.

### **Rejection and social pressure**

The researcher noted that uninitiated women were rejected and were not accepted by those who were initiated. Before the researcher was initiated, she was rejected and denied access to information. The reason given was that they would not share any information with her because she would not understand because she had not gone through initiation. The researcher was initiated for research purposes. If permission is sought, one can be initiated at any age. The current researcher further discovered that uninitiated women commonly experienced a degree of rejection. No matter how educated a person was, as long as they had not been initiated, they meant nothing to the initiated.

In women gatherings or '*muzilongwes*', the uninitiated suffer social pressure from the initiated women. The uninitiated are not accommodated in any activities within the community. The uninitiated are made to feel small and are called names.

## **Lack of acceptance and stigmatisation**

The Tonga people urge young girls and women to attend initiation schools because it is a cultural norm. The initiation schools are perceived as an informal school that educate girls about cultural values and help them to acquire the knowledge that should be passed from one generation to another. If the individual does not comply with the norm, she would not be accepted by the community and would be reminded by others that she is not a woman. The initiated would make life difficult for the uninitiated in understanding the conversation.

Women who are not initiated are not considered as part of the community. The community would not listen or accept any advice from them, because the person is considered to be still a child and cannot make informed decisions. The uninitiated also suffer from isolation, rejection and stigmatisation by their peers and community. They are not accepted and respected by initiated women and they always find it difficult to have normal relationships, whether from the initiated male side or female side.

The initiated women contend that female genital cutting gives pleasure to their partners. A five year study of 300 women and 100 men in Sudan found that ‘sexual desire, pleasure and orgasm are experienced by the majority of women who have been subjected to genital mutilation, in spite of them being culturally bound to hide these experiences.’ The researcher has discovered that those initiated think they perform better sexually than those who did not go for initiation and this can be a valid perception judging from first-hand experience that the researcher was subjected to.

Most advocates of the practice continue to perform the procedure in adherence to standards of beauty that are different from those in the west. Initiated women contend that the pleasure their partners receive due to this procedure is a definite part of a successful marriage and enjoyable sex life. However, female genital cutting does not eliminate all sexual pleasure for all women who go through initiation, though it does reduce the likelihood of orgasm. The researcher personally found that initiated women say different things when asked about sexuality and initiation, which she believed was a way of encouraging those who did not attend initiation to attend.

The researcher's finding is that information that is acquired and learned cannot be shared except when you have graduated from the ceremony. This is why the researcher was forced to be initiated to give a true reflection of knowledge. Yes, it is prohibited to talk about the rite of passage with uninitiated women. The researcher's finding is that some information that is shared by uninitiated women is not a true reflection of what happens at the schools. Some would falsify the information to discourage girls not to attend the ritual. However, the researcher had an opportunity to attend the *Nkolola* initiation and it gave her a more comprehensive insight, and shed more light on the context of secrecy and taboo regarding sharing information without facts.

Women initiations are considered by initiates as traumatic and abusive. The initiates felt emotionally bullied and experienced feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, and inferiority because all instructions during the process of initiation were imposed upon the initiates and never questioned. The psychological, traumatic impact of the above-mentioned physical hardship is enormous in the sense that initiates were disempowered and put in a position of subservience without freedom of choice. However, the old generation did not regard all this as abuse, because contemporary society views the practice as an acceptable norm of culture.

Initiation schools demand complete submissiveness and obedience of girls and women. The schools are perceived as a general preparation for marriage, where boys and girls, are brought together by means of symbols and metaphors, taught to understand the true significance of marriage and child birth. In the process of informal education, they are warned of the pitfalls and the dangers that they are likely to encounter during the course of their lives.

It is true that all initiation ceremonies by definition are status markers, meaning an important change in the initiate's social standing. As discussed above, adolescent initiation ceremonies are more likely to be held in societies in which gender identity has a great social significance. Management of initiation schools also serves as a source of identity, unity and solidarity among the initiates.

The passage from childhood to adolescence is when a girl has 'seen the moon' that is when she has started her first menstruation; she must discard her childish practices and become a responsible member of the community. The passage from childhood to adolescence is marked by the *Nkolola* ceremony. The girl is called *Mooye* (a young girl), and afterwards is always referred to as *Khomba*, meaning 'dangerous', implying that sexual intercourse may now result into pregnancy. In other words, now that the girl has started menstruating, she is perceived as matured, can get married and have children.'

The ceremonies only take place when there are more than two girls. On the day of proceedings, all initiated women living nearby come into the chief's kraal with loud trilling and ululating to welcome the new initiates. Girls of royal blood do not go into the water. It is said that they will have a fever. They only make beer and they pay no fees for participation in the rites of *Nkolola*. They only undergo treatment, but do not have to suffer the maltreatment that the commoners undergo.

A fire is lit in the public meeting place of the village headman. The fire is said to cast away the evil spirit. Young and old women, dance around the fire. The python dance is performed for two or three hours before the initiates are allowed to rest. No special drums are used at this ceremony, but ordinary drums are played with a characteristic beat, which is never heard elsewhere. The singing and dancing continue for the whole night. The initiates remain in the public hut throughout the ceremony, which continues for a period of six days. A great deal of time is dedicated to sexual teaching and the girls are warned against becoming deflowered before marriage.

The girls are also taught all about womanhood, customs of marriage life and how to plan a family by spacing children. The girls are taught how a woman should behave and how to satisfy her husband. To the beat of drums, they are made fit, paying special attention to the thigh and leg muscles by squatting and dancing while in a crouched position: This is believed to make childbirth easier. The initiates are escorted to the riverside each morning, led by one of the instructresses, who beats the drum as a warning to all males that the party is approaching. During this phase, all men are excluded, and throughout the

ceremony, it is strictly forbidden for a man to come anywhere near. If a man is caught in the vicinity, he would be brought before the chief and fined for his indiscretion.

The initiates are then awakened and are taught the tribal rules of etiquette and obedience. The initiates are often subjected to further humiliation. For example, they may be ordered to lift a heavy stone on to their backs and walk to the kraal carrying it in the same position. The dance performance is more in the nature of hard physical exercise than actual dancing. The findings show that the *Nkolola* ceremony has not taken place regularly in the recent past. Its occurrence depends largely on the number of girls who are ready to participate depending on the harvest. It is essential that there should be plenty of food to enable the members of the school to have the necessary leisure.

*Nkolola* initiation is held in winter. However, nowadays it is held during school holidays irrespective of the season. The socio-economic status led to some changes within societies and the right to freedom brought some changes to different cultures. All this has caused deterioration in women's interest in attending initiation. The changes in *Nkolola* seem to be related to the demands of formal education.

Traditional ceremonies can be channels of information that stress respect, faithfulness, mutual responsibility and support within the family context. Therefore, it is imperative that we conserve our traditions. Despite the practice being of great benefit to both the society and individuals, certain rules and ways of implementing the rite have to be modified. Practices like use of herbs for body warmth and dry sex can affect girls' sexual and reproductive health. Lessons on erotic sexual dances should also wait until later on in someone's life. Thus, the stakeholders of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony, who are mostly the initiators, should wait until the girl is at least twenty years of age before she is taken into seclusion. Whether she is to marry at that age or not, at least she should be matured enough to digest what she is taught and know better how to implement the issues taught so that she is appreciated by the husband.

## **Opportunities for HIV and AIDS prevention programmes in the initiation ceremonies**

As the HIV and AIDS scourge continues to cause havoc within Southern Africa, voices are growing for serious consideration of a cultural approach to the prevention and awareness of the infection. It is a well-known fact that in any discussion of HIV and behaviour in Africa, the centrality of culture cannot be ignored. In a rapid assessment of programmes targeting adolescents and youths conducted in Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, and Kenya, culture is a significant factor in communication of HIV prevention information and behaviour, in spite of the variation in the views on what cultural values are and how they influence attitude and behaviours.

A cultural approach to HIV and AIDS entails tackling the problem from a position of values, norms, traditions and other cultural institutions as platforms to discuss and communicate information about the virus and the disease. Communication is integral to a cultural system in that cultural values, beliefs, knowledge are conveyed through symbols and language. This cultural approach seeks to exploit and make use of every action of tradition, beliefs and value systems for ethical and practical reasons. It also mobilises cultural resources including, knowledge, and modes of economic and social organisation, creativity and self-confidence. Gagnon and Parker (1995) explains that certain aspects of culture are pertinent in any deliberation on communication on HIV and behaviour. The basic consideration in HIV prevention *visa-a-vis* initiation ceremonies, according to Gagnon and Parker (1995), is the fact that culture constitutes the very matrix within which people formulate their ideas, within which they carry out their activities. This means that culture controls almost every aspect of an individual's life including how that individual acts or behaves.

Furthermore, an individual's concept and expression of sexuality is deeply entwined in the social norms of the society. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of what cultural dynamics are at play in regard to behaviour surrounding sexuality, human relationships and how this impacts on the prevention and spread of HIV is a necessity. The way people acquire knowledge is dictated to some extent by cultural norms. Thus, with this in mind initiation ceremonies being one of the most popularly practiced way of

transmitting cultural norms by most ethnic groups in Zambia can be tapped to focus on the manner in which new and critical knowledge on HIV prevention can be introduced within this cultural system to generate a debate. This could possibly force a community to re-think their approach towards issues regarding sexuality and human relationships that foster the prevention and spread of the HIV infection. Nevertheless, not all cultural practices and institutions contribute to the rise of the epidemic.

An important mode of transmitting cultural norms and beliefs from one generation to another are initiation ceremonies and rites of passage. Raising (1995) considers these ceremonies important because they are targeted at members of the society who are transcending from childhood to adulthood. The initiation ceremonies, therefore, have the potential to shape the lives and behaviours of the young adults. This implies that initiation ceremonies have the power to influence and impart desired behaviours to young Zambians since most of the ethnic groups practice initiation ceremonies, especially for girls who have reached puberty and women.

Richards (1956) points out that initiation ceremonies play an important role in imparting knowledge to the young girls and women about their future roles as wives and mothers. Consequently, issues of sex and sexuality are prominent in the messages that are given during this period. Nearly every woman getting into marriage is counselled by traditional counsellors who are either found in the community or church. Sometimes girls stop school and get married. They still go through traditional counselling through an initiation rite, hence it is important to empower the counsellors in these ceremonies with information on HIV and AIDS if these unfortunate girls have to know the dangers of HIV including prevention and the skill of negotiating for safe sex in their marriages.

HIV prevention is critical in the fight against HIV and AIDS. In the absence of a cure, every available potential mode of prevention of HIV and AIDS infection or re-infection should be explored. The key word is prevention. As such, the mass mobilisation of every sector of society remains the only weapon. In Zambia today, traditional initiators have been left out in AIDS awareness campaigns, in spite of them being the most important

avenues of transmitting traditional information on sexuality from one generation to the next. Most Zambian women pass through initiation rites at one stage in their lives.

Therefore, leaders of initiation ceremonies who are traditional counsellors should be actively involved in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Through them, cultural practices that put girls and women at risk of contracting the HIV virus can be corrected. Women face particularly big risks of contracting the HIV virus on account of certain cultural practices that emphasise female subservience to men.

HIV and AIDS prevention measures should aim at targeting women and girls who are more vulnerable to contracting HIV and AIDS. Integration of HIV information into initiation rites such as *Nkolola* is, however, a challenge that needs to be addressed by the Zambian government and every sector fighting the pandemic. Initiation can offer an important avenue; it has great potential to contribute to the fight against HIV and AIDS infection. It is important to impart correct and current information on HIV and AIDS prevention to girls as early as possible before they engage in sexual activities that expose them to contracting the virus and before getting married. Most women become vulnerable to infection when they get married since they lack the power to say no to sex despite them knowing that their husbands have HIV and AIDS. Through initiation rites, knowledge on how women can protect themselves from getting infected can be infused into the messages taught. Traditional counsellors are important traditional leaders in the society. According to Raising (2001: 136):

*The Nacimbusa had a high status and authority; they belonged to the original inhabitants of the land and were knowledgeable concerning territorial rites.*

Initiation ceremonies are important areas where little HIV and AIDS work has been done. Educating women and girls on HIV and AIDS and its prevention is probably the beginning of solving many of the HIV and AIDS related problems the women face today. Looking at the gender dimension of the AIDS pandemic, there is great need to explore any available mode that target women and one such mode is initiation rites.



## 5.15 Summary

Traditional ceremonies can be channels of information that stress respect, faithfulness, mutual responsibility and support within the family context. Therefore, it is imperative that we conserve our traditions. Despite the practice being of great benefit to both the society and individuals, certain rules and ways of implementing the rite have to be modified.

Practices like use of herbs for body warmth and sex can affect girls' sexual and reproductive health. Lessons on erotic sexual dances should also wait until later on in someone's life. Thus, the stakeholders of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony, who are mostly the initiators, should wait until the girl is at least twenty years of age before she is taken into seclusion. Whether she is to marry at that age or not, she should be mature enough to digest what she is taught and know better how to implement the issues taught so that she is appreciated by her husband.

Therefore, this study concludes that initiation ceremonies should continue being practiced except that a few modifications need to be made. These rites are good in that they help instil good morals in most women.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter, gives a summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study. It is divided into three sections. The first section gives a brief review of the study, including the findings. The second section gives some observations on the findings of the study. The last section has the theoretical conclusions, recommendations and practical implications of the study and suggestions for further research.

#### 6.2 Summary of the study

##### 6.2.1 Problem and Purpose of the study

The *Nkolola* initiation ceremony is a rite of passage among the Tonga people of Southern Province, which marks and prepares a woman for entry into adulthood and marriage life. A lot of traditional Tonga people consider those who have not undergone the initiation as inferior and uncultured. The study sought to establish the perceptions of initiated women and their husbands towards the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony so as to ascertain the significance of the ritual among the Tonga of Southern Province of Zambia.

The purpose of the study was to assess the perceptions of married men and women of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in Mazabuka and Monze Districts of Southern Province of Zambia.

It was hoped that the study would establish both positive and negative aspects of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. It was hoped that the married women and men would come up with ideas to improve the initiation ceremony in accordance with how they perceived it so that it becomes more acceptable to society, especially with the dynamics of modern society.

##### 6.2.2 Findings

The study revealed that many women (83%) and their husbands (84%) agreed on the fact that the initiation ceremony did have a positive impact on the initiates' behaviour as it

made the woman mature, a good wife and a perfect home maker. The study further ascertained that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony should continue but be restricted to women about to enter marriage.

The study also showed that *Nkolola* has a significant influence on a woman's behaviour. Both married women and men stated that women are taught how to behave well towards others, especially to elderly people. The study revealed that initiated women tended to portray a behaviour which was acceptable in traditional society unlike their uninitiated counterparts. The initiated women were also seen to have self-control in matters of sexual relationships. Furthermore, the study established that initiates were taught income generating activities, sex roles and survival skills within the family framework.

The study thus contends that the gist of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony was to ensure that the initiate was well endowed in the virtues of respect, obedience and community life, placing and poising them for a respectable position in their communities.

On the other hand, the study revealed that women who went through *Nkolola* initiation ceremonies were perceived to be vulnerable to prostitution. It was stated that *Nkolola* initiation ceremony exposed young girls to sexual knowledge at a young age. This raised curiosity and hence prompted young girls to start experimenting with sex. This led to promiscuity and ultimately, to teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

This study shows the perceptions of married men and women on *Nkolola* initiation ceremony drawn from two Districts of Zambia. Since the sample had a large portion of both married men and women, the findings may reflect the opinions and perceptions of these groups more than they may reflect those of other groups. However, there could be some justification in applying the findings to other areas other than the two Districts. The justification lies in the fact that the sample included respondents of various social, educational, economic, occupational and other backgrounds.

The findings show that *Nkolola* was highly valued particularly among the initiated women and their husbands. The initiates and their husbands perceived *Nkolola* as having

a significant impact on behaviour and acclaim in the community. It was understood that cultural values and homemaking skills were transmitted during the ceremony, which made it even more significant.

Married initiates and their husbands perceive *Nkolola* as having an overall positive effect on behaviour and attitude of the initiated women. Both the women and their husbands believe that undergoing *Nkolola* enriches the initiate's marriage and increases their societal value. Both the initiates and their husbands seemed to have generalised perceptions about non-initiates and how their behaviour differs from that of the initiates. It was generally held that the uninitiated were rude and uncultured, disrespectful and often poor home makers. However, this was more of a general reflection and may not necessarily be true.

The general consensus among the initiated women and their husbands was that the lessons taught during *Nkolola* should be revised depending on the age of the initiates. This was because it was felt that teaching sexually related lessons to young girls encouraged promiscuity. Children are tempted to use their newly acquired skills, which may endanger their lives by increasing their susceptibility to HIV and AIDS and early unplanned pregnancies.

### **6.3.1 Theoretical implications**

The study fulfils the socialisation, gender socialisation and the social identity theories as a framework in which perceptions of married men and women of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in Mazabuka and Monze Districts can be analysed.

The gender socialisation theory contends that 'an important part of socialisation is the learning of culturally defined gender roles'. The *Nkolola* initiation ceremony does fit this theory as it imparts in initiated women their roles as wives and home makers in their society. It teaches them obedience and respect to their husbands and elders in society.

As parents are present in a child's life from the beginning, their influence in a child's early socialisation is very important, especially with regards to gender roles. Sociologists have identified four ways in which parents socialise gender roles in their children: Shaping

gender related attributes through toys and activities, differing their interaction with children based on the sex of the child, serving as primary gender models, and communicating gender ideals and expectations.

Thus, from the gender socialisation theory, it was assumed that parents, family and communities continuously reinforce their perceptions of *Nkolola*, and ultimately this has a bearing on the perpetuation of these norms in society. Gender socialisation theory does support the current perceptions regarding the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony among the Tonga people of Southern Zambia.

**Primary socialisation** for a child is very important because it sets the ground work for all future socialisation. Primary Socialisation occurs when a child learns the attitudes, values, and actions appropriate to individuals as members of a particular culture. It is mainly influenced by the immediate family and friends. For example, if a child saw his/her mother expressing a discriminatory opinion about a minority group (for instance, the uninitiated women), then that child may think this behaviour is acceptable and could continue to have this opinion about minority groups.

**Secondary socialisation** refers to the process of learning the appropriate behaviour as a member of a smaller group within the larger society. Basically, it is the behavioural patterns reinforced by socialising agents of society. Secondary socialisation takes place outside the home. It is where children and adults learn how to act in a way that is appropriate for the situations they are in. Schools require very different behaviour from the home, and children must act according to new rules. Secondary socialisation is usually associated with teenagers and adults, and involves smaller changes than those occurring in primary socialisation. Examples of secondary Socialisation are entering a new profession or relocating to a new environment or society.

*Nkolola* initiation ceremony is perceived as an important stage in a woman's life. Through socialisation, young females will continue to consider it as an essential part of their growing up and ultimately discriminate against their peers who have not undergone the ceremony. This explains the negative perceptions held by initiated women and their husbands towards the uninitiated. Thus, if *Nkolola* was not highly regarded by the

initiated, the women would not encourage their children to undergo the ceremony and soon it would lose its significance in the communities.

Although this study seems to agree with both the gender socialisation and the socialisation theories, it does not mean that a general social theory from one culture can be applied in its entirety to a similar study in another culture. Even in a study of 'universal' phenomena, care should be taken in the way a theory is applied in a 'foreign' setting, as two different cultures may not view one social phenomenon in the same way. It is important that in collecting data, indicators which are appropriate and familiar to the culture being studied are used. It is, therefore, necessary that the researcher does not just transfer indicators from one culture to another culture without knowing the meaning another culture attaches to the indicator. A question like, 'How big is your family?' may have a different answer in Zambia from that given in a Western country where family may mean the immediate family. In Zambia, it may include the extended family.

However, this does not mean that theories based on the western culture have no relevance to a non-western culture. On the contrary, their underlying principles and ideas can be used as a starting point from which one can construct a theory which may be much more relevant to the society or culture in which a social phenomenon is being studied. These theories can also be modified to make them applicable or relevant to the situations being studied in a non-western culture.

It should be noted, however, that *Nkolola* may not be the only major basis of knowledge about marriage. For instance, an uninitiated woman would be accorded more respect in society due to her Christian standing and character in society as opposed to her initiation status. It should be mentioned once again that in a traditional society, it was generally the morally upright women who earned the songs of praise from the people and were accorded more respect in the community.

### **6.3.2 Perceptions of women and their husbands towards *Nkolola* initiation ceremony**

The study has established that both the women and their husbands in Mazabuka and Monze Districts of Southern Province believe that the initiation ceremony affects the

behaviour of women. It has been shown in the study that women who have not undergone initiation are perceived to be rude and uncultured. They are often thought of as being ill mannered and their marriages are most likely to end up in divorce.

The study has shown that though some people in the community do not ascribe to the notion that the women who have not undergone *Nkolola* are inferior to their initiated counterparts, the majority of people do. This is more so among the married men. According to the findings of this study, many of the respondents believed that a woman becomes a woman only after passing through *Nkolola*. Thus, while a majority of the women and their husbands believed that maturity comes after a certain age, a significant number still believe that the initiation ceremony is a significant indicator of the attainment of maturity.

The study has thus, concluded that both the women and their husbands in Monze and Mazabuka Districts perceived *Nkolola* initiation ceremony as imparting a positive influence on the initiates' behaviour. They believe that such virtues as respect, communitarianism, cooking, modest dressing, home keeping and body preparation during menstruation are taught during the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony and, hence the positive influence on behaviour of the initiated women.

### **6.3.3 Effects of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony as perceived by initiated women and their husbands**

The study has established that the initiated women and their husbands in Mazabuka and Monze Districts of Southern Province felt that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony had both positive and negative effects. Among the positive effects is the fact that the initiated women were better prepared for marriage and, hence handled marital affairs with maturity and discretion. The study further noted that *Nkolola* initiation ceremony empowered women with skills to handle their husbands both in and outside the bedroom, which implied that the initiates had longer lasting marriages than their counterparts. Additionally, it was revealed that the initiation ceremony was perceived to make women better mothers and members of society and as such it was highly regarded. This was

reflected in the views of the respondents as they advocated for the continuation of the teachings of *Nkolola* in their respective communities.

On the other hand, the study found the teaching of the same lessons to initiates of different age groups as having a negative effect. This was detrimental particularly to younger initiates who started using this knowledge inappropriately. This in many cases led to early marriages and teenage pregnancies and in some cases, sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and AIDS.

In gender socialisation theory, the aspects discussed are that culture plays a role in the construction of gender, but that does not mean that gender norms cannot be subverted disregarding what culture may prescribe (Butler, 2004). Cultural practices and attitudes towards sex tend to shape the way women would respond to sexual relationships, for example. The theory states that culture may prescribe a situation where men dominate in relationship and, thus shaping the identity of men but at the same time denying the women a right over their own bodies, a situation that can make women vulnerable to HIV infections (Baxen and Breidlid, 2009). Thus, the study by Baxen and Breidlid, (2009) indicates that women are usually scripted in the role of silence and acceptance when it comes to sexual intercourse in that they have to wait for a man to initiate sex and should he do so, they have to yield often without question. In the discussion of the findings, one respondent was of the view that initiation ceremonies made women to exaggerate the respect they had for their husbands, treating them like ‘gods’. This according to the respondent implied a continued perpetration and oppression of women in society. This agrees with what the theory asserts.

Furthermore, the study found that the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony caused young girls to stay out of school as the initiation period in many instances was significantly long. This increased school dropout rates and further disadvantaged the girl child. Additionally, it was thought that the initiation ceremony taught values that perpetuated the oppression of women by men.



#### **6.3.4 Significance of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in a woman's life**

The study showed that though many women and their husbands in Mazabuka and Monze Districts viewed *Nkolola* initiation ceremony as a significant contributor to a stable and well-functioning marriage, a small minority thought otherwise. Many of the husbands were happy with their wives and were proud of their wives' initiation status. However, the same was established of the husbands of uninitiated women. They did not perceive their wives as being inferior in any way and seemed to be indifferent about initiation. This was particularly true among Christian men and even more so among the women and men with a higher level of education.

Thus, since the study's sample had a majority of respondents being initiated women, it was difficult to establish clearly the voices and perception of the uninitiated women and their husbands on the matter. Nonetheless, the study has shown that many people in Mazabuka and Monze Districts of Southern Province consider the *Nkolola* initiation as significant to married life.

#### **6.3.5 Strategies to modify values taught in *Nkolola***

The study has noted that while most of the people in Mazabuka and Monze Districts of Southern Province are happy with the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony and gladly advocate for its continuation, there are some changes which they would like to make towards the lessons taught in *Nkolola*. These changes include the teaching of selective lessons to initiates of varying ages. This is so as to preserve the essence and spirit behind the ceremony and avoid the current pitfalls the ceremony entails the initiates.

Furthermore, many people are calling for the integration of Christian virtues in the teachings of *Nkolola* so that initiates have the fear of God above all others. It was further noted that people advocated for the addition of health and reproductive messages in these ceremonies to equip initiates with the ability to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and AIDS among others.

The study also pointed out that the initiators needed to be sober and possess good morals so that they serve as positive role models to the initiates. Additionally, it was suggested

that the lessons be documented and a book be written containing recommended instructions so that the rest of the country can benefit from the values of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony.

It was further noted that the initiation ceremony needed to be conducted during school holidays so that it did not interfere with the formal education curriculum. Many people also called for the increased involvement of government to ensure that they sensitise parents on the importance and need for the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony.

The study further showed that there were calls for *Nkolola* initiation ceremony to be extended to male children so that they too share in the rich cultural values that are entailed in the ceremony. Furthermore, the respondents said that there was a need to emphasise life skills and survival skills during such ceremonies. This would help the initiate to survive in society both socially and psychologically.

#### **6.3.6 Implications for policy and practice**

The *Nkolola* ceremony is a part of a cultural traditional heritage that gives pride to the indigenous people and Zambia as a cultured African Nation at large. Even when we embrace change and modernity as a people in a developing world we certainly hope to keep most of our values and traditions alive as a symbol of our roots. However, with growth of new Knowledge, it is our duty to evaluate our norms and see how best to improve some sections of our social wellbeing without making other sections worse off. The study has acknowledged the value addition that the *Nkolola* ceremony installs in the life of a young woman, these values go a long way in making her a better community member in as far as execution of her sex roles and responsibilities is concerned. This certainly is a good learning tool that could be harnessed and extended to all of society within the *Zambian* context.

The findings of this study have a number of implications for the government in *Zambia*. The fact that many initiates and their husbands contend that *Nkolola* should continue implies that government needs to take an active role in ensuring that the right messages are communicated to initiates in the ceremony. There should be a way to harmonise the

teachings in *Nkolola* to reflect the values placed on education and safe sex, particularly in the wake of the HIV pandemic.

With respect to the findings of the study, the *Nkolola* should continue, however with inclusion of the recommended views that the study has brought out. One way of attracting women to be initiated is by improving the value of the lessons taught and incorporating economic and self-sustaining skills among the initiates. This would encourage participation in *Nkolola* as it would erode the notion that the ceremony emphasises sexual education at the expense of other equally important lessons.

In the village setting, the *Nkolola* should only take place during the holidays when schools have closed and for a shortened period of time of almost 4 weeks (1 Month). Lessons could be split in three (3) sessions taking place at particular times of the year when schools are in recess, in order to allow for school going young girls. As a widely held view in the study, certain practices and lessons such as sexual and marriage lessons should be restricted only to particular ages considered ready for marriage. This will help curb the unintended adverse outcomes of the initiation ceremony such as promotion of promiscuity that threatens the Sexual reproductive health of young girls.

It is important to explore ways in which the value of the *Nkolola* ceremony can be enriched. This can be done through avoiding giving alcohol to the initiators as alcohol tends to cloud the judgement of the initiators and hence they cannot communicate valuable messages to the young girls. Initiators' behaviour was cited as one of the main issues contributing to the decline of the *Nkolola*. Having been entrusted with bringing up the delicate age of novices who will easily imitate the grown-ups, initiators are expected to be exemplary in every aspect of their initiation career. They have to remember that good marriages emanate from *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in many cases

However, it is understood that not all people grow up in the village setting or has roots in the village where such practices are held. The study therefore, recommends the incorporation of such vital lessons in the general teaching curriculum as a way of embracing our culture and traditions to all the citizenry. This could be executed by

bringing on board the Ministry of Chiefs and Cultural Affairs to render assistance to the Ministry of Education in imparting cultural and traditional knowledge in teachers training institutions. These would in turn upon graduation implement the lessons in various schools. The curriculum would be formulated and implemented in the same way other subjects like home economics and management are taught. This cultural affairs and tradition could be taught side by side with the various main local languages that already exist in the school programme.

This will ensure that cultural values and traditions are inculcated and developed along with other professional developments in the lives of not only young women but young men as well and as a result, the Zambian society will be able to hold on to its culture and tradition in a more modernised and balanced set up. Various cultural books may be prepared and translated into the various main local languages focusing on not only the *Nkolola* but other renowned traditional initiation ceremonies that take place within the country. This way, important aspects of young people's lives that parents feel embarrassed to teach will be learnt under a specifically guided cultural and affairs programme in school with respect to their age and gender. It could widely be used as a tool for behavioural change and awareness programme among pupils.

Lastly, to maintain the lessons taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony, the government through the Ministry of Education should publish a book containing the lessons taught during the ceremony. This documentation would ensure a more adept way of ensuring that the cultural content and values are preserved and passed on efficiently to the future generations.

#### **6.4 Recommendations**

Based on the research findings, the Government through its appropriate ministries should ensure that the recommendations made below are addressed by the organisers of the *Nkolola* Initiation Ceremony:

- (a) Since the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony is perceived as having a positive influence on the behaviour and conduct of its initiates, the study recommends that *Nkolola* initiation ceremony be encouraged to continue.

- (b) There should be an integration of other important lessons during the initiation ceremony such as HIV and AIDS prevention and sexual reproductive health. This is so as to improve the content and quality of the lessons taught during *Nkolola*.
- (c) The ceremony should adopt an age specific selection criteria when delivering lessons to the initiates. This will help to mitigate the observed follies of teaching young girls marriage lessons which they are clearly not ready for. Furthermore, the lessons taught during *Nkolola* need to bring out the importance of a woman attaining economic independence before venturing into marriage. This will empower women and reduce the prevalence of early marriages.
- (d) A book containing the values and lessons taught in *Nkolola* should be written so that an account is kept and uniform virtues are taught to would be initiates country wide. This will be an important means of preserving the culture and tradition of *Nkolola* and other initiation ceremonies for our future generations.

## **6.5 Suggestions for future research**

The following are some of the suggestions for future research:

1. There is need to have a national feel of the initiation ceremonies available for women. The current study was restricted in that it only focused on two Districts of Southern Province. This would give additional insight into the significance and role that initiation ceremonies are playing in the modern era particularly among the youths.
2. The current study discovered that some people feel kitchen parties are the new initiation ceremonies. A study to investigate the lessons taught in kitchen party settings would help to understand this new development and help advice on the future of initiation ceremonies in Zambia.
3. A study which incorporates the views of both the initiates and non-initiates' perceptions of *Nkolola* should be done so to ascertain the exact value placed on

*Nkolola*. This is because the current study is biased towards initiated women and the views of non-initiates have not been covered.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Explanation of keywords

In this section, the following concepts are clarified as used in this thesis: initiation, circumcision, menarche, puberty rites, adolescence, and rites of passage

#### Initiation

Richards (1956) defines initiation as a rite of passage, usually performed during puberty. It is a cultural tradition that is practiced in most communities in Africa. Lincoln (1981) concurs and goes further to define initiation as a process that a woman goes through, resulting in a change of status and becoming 'fertile, productive, experienced and whole. Menarche is when a girl has 'seen the moon' (i.e., started her first menstruation), she is claimed to be carrying danger because she can fall pregnant. Women initiation is performed differently in other countries. For example, in Nigeria four lines are cut in the girl's abdomen, to make her a woman and the mother would teach a girl to 'love magic.' The initiated women could teach her of the female powers and the physical changes marking womanhood. However, it differs from the Japanese because when a girl sees her first menses, the family celebrates by eating red-coloured rice and beans. In India, a girl who has reached puberty is given a ceremonial bath, decked with ornate jewels and garments, and the girl's kith and kin are all invited for a ceremony, in which it is announced that the girl has come of age and is celebrated. This culture is unique, but some families still hold on to this tradition. Like the Hindus and some Buddhists, at the onset of menarche it is believed that the goddess spirit vacates the girl's body and returns to ordinary life after a series of rituals (Turner, 1987; Mönnig, 1967).

Initiation is culturally important in most communities and implies the beginning of new life. It is a ceremony by which a person is introduced into a society, which brings a man/woman to the realisation of the egoist aspect and to bring the lower nature under its control. It is a process of undergoing an expansion of consciousness, as part of the normal process of evolutionary development, viewed on a large scale, and not from a standpoint of an individual. Primarily, it involves the capacity to see, hear and comprehend, and to

synthesise and correlate knowledge and recognise the purpose of pervading circumstances (Maluleke; Troskie, 2003). Initiation rites comprise pro-social behaviours that build social relationships; understanding, empathy, civility and moral decision making. It is viewed as a major developmental task for a girl who is learning how to fit in and be accepted socially by her peers. Furthermore, it is equal for society to bestow and acknowledge the newly found status on the young initiate. When initiation rites are done appropriately, they meet teenagers' needs for a sense of belonging, and understanding the history and culture of her nation. It serves the purpose of building relationships and if not done properly can cause psychological harm to a girl's ego or self-concept. Furthermore, initiation rites create solidarity among women and are used for passing knowledge from one generation to another (Raising, 1996).

### **Menarche**

According to Matlin (1987), menarche (pronounced 'men-nar-kee') is the first menstrual period. When a girl has 'seen the moon' is when she started her first menstruation. Menstruation is defined as a period when a woman bleeds. It is commonly referred to as a menstrual period. Menstruation is called just a period. Both the information posted by Ussher (1989) and Beidelman (1997) concur that the onset of menstruation is marked with disempowering messages on the possibility of unplanned pregnancy, promiscuity, contraction of HIV and AIDS, as opposed to messages that affirm one's newly acquired status as a woman who has power to give life. Menarche allows accommodation and assimilation of these changes to take place, as it is an event which cannot be ignored and for many mothers and daughters symbolises the beginning for womanhood. Girls themselves have reported that menarche confirms their identity and characterised the leap from being a young girl and moving from matured early adulthood with the ability to reproduce, and means a profound effect on their relationships with their parents (Ussher, 1989).

Menarche tends to occur relatively late in puberty, following the beginning of the physical changes; the development of pubic hair, breast development and the gradual development of hips. According to Turner (1987), this physiological change characterises

the leap from being a young girl and moving from 'not girl, not woman.' There is evidence that only twenty-five % (25%) of girls are prepared for menarche adequately (Ussher, 1989). As a result, many myths and negative assumptions surrounding menstruation are frequently internalised. From a medical point of view, when menarche occurs, it confirms that the girl has had a gradual oestrogen-induced growth of the uterus, especially the endometrium, and that the 'outflow tract' from the uterus, through the cervix to the vagina, is open, and menarche may occur at an unusually early age average 10-11 years, preceding the larch and other signs of puberty. The larch is defined as the onset of breast bud development (Rosenfield, 2009). On the first sign of menstruation, the girl will inform one of the elderly women of the kraal, of its occurrences (Beidelman, 1997). The elderly women will then approach and tell the girl's mother, who then tells the father who will give consent for the girl to be initiated. There is a barrier of reserve that forbids the direct approach of the parent by the child concerning matters of intimacy. This behaviour occurs repeatedly among the Vha-Venda and other African cultures.

In other communities, such as the American Indian society, an adolescent female, at her first menstruation, is secluded for a number of days in a wigwam built by the girl herself 'to cool herself.' (Beidelman, 1997). The isolation of the girl is due to the belief that, as a menstruating woman, she is seen as dangerous to the community, and must be protected from becoming pregnant. Among the Kaguru people in Tanzania, menstruation is viewed as a contentious, disturbing process; a source of pollution that has to be subdued by circumcision (Beidelman, 1997). During her seclusion, the girl is tutored by her mother on her future role as an adult woman. However, in Venda, a girl who has her first menstruation must hide any sign of blood. She must wear two pubic coverings 'maredo; an old 'moredo' is worn inside as a tampon, and a new one is worn outside, like an apron. The husband will then know that the wife is menstruating and that intercourse is forbidden [<http://www.era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era-.resources>]. Many Native American societies also publicly celebrated a girl's first menses. For instance, the parents of girls among the Indians of Southern California used to proudly announce to the community that their daughters were beginning to menstruate and thus becoming women. The girls were partly buried in heated sand to cool off at that time. They were not permitted to scratch themselves or eat salt. The girls are given instructions by older women about the

physiological changes that were occurring and how to behave as a woman and wife. For most girls today, public announcements that they had begun menstruating would be considered humiliating (Molnos, 1973). However, it is a matter of personal and family pride in many cultures.

Beidelman, cited in Molnos (1973), states that the girls are taught by older women various riddles, sayings and singing songs with double meaning relating to proper sexual conduct and sexual hygiene. However, the songs and the content of the instruction may vary from performance to performance, but the style of execution involves common elements, that is, song, mime and dances backed by the beat of drums, and a characteristic dance step. However, in some African countries where puberty rites of passage have been researched, there is evidence of consistency in terms of the content, material, information and messages that are deemed necessary for girls and women initiates in their journey to womanhood. According to Erickson's and Freudian theory, puberty refers to the physical and sexual maturation of boys and girls. Puberty is the period of transition between juvenile state and adulthood during which secondary sex characteristics appear and fertility is acquired. However, the catalyst for puberty is unknown, but puberty occurs when there is maturation of the hypothalamo-hypophysal-gonadal axis, because gonads stimulate the production of testosterone/ estrogen for breast development and genital growth (Hall and Guyton, 2002).

These hormones stimulate the interest in sexuality and increase the natural will for affirmation. Oestrogen mainly promotes the proliferation and growth of specific cells of the body and is responsible for the development of the majority of secondary sexual characteristics of the female (Hall and Guyton, 2002). Puberty is defined by van Warmelo (1932) as a transitional period, marking the entrance of the young girl into her new role as a woman. It is during adolescence and puberty that the discourse that locates the centre of a woman's being in her womb, in her sexuality, is first found, and the seeds of contempt and disgust towards a woman's body and her reproductive function (Ussher, 1989). A girl sometimes gets pimples on her skin before puberty. When the elders see this they say that the girl is menstruating internally. When a girl has her menses for the first time, it is said that she has 'seized a baboon'. This event is announced to the other

girls, who receive an invitation to attend the puberty rites (van Warmelo, 1932; Nodin, 2001; Burbank, 1997). It is during this phase that young girls and boys become ‘a person’, and become autonomous and they try to determine their positions in the world.

The researcher perceives puberty as presenting a potential for transformation, to be seen, heard and recognised as an important member of society. In most societies, a host of mixed messages are given to pre-pubertal girls about menstruation. Available information is often contradictory in that it congratulates girls on their entry into womanhood while at the same time suggesting that ‘it’ be kept secret. For most young women, cultural beliefs that menstruation is associated with physical discomfort, increased emotionality, and disruption of activities and social interactions are well entrenched even before menarche. For example, advertisements in the media are promoting cures for backache, bloating, and cramps, thereby conveying the idea that menstruation is an illness. Historically, menarche has been celebrated with detailed rituals. For example, the Ancient Greeks mixed corn with menstrual blood to celebrate fertility. The Hopi Indians secluded the girl during menarche and welcomed her back to the community five days later, as a woman (Gennep, 1960). Although many people today overlook menarche as an important stage in a young girl’s life, increasingly, more and more mothers are beginning to hold their own personalised menarche rituals, using music, jewelry, flowers, and dance to celebrate their daughter’s move into womanhood.

The transition to adulthood for girls in early societies was not as traumatic as male initiation rituals. Apart from a small initiation celebration of biological development, a girl is introduced to womanhood without effort simply by having a mother and other female kin to emulate. Chodorow (1974), states that the girl does not have to prove her femininity and independent identity or worth. Female manners and activities were acquired in a way that seemed easy and natural. By observing her family, a young girl would see exactly what her future life and relationships would be like (Berenice, 1994). There are certain transition points in an individual’s life that are imbued with psychological and or socio-cultural significance because they signal a need for change in self-identity. For girls, first menstruation or menarche may be of importance because it represents a concrete symbol of a shift from being a girl to womanhood.

## **Adolescence**

Nodin (2001) states that Erickson and Freud's theory defines adolescent as the period of life between puberty and maturity, which is generally, accepted as the ages between twelve and seventeen, inclusive. For example, it is the period of physical, psychological, social and moral/ethical growth following childhood and preceding maturity; a period characterised by intensified pre-occupation with issues of identity and autonomy; often associated with intensified pre- personal and inter-group competition. Nodin (2001) defines an adolescent as an individual living through the period of major change at various levels: physical, family, social, emotional and personal. It is during this phase that, in a way, the adolescent becomes a person tries to become autonomous and tries to determine her position in the world, something necessary to give some significance to her own existence (Heaven, 2001). According to Heaven (2001), adolescence means to sprout, to grow. Generally, this also parallels the African cultural phenomenon. In the English language, originally, the term 'teen', an abbreviation of 'teenager', was used to indicate an age group from 11 to 19 years of age. However, the recent meaning of the word 'teen-adolescent' came into use only during the 20th century (Rice, 1996). Erickson's developmental stage of adolescence is a stage that one is neither a child nor an adult. At that point, life is definitely getting more complex as the people attempt to find their own identity (Sue *et. al.*, 1994; Nodin, 2001).

It is during adolescence that the young woman first experiences a split between her body and herself; between her own experience and the archetype she is expected to emulate. In most societies, men and women develop very different attitudes towards their bodies and their sexuality. In general, the positive, almost proud, attitude of men contrasts sharply with the negative and often guilt-ridden feelings of many women. Puberty gives a man the knowledge of greater power, and gives a woman the knowledge of her dependence (Ussher, 1989). Nodin (2001) postulates that Erickson's developmental stage of 'Identity versus Identity Confusion', also corresponds to the genital stage of Freud's psychosexual stages of development that occur during adolescence. This is the period wherein young girls and boys ask crucial psycho-social questions, such as: who am I, in relation to society, a) what set of values or beliefs will guide my life and choices b) the onset of



puberty results in bodily changes which always encourage adolescents to view themselves as adults and independent. Adolescence is characterised by moving from the blossom of one's family and subsequent immersion into the adult world. During this phase, the persona is influenced by the environment in a much more complex manner than before. For example, social links are established; a set of characteristics deemed necessary to be accepted by the group, even characteristics needed to express a style which pleases the self and others. The persona represents what the person will be for the other people, like a girl who is obliged to be initiated so as to be accepted by the group and the community.

Human development is a universal phenomenon, characterised by various stages. These stages differ from one culture to the other. Furthermore, each developmental stage tends to bring about expectations that are in accordance with the particular culture. In addition, in each culture there exist challenges that are specific to a given stage as well as to the manner in which these challenges are resolved. Like in many other cultural groups, these stages are accompanied by various expectations. For example, the system for assisting young women in making the transition to adulthood has been eroded in recent decades because various factors have contributed to this, including the transformation of gender roles, human rights and family structures Lemmer (1993). The modern South Africa, while Changing rapidly in the economic and social domains is unable to fill the cultural and social gaps that have arisen but with the previous systems are frequently maintained in consent with the new adaptations to a rapidly changing socio-cultural environment. In such a transitional state, adolescents and youth frequently find themselves caught between conflicting socio-cultural pressures, including those relating to initiation rites of passage, sexuality and marriage.

## **Rites of Passage**

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Belgian anthropologist, 'Gennep, (1960)', observed that all cultures had prescribed ways for an individual and society to deal with these emotionally charged situations (Gennep, 1960). Different cultures perform different ritual ceremonies to mark the transition from one phase of life to another. Gennep called these ceremonies rites of passage. Graduation from school, divorce, and retirement at the end of a work life are also major transitions in modern, large scale societies. Diverse cultures throughout the world have heightened emotions during times of major life changes. These developmental changes may be physiological or social in nature. These moratoriums are connected with personal transitions between different stages that occur during developmental stages. They represent significant life changes such as, birth, puberty, marriage, life threatening illnesses or injury and finally death. However, rites of passage in many cultures are used to mark the socially recognised transition to sexual maturity.

The term 'rite of passage' refers to any ritual marking a transition in the life of an individual from one state or status to another. Mloma (1990) argues that all human beings experience a series of such transitions in the course of a lifetime. Transitions can reflect biological or maturational progressions. For example, transition from existence within the womb to life, social status and role assignment. Human societies tend to mark such life transitions with rites of passage. Mloma (1990) states that a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood for girls, in which experiences of womanhood are inculcated, are presented with the practical purpose of instructing the girls on how to fulfill their various roles as adults.

## **Circumcision**

Female genital mutilation refers to female circumcision. Female genital mutilation may be in the form of surgical removal of the clitoris called clitoridectomy. The procedures were once commonly referred to as female circumcision (FC) and are said to be now dominant throughout the international community. Some cultures are opposing the stigma of the word 'mutilation' and prefer to use the term female genital cutting. The term

female circumcision is predominantly replaced by the term female genital mutilation/circumcision. Countries like Kenya; Ghana and in Limpopo Province in South Africa, consider female genital cutting (FGC) as part of maintaining cleanliness as it removes secreting parts of the genitalia, preserving virginity and, maintenance of good health and prevention of promiscuity [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/female-genital-cutting>].

**Appendix B: Interview schedule for the initiated women**

**RESEARCH TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED MARRIED MEN AND WOMEN ON *NKOLOLA* INITIATION CEREMONY IN MAZABUKA AND MONZE DISTRICTS OF SOUTHERN PROVINCE**

(FOR INITIATED WOMEN)

1. How old are you? [ ]

2. What is your marital status?

(a) Single [ ]

(b) Married [ ]

(c) Widowed [ ]

(d) Separated [ ]

(f) Divorced [ ]

3. Level of education

(a) Not been to school [ ]

(b) Lower primary: Grade 1-4 [ ]

(c) Upper primary: Grade 5-7 [ ]

(d) Junior secondary: Grade 8-9 or Form 1-2 or Form 1-3 [ ]

(e) Senior secondary [ ]

(f) College [ ]

(g) University [ ]

4. What is your religious denomination?

.....

5. What is your occupation?

.....

6. What do you understand by the term initiation ceremony?

.....

.....

7. Have you undergone *Nkolola* initiation ceremony?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]



16. As an initiated woman, how do you perceive those who are not initiated?

.....  
.....  
.....

17. (For married women) what is your husband's view towards your status?

.....  
.....  
.....

18. Should all values taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony continue being taught to those who become of age?    Yes [  ]    No [  ]

19. Give reasons for your answer.....

.....  
.....

20. What do you think is the significance of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony?

.....  
.....  
.....

21. What strategies do you think can be employed to make some modifications to values taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony?

.....  
.....  
.....

22. What comments, do you have to make?

.....  
.....  
.....

23. What questions do you have to make?

.....  
.....  
.....

24. What recommendations do you have to make?

.....  
.....  
.....

End of interview

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

**Appendix C: Interview schedule for husbands of initiated women**

**RESEARCH TOPIC: PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED MARRIED MEN AND WOMEN ON *NKOLOLA* INITIATION CEREMONY IN MAZABUKA AND MONZE DISTRICTS OF SOUTHERN PROVINCE**

**Interview Schedule (FOR HUSBANDS OF INITIATED WOMEN).**

1. How old are you? [ ]
2. What is your marital status?
  - (a) Single [ ]
  - (b) Married [ ]
  - (c) Widowed [ ]
  - (d) Separated [ ]
  - (e) Divorced [ ]
3. Level of education
  - (a) Not been to school [ ]
  - (b) Lower primary: Grade 1-4 [ ]
  - (c) Upper primary: Grade 5-7 [ ]
  - (d) Junior secondary: Grade 8-9 or Form 1 – 2 or Form 1-3 [ ]
  - (e) Senior secondary [ ]
  - (f) College [ ]
  - (g) University [ ]
5. What is your religious denomination?  
.....
6. What is your occupation?  
.....
7. What do you understand by the term initiation ceremony?  
.....  
.....



8. What do you think is taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony?  
 .....
9. Does *Nkolola* initiation ceremony affect the behaviour of the initiates?  
 Yes [ ] No [ ]
10. Please give an explanation to your answer for question 8.  
 .....
11. Do you think the values taught during the ceremony are of any relevance to someone's life? Yes [ ] No [ ]
12. When do you think a woman becomes a real (grown up) woman?  
 (a) After she has been in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony [ ]  
 (b) After attaining a certain age [ ]  
 (c) When she has a child [ ]  
 (d) When she is married [ ]
13. Do you see any difference in behaviour between those who are initiated and those who are not?  
 Yes [ ] No [ ]
14. If yes, what is the difference in behaviour?  
 .....
15. Why do women get initiated?  
 .....
16. How do you perceive those who are not initiated?  
 .....
17. What is your view towards your wife's status?  
 .....

18. Should all values taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony continue being taught to those who become of age? Yes [ ] No [ ]

19. Give reasons for your answer

.....  
.....

20. What do you think is the significance of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony?

.....  
.....

21. What strategies do you think can be employed to make some modifications to values taught in *Nkolola* initiation ceremony?

.....  
.....

22. What comments, do you have to make?

.....  
.....  
.....

23. What questions do you have to make?

.....  
.....

24. What recommendations do you have to make?

.....  
.....  
.....

End of interview

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

**Appendix D: Researcher's written consent to the respondents**

I have come to talk about initiation ceremony.

Are you willing to tell me whether or not you have gone through this ceremony?

.....  
.....  
.....

Are you clear on what this research is trying to accomplish?

.....  
.....

I give my consent to fill in this form.

Signature: .....