

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY
AS A COPING MECHANISM:
THE CASE OF THE ELDERLY PEOPLE FACING THE CHALLENGES OF LONELINESS
IN ADDIS ABABA

A Thesis submitted to the Addis Ababa University School of Social Work in partial fulfillment
for the Requirements of degree of Masters of Social Work (MSW)

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this Master's thesis entitled ***EXPLORING THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY AS A COPING MECHANISM: THE CASE OF THE ELDERLY PEOPLE FACING THE CHALLENGES OF LONELINESS IN ADDIS ABABA*** is my original work and all the sources or materials used have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

In Ethiopia, research on elderly is an emerging study area. Though the existing researches show the challenge of loneliness in the lives of the elderly, no research was conducted on spirituality as a coping mechanism. Therefore, this study aimed at exploring the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elderly people who faces the challenges of loneliness. To get a better understanding of the subject matter, a qualitative approach of case study was used to explore the topic well through in-depth interviews. For the research, eight elders of over sixty years of age were selected using purposive sampling technique from Woreda (district) 01 and 03 of Yeka Subcity in Addis Ababa. Data was collected through semi-structured open ended interview guide for this case-study. Two focus group discussions were also conducted in the two Woredas from groups composed of different age groups coming from different walks of life in order to get better supporting information to the findings of the case study. In addition, secondary data was utilized and the reviews of the documents were used. The collected data was thematically analyzed and interpreted. The findings of the study identified the contributing factors to loneliness in the lives of the elderly, the effect of loneliness, the elders' religious activities and their role in coping loneliness, spirituality and its meaning for the elders, how the elderly cope in the challenging times and their sources of strength for hard times and where they get spiritual support from.

This study had tried to fill the gap by contributing some insight on how spirituality can contribute to the coping mechanism of the elderly which in return contributed to their wellbeing.

Key words: *elderly, loneliness, spirituality, religiosity, coping mechanism.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	ix
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.2 Objective.....	6
1.2.1 General Objective.....	6
1.2.2 Specific Objective.....	6
1.3 Research Questions.....	6
1.4 Scope of the Study.....	7
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	7
1.6 Limitations.....	8
1.7 Conceptual Definition of Terms.....	9
CHAPTER TWO.....	11
2. Literature Review.....	11
2.1 Theories of Aging.....	11
2.1.1 Disengagement Theory.....	11
2.1.2 Gerotranscendence Theory.....	12
2.2 Loneliness.....	13
2.2.1 Concept of Loneliness.....	13
2.2.2 Loneliness and Aging.....	15
2.3. Coping Skills in Elderly.....	16
2.4. Spirituality and Religiosity.....	18
2.5 Definitions and Models Related to Spirituality.....	18
2.6. Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism.....	20
2.7. Spirituality in Later Life.....	21
2.8 Summary of Literature Review.....	23
CHAPTER THREE.....	24
3. Research Method.....	24

3.1 Research Design and Approach	24
3.2 Description of the Study Area.....	26
3.3 Study Population.....	27
3.4 Sample Size and Sampling.....	27
3.5 Data Collection Procedure	28
3.6 Method of Data Collection.....	29
3.6.1 In-depth Interview.....	30
3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion	30
3.7 Data Analysis	31
3.8 Ethical Consideration.....	32
CHAPTER FOUR.....	34
4. Data Presentation	34
4.1 Background Profiles: Age, Sex and Religion of the Participants	34
4.2 Case Presentations: Brief Descriptions of the Participants.....	35
4.3 Loneliness in Elderly and Contributing Factors	40
4.3.1 Death of Loved ones	40
4.3.2 Ill Health of the Elders and Their Family Members	41
4.3.3 Poverty	42
4.3.4 Children Moving away and Lack of Social Support.....	42
4.4 The Effects of Loneliness in the Lives of the Elderly	43
4.5 The Elders’ Religious Activities and Their Roles as Coping Mechanisms	44
4.6 Spirituality and Its Meaning for the Elderly (<i>መንፈሳዊነትና አረጋዊያን የሚሰጡት ትርጉም</i>)	47
4.7 How the Elderly Cope in the Time of Challenges	50
4.7.1 Engaging in work.....	50
4.7.2 Influence of their Parents/Families	50
4.7.3 Divine Help.....	50
4.7.4 Social Support from Family and Friends	52
4.8 Spiritual Sources of Support.....	53
4.9 Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism in the Times of Loneliness	55
4.9.1 Spirituality as a Source of Strength for Hard Times.....	56
4.10 Spirituality as a Source of Hope, Peace and Joy.....	59
4.11 Spiritual Sources of Growth and Transformation.....	60
4.12 Spiritual Well-being: Sense of Purpose, Sense of Connectedness	61
4.12.1 From Sadness to Happiness	61

4.12.2 Connectedness to Their God/Allah	63
CHAPTER FIVE	67
5. Discussion	67
5.1. Factors Contributing to the Loneliness of Elderly	67
5.2 Effects of Loneliness in the Lives of The Elders	68
5.3 Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism	69
5.4 Spirituality as Sources of Growth and Transformation	70
CHAPTER SIX.....	72
6. Conclusion and Social Work Implication	72
6.1 Conclusion	72
6.2 Social Work Implication	75
References	77
Appendices.....	1
Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form	1
Appendix 2: Interview Guide Questions for Spirituality	2
Appendix 3: Amharic Translation of Consent Form and Guiding Questions	9

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BOLSA	Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs
CSA	Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KMU	Kotebe Metropolitan University
MOLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

List of Figures

Figure 1. Alienation-connectedness continuum

Figure 2. Spirituality including and transcending religion

Figure 3. Yeka Subcity on Addis Ababa Map

List of Tables

Table 1. Numbers of the Elderly Association members in different Subcities

Table 2. Age, sex and religion of the in-depth interview Participants

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

United Nations (2019) in its World Population Prospects 2019 stated that the world's population is growing older, with persons over the age of 65 years old being the fastest-growing age group. The report added that by 2050, one in six people in the world will be over age 65 (16%), up from one in 11 in 2019 (9%). There were 703 million persons aged 65 years or over in the world in 2019. The number of older persons is projected to double to 1.5 billion in 2050. United Nations (2017a) indicated that the number of older persons—those aged 60 years or over—has increased substantially in recent years in most countries and regions, and growth is projected to accelerate in the following decades.

UNFPA and HelpAge International (2012) stated that increasing longevity is one of humanity's greatest achievements and indeed, population ageing is cause for celebration. Ageing is a triumph of development. Improved nutrition, sanitation, medical advances, health care, education and economic well-being has contributed to human beings to live longer (UNFPA, 2012).

Central Statistical Agency in its Population Projections for Ethiopia 2007-2037 (CSA, 2013) projected the number of the elderly in Ethiopia to be 4,796,217 for the year 2019 out of the projected total number of populations which is 98,665,000. In this case, according to CSA, the total percentage of the elderly for the year 2019 was 4.8%.

Erb (2011) stated that approximately 83 percent of Ethiopia's population lives rurally, but migration to urban areas for work, family support and medical care increasingly brings older persons to city centers. It added that regardless of location, Ethiopia's older persons are

vulnerable to poverty, food insecurity, limited access to social and health services, and limited options for livelihoods diversification and security (Erb 2011).

Although, challenges are not only specific problems to elderly people, a relationship between aging and deterioration of health, loneliness, and other challenges are expected (Savikko 2008). Savikko added that loneliness can be a great challenge for the elderly.

According to MacKinlay (2004), spirituality is that which lies at the core of each person's being, an essential dimension which brings meaning to life. She contends that spirituality must be understood more broadly than religious practices; it is far from being a private and self-centered matter. MacKinlay added that the spiritual is the ultimate ground of all our questions, hope, fears and love... (MacKinlay, 2004). "It (spirituality) concerns our struggles with loss; questions of self-worth and fear of reaching out to make new friendships" (Fischer 1998, p.13).

King (2004) sees spirituality as "spiritual development, a process of growth that can still flourish when all other growth has stopped and our physical and mental powers begin to decline". She added that the complex relationship between spirituality and 'successful ageing' should be regarded as a spiritual journey towards wholeness which can transcend what is usually regarded as ill health, adversity and loneliness (King, 2004). Thorson and Cook (1980) stated that the spiritual is not one dimension among many in life; rather, it permeates and gives meaning to all life.

To conclude, spirituality transcends all the hardships that the elderly face. In this paper, the researcher tried to explore the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elders who face the challenges of loneliness in Addis Ababa, particularly in Yeka Subcity Woreda 01 and Woreda 03.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Various studies have been conducted on the challenges that threaten older people in different countries (Ginn, Ribe & Tinker, 2013; Chane, 2014; Ayele, 2017; Zelalem, 2017; Getachew, 2017). One of the challenges identified is feeling of loneliness to which the elderly are the most vulnerable group (Donaldson & Watson, 1996; Killeen 1998). These authors stressed that attention should be paid to the elderly who are lonely because they are at risk of social isolation due to reduced contacts with other people (Donaldson & Watson, 1996). However, their findings did not come up with the issue of spirituality as a coping mechanism for these elders who were challenged by loneliness.

MOLSA (2006) stated that older persons in Ethiopia are challenged by loneliness. It further noted that the elderly who were traditionally supported by the extended family system, are facing loneliness due to rapid growth of cities and the emergence of complexities associated with social, economic and cultural changes, which is gradually changing the extended family system to a nuclear one. The report added that although family ties are still vital in rural Ethiopia, industrialization, migration, education and modernization are playing a big role in transforming the structure of extended family system into nuclear families in the cities which leaves the elderly with no family members living with them. This has brought a challenge of loneliness into the lives of the elders (MOLSA, 2006).

In some literatures, the researcher could see spirituality as a virtue that could give meaning to the people's lives in times of difficulty. Edward and Leola (2010) stated that spirituality help people to thrive and to succeed at challenges, and to have meaning beyond mere survival value.

Shah, et al (2011) found a relationship between religious and spiritual beliefs and coping strategies in the population of severely mentally ill. Their findings suggest that a sound spiritual, religious, or personal belief system positively affects active and adaptive coping skills in patients with schizophrenia. They further stated that patients with better spiritual, religious, or personal belief system had a lower negative symptoms. Therefore, they concluded that understanding and assessing the spirituality and religiousness of patients with schizophrenia can help in better management of the disorder.

There are few studies that looked into the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism. Jacobs and Niekerk (2017) found that the utilization of spirituality enabled traffic officers to cope more effectively with the daily demands they were faced with. The role of spirituality in the coping of traffic officers is ultimately described by their ability to interpret the meaning of spirituality and the implementation of spirituality, which facilitated coping. This has made the researcher wonder and ignited interest to explore the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for elderly people who are faced with the challenges of loneliness.

Shiri (2011) in her research stated that spiritual experience of an individual plays critical role in coping crisis. The longing of the heart during people's time of difficulties which Shiri calls 'the thirst for God' is deeply rooted in individual's hearts. Shiri stated that spirituality becomes clear in response to life's most critical problems, since the 'sacred' has something special to offer when pushed beyond our immediate resources, once confronted with our vulnerability and lack of personal control. Though this finding stresses of people in difficulty in general term, it has not included the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elders who are faced with loneliness.

Anderson (2006) in her study of “spirituality as a coping mechanism for African-American female kinship caregivers” found that caregivers utilized spirituality or spiritual practice to cope with stressful events that occurred in their lives. Shah et al (2011) in their studies of “Relationship between spirituality/religiousness and coping in patients with residual schizophrenia”, found that a relationship between religious and spiritual beliefs and coping strategies in the population of severely mentally ill. Their finding suggests that a sound spiritual, religious, or personal belief system positively affects active and adaptive coping skills in patients with schizophrenia. They further stated that patients with better spiritual, religious, or personal belief system had a lower negative symptoms. Therefore, they concluded that understanding and assessing the spirituality and religiousness of patients with schizophrenia can help in better management of the disorder.

Thus, the researcher is interested to study spirituality as a coping mechanism for elders who are faced with loneliness as this could give meaning to the elderly to help them see beyond their own daily struggles to be able to age gracefully.

Researches on elderly who face different challenges in their lives in Ethiopia is an emerging and growing field of study. The researcher would like to contribute in this area of research from the point of view of spirituality. In view of this, the exploratory study of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elders challenged by loneliness can be considered as an important contribution. Therefore, the researcher in this thesis was motivated to conduct research on the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism on the lives of the elderly people in the times of loneliness in Yeka Subcity, Addis Ababa.

1.2 Objective

1.2.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to explore the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elders who are faced with the challenges of loneliness in Yeka Subcity, Addis Ababa.

1.2.2 Specific Objective

The following were the specific objectives of the study:

- 1 Exploring the major factors that bring loneliness into the lives of elders,
- 2 Identifying the major effects of loneliness in the lives of the elders,
- 3 Exploring the understanding of the elderly about spirituality,
- 4 Exploring the sources of spirituality available for the elderly,
- 5 Exploring spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elders who are faced with the challenges of loneliness.

1.3 Research Questions

This research has tried to answer the following key research enquiries.

- 1 What are the main factors that bring loneliness faced by the elderly people in the sub-city?
- 2 What are the effects of loneliness in the lives of the elderly people?
- 3 What is spirituality for the elderly people?
- 4 What are the available sources of spirituality for the elderly in Yeka Subcity?
- 5 How does spirituality help them as a coping mechanism in their times of challenges by loneliness?

1.4 Scope of the Study

In order to make the study more manageable in terms of the researcher's aim and interests, available time, finance and facilities, attempt has been made to delimit the scope and dimensions of the study with regards to the topical scope –breadth and depth, area to be covered, respondents to be studied, and issues to be analyzed. This study was confined on exploring the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elderly people who are challenged by loneliness, who live in two Woredas of Yeka Subcity, Woreda 01 and 03 in Addis Ababa. These Woredas were selected because they were easily accessible for the researcher.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is of paramount importance in understanding spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elderly in the times of loneliness. It aimed to provide insights and to build knowledge about the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elderly who face the challenges of loneliness in the Ethiopian context. The findings of the study have implications for social work practice, education and research. The findings may serve as input to government and non-governmental organizations, community and faith-based organizations that are engaged in providing social services, training and research programs targeting the elderly.

The researcher hopes that the results of this thesis will bring a better understanding about the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism among elderly population in the challenges of loneliness which will enable those interested Governmental and Nongovernmental organizations to utilize different approaches of spirituality in the services and cares they render to the elderly which will add value to the other services provided.

In addition, the School of Social Work Education could add spirituality as a coping mechanism for older people challenged by loneliness into its list of courses to instill to its

trainees the importance this virtue which could help the elderly transcend of all the challenges they face in their lives and to maintain their wellbeing. Finally, this study is expected to be a source of information to researchers who are interested to undertake it further with a larger scale with a generalizable sample on this area study on elder issues.

1.6 Limitations

It's hard to imagine for a study of this kind could possibly be without limits. The fact that this study was planned to be conducted in Yeka Subcity, in the city of Addis Ababa, raises the key question of representation for a bigger image.

This qualitative research with exploratory nature which systematically focused on exploring the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elderly people challenged with loneliness focused on limited number of participants without statistical representation. The study results do not allow drawing generalizations. This is because of the small sample size, and participants being selected purposively, thus they do not represent the entire elderly population who experience loneliness. In fact, drawing generalizations on the spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elders challenged with loneliness was not part of the research objectives of this study. Rather, it focused on exploring the subjective understandings of the elderly who are challenged with loneliness and how they use spirituality as a coping mechanism. In addition, this qualitative study does not include other dimensions of the problems of elderly. Even though the issue of loneliness is extremely wide among the elderly, the study was limited to examine spirituality as a coping mechanism in this part of Addis Ababa. Meanwhile, this does not compromise the credibility of the data and the study. In order to explore the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism, the elderly were encouraged to describe their subjective understandings broadly and frankly.

Concerning the religious affiliation, the proportion could not be representative of the population as 6 of the participants were Orthodox Christians and 2 Muslims; it was not possible to include participants from other religions as there were no elderly available for the interview.

Hence, it is probable that the result may not necessarily represent the reality for the entire city of Addis Ababa.

1.7 Conceptual Definition of Terms

Elderly: According to the United Nations (2007), people who aged 60 and older are identified as elders. This definition of UN has been accepted by Ethiopian government officially (MOLSA, 2006). In this research, elderly is defined as people who are above 60 years old.

Loneliness: is an unpleasant, anxiety inducing subjective experience that is the outcome of inadequate social relationships (Peplau & Perlman 1982). Loneliness is: “... *an enduring condition of emotional state that arises when a person feels estranged from, is misunderstood or rejected by others, and/ or lacks appropriate social partners for desired activity, particularly activities that provide a sense of social integration and opportunities for emotional intimacy.*” (Donaldson & Watson 1996, 953). In line with the above definition, in this study, loneliness is defined as emotional state that makes the elder feel estranged from, misunderstood and/ or rejected due to the changes they faced in their lives.

Religiosity- can be defined in terms of church, mosque or worshiping place attendance and frequency of prayer (Baker et al. 1981 and Clements 2013:369). *Religion* is an institutionalized (i.e. systematic) pattern of values, beliefs, symbols, behaviors, and experiences that are oriented

toward spiritual concerns, shared by a community, and transmitted over time in traditions. In this research, it is defined as attendance of worshipping places and frequency of prayers.

Spirituality - refers to a universal and fundamental human quality involving the search for a sense of meaning, purpose, morality, well-being, and profundity in relationships with ourselves, others and the Divine /God/Allah/ (Edward et al. 2010: 75). In this sense, spirituality may be expressed through religious forms or it may be independent of them, and in this research, spirituality is defined in line with this.

Coping mechanism: the behavioral and personality patterns used by the elderly to adjust or adapt to the challenges of loneliness they face in order to manage it (Social Work Dictionary, 1995).

CHAPTER TWO

2. Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the current knowledge including substantive findings and theories that impact the lives of the elderly. In this regard, it tried to review the related theories, the concept of loneliness and aging, coping skills in the elderly, spirituality and religiosity, definitions and models related to spirituality, spirituality as a coping mechanism, spirituality in later life and summary of literature review. In doing so, this chapter explores how the elderly cope with loneliness and how they use spirituality as a coping mechanism in the studies in the global and Ethiopian contexts. In the next section, relevant theories were reviewed.

2.1 Theories of Aging

2.1.1 *Disengagement Theory*

Disengagement theory was developed and defined during studies undertaken by Cumming and Henry (1961). They stated that the central hypothesis of disengagement theory is that there is a mutual, inevitable act of withdrawal between the older person and society. They added that the withdrawal from society can be both from a social perspective (e.g., interaction) and from a psychological perspective (e.g., decreased interest and motivation). The process of withdrawal can be initiated either by the individuals themselves or by society. Disengagement theory is intended to apply to all aging people in all societies even though the actual process may vary between cultures. It states that older people actively disengage from most of society, and this is the appropriate way of coping with external and internal pressures.

The underlying message of disengagement theory is that older people willfully initiate the disengagement process and it is part of the natural ageing process and normal course of life when

older people prepare themselves for death (Hall, 2012). Nevertheless, Amalia (2009) points out that against the will of older people there might exist occasions when society may oblige them to disengage from social activities and roles totally or partially.

From this theoretical perspective, ageing naturally brings with it a growing sense of powerlessness, loss of role, loss of sense of purpose, increased dependency which makes the elders to be lonely (Hall, 2012).

2.1.2 Gerotranscendence Theory

The theory of gerotranscendence, a developmental theory of positive aging was proposed by Lars Tornstam in 2089. He began to explore aging with a phenomenological qualitative approach. His earlier work on aging revealed that aging is a natural developmental process towards maturity and wisdom.

Tornstam contended that aging involves some overlooked developmental changes related to increased life satisfaction, as described by real, flesh and blood individuals. The gerotranscendent individual, he said, experiences a redefinition of the self and of relationships to others and a new understanding of fundamental, existential questions. He added that the individual becomes less self-occupied and at the same time more selective in the choice of social and other activities. The elders develop increased feeling of affinity with past generations and a decrease in interest in superfluous social interaction. The individual might also experience a decrease in interest in material things and a greater need for solitary “meditation.” Positive solitude becomes more important in their lives. There is also often a feeling of cosmic communion with the spirit of the universe, and a redefinition of time, space, life, and death (Tornstam 2005).

According to this theory, the elderly transcend beyond their loneliness and turn it into solitude. In solitude, the elderly focus on spirituality that helps them to focus on things that matter most in their lives.

Rajani (2015), states that Gerotranscendence is the final stage of natural progression towards wisdom and maturation. She further states that a transcendent view of life in old age enables a person to see his life with a larger perspective with a meaningful interpretation of his life. She adds that there is a positive relationship between gerotranscendence and life satisfaction. She added that an individual become more transpersonal in later life and therefore less likely to feel lonely (Rajani 2015).

As spirituality refers to a universal and fundamental human quality involving the search for a sense of meaning, purpose, morality, well-being, and profundity in relationships with one self, others and the Divine /God/Allah/, this research tried to explore and see how those elders who were able to tap to this virtue, were able to cope with loneliness better.

2.2 Loneliness

2.2.1 Concept of Loneliness

Killeen (1998) stated that the phenomenon of loneliness has been described in literature and arts since ancient time, yet it is difficult to define it. Killeen added that loneliness is universal, very subjective feeling and natural to all human beings. For its subjectivity, many people may be ashamed of talking about it or admitting they feel lonely because they are afraid of being stigmatized. Loneliness may also have different meaning for different people which makes understanding of loneliness even more difficult (Killeen 1998). Loneliness causes people to feel empty, alone and unwanted that they often crave human contact.

Killeen (1998) summarizes loneliness into alienation-connectedness continuum. Beginning from the negative side, there are estrangement and alienation, a rejection by others or a feeling of a complete worthlessness. Next to them stays loneliness which is viewed as “emptiness due to an unfulfilled social and/or emotional life” (Killeen, 1998, p. 764). Social isolation and aloneness are two other related concepts. Social isolation balances between loneliness and aloneness, depending on whether it is one’s choice or not. Consequently, aloneness can be understood as one’s preference of being alone. Unlike previous concepts, solitude has a positive meaning. It is a time on one’s own that can be used for self-reflection and creativity. Killeen also covers a concept of connectedness in her work (Killeen 1998). Through suffering of loneliness, one can find connection with others, nature and universe.

The following figure depicts Killeen’s alienation-connectedness continuum concept of loneliness. First, social isolation was put in the middle, as it was seen as a turning point between positive and negative sides of the continuum. Secondly, alienation was understood as the most negative case on the emotional, and estrangement on the social side of loneliness. Yet, the author was not able to decide which one is more severe. Finally, in author’s point of view, there were no major differences in meanings of solitude and connectedness. Therefore, they are standing equally at the positive end as shown below.

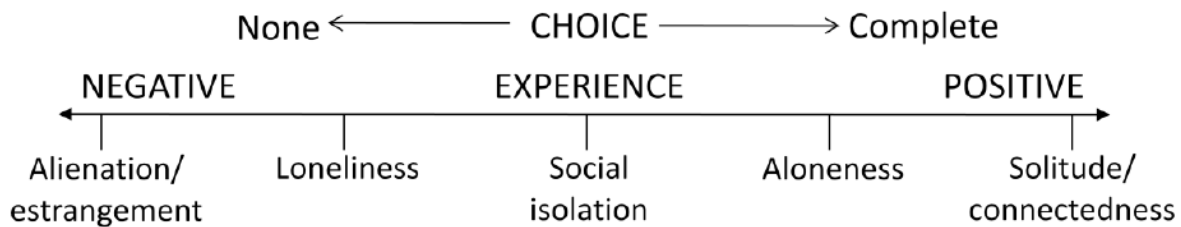


Figure 1. Alienation-connectedness continuum (Killeen, 1998, p. 765, modified)

In this thesis, loneliness is thought as a negative experience. Thus, definition given by Donaldson & Watson (1996) was used. They defined loneliness as “... *an enduring condition of emotional state that arises when a person feels estranged from, is misunderstood or rejected by others, and/ or lacks appropriate social partners for desired activity, particularly activities that provide a sense of social integration and opportunities for emotional intimacy.*” (Donaldson et al. 1996, 953).

Loneliness is the state in which there exists a deficit between the individual’s actual and desired level of social engagement (Christina, 2009).

2.2.2 Loneliness and Aging

Feeling of loneliness occurs among all age groups; the most vulnerable seems to be adolescents and elderly people (Donaldson & Watson, 1996; Killeen 1998). The authors claim that loneliness among teenagers is transient and short lived and more attention should be paid to elderly because they are at risk of social isolation due to reducing contacts with other people.

According to Victor et al. (2005), loneliness among elderly population has been examined in quantitative studies. In average, one third of elderly population suffers from loneliness at least sometimes (Victor et al. 2005; Savikko 2008; Theeke 2009). Illness, death of a spouse and lack of friends were the most common causes of loneliness (Savikko 2008).

Loneliness was associated with increasing age. The reason behind is shrinking of the social network, caused by loss of partner and friends (Savikko 2008). However, it has been found that after age of eighty-five, loneliness does not play a significant role in elderly people’s lives (Victor et al. 2005). In this age, not amount of social contact but a quality of relationship is more

important. Another explanation of decreased perception of loneliness in this age group may be “survivor effect and adaptive response” (Victor et al. 2005).

Qualitative studies focus on elderly people’s perception of loneliness and their coping strategies. In Pettigrew and Roberts’ study (2008), loneliness was thought, by most of elderly Australians, to be a natural part of aging and older age as a result of decreased participation in social activities due to health problems, death of friends and busy life of their children. On the other hand, many of the participants felt that loneliness can be decreased by constructive free-time activities, like reading, gardening or taking part in voluntary work (Pettigrew & Roberts 2008).

Unlike in the Australian study, Hauge and Kirkevold (2009) explored elderly people’s understanding of loneliness more deeply. Their findings confirmed that loneliness is highly subjective. Differences of loneliness description were found between “not lonely” and “lonely” group, by lonely people giving more comprehensive description. What is more, loneliness was seen negatively and was stigmatized. The group of “not lonely” reported loneliness to be one’s own fault connected to one’s personality and passive attitude to life (Hauge & Kirkevold 2009).

In Ethiopia, the extended family system which traditionally supported the Ethiopian older persons is changing into nuclear families structure in the cities due to industrialization, migration, education and modernization (MOLSA 2006). This change is not favorable for the elderly people and it has brought a challenge of loneliness into the lives of the elderly (MOLSA, 2006).

2.3. Coping Skills in Elderly

Coping is also seen to be related to human personality trait and a time changing process in accordance with the situation we found ourselves in (Birkeland & Natvig, 2009). Elderly

people face series of challenges such as illnesses and irreversible loses during the phase of ageing process. This process works against the will and interest of the elderly people. Acute illness comes with lots of problems including loneliness and there may be a need to keep in shape one's emotions, self-image, ability and relationship.

Keeping in mind that the future ahead is no longer promising regardless of the condition of illness, it is the responsibility of the elderly to try and keep up with a good life (Ridder & Schreurs 2001; DeSouza & Nairy 2003).

Research result of Birkeland & Natvig (2009) indicates that old people that are living separately consider acceptability as one of their main coping strategies. From a different angle, Kahana & Kahana (2001) see surrendering roles to the other members of the family or society as a way of coping to overcome social losses. Results of a research on psychological solution as regards immune system confirmed that keeping body fit, having adequate rest and practicing openness are workable coping skills (Olf 1999).

In his study of "Exploring the Challenges of Older People in Nekemte", Ayele (2017) found that the older people in Nekemte used various ways of coping mechanism to manage the challenges they faced. He stated that they involved in guardianship, rearing cattle, depending on assistance of family and other relatives, daily labor and begging as income generation as a means of survival.

Sentayehu and Anteneh (2018) in their study of Psychosocial Challenges and Coping Mechanisms of Elderly People found the following coping mechanisms: social interaction, getting busy, taking rest when needed, therapy, medications and good living. In addition, they found that the elders used adaptive coping strategy/ acceptance, hope, change in perception, redefinition of self, avoidance, dropping responsibilities, praying, less fear for life & death.

The researcher has not come across a study which was conducted on spirituality as a coping mechanism for loneliness. Duly, this thesis tried to conduct a research on the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for elders challenged by loneliness.

2.4. Spirituality and Religiosity

Spirituality and religiosity are interconnected subjects, and putting a clear distinction between them was a challenge. But, most of the theorists say there is a distinction between religiosity and spirituality. Hill, Pargament & Hood (2000) defined religiosity as the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred. They defined spirituality as the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred, without the added components of ... religious community (Hill et al., 2000). Miller (1998) describes spirituality as fundamentally an idiographic aspect of the person which is very difficult to delimit, and which defies customary conceptual boundaries by its focus on the transcendent; and religion, in contrast, as a social phenomenon, an organized structure with many purposes, one of which historically has been the development of spirituality in its members and defined by its boundaries, by particular beliefs, practices, forms of governance and rituals (Rusu & Turlic, 2011). Increasingly, the term spiritual is used for individual religious experiences, whereas the term —religious is used for institutionalized religion (Tsang & McCullough, 2003). The term spirituality includes but has evolved beyond its religious to convey experiences that bring a heightened sense of meaning and purpose in one's life (White & Laudet, 2006).

2.5 Definitions and Models Related to Spirituality

Spirituality is that which lies at the core of each person's being, an essential dimension which brings meaning to life; it must be understood more broadly than religious practices, (Jewell A., 2004).

Edward & Leola (2010) stated that individuals and groups may express spirituality in religious and nonreligious ways. They added that spirituality always has a private and individual expression in a person's life. Individuals may or may not connect their spirituality to explicit public expression or participation in groups (such as religions or informal spiritual support groups). However, there are always implications of an individual's spirituality for relationships. Spirituality may or may not permeate an individual's daily life and a group's culture.

Transcendence refers to experiences and interpretations of events as profound, breaking through limitedness by time and space. For example, transcendence could involve a sense of divine revelation; an awareness of the sacredness immanent within the self and nature; a breaking through the body/self-boundary with expanded consciousness. As a universal feature of persons and cultures, everyone has spirituality, though people vary in amount of focus on it (Edward & Leola, 2010).

Healthy spirituality encourages individuals to develop a sense of meaningfulness, purposefulness, personal integrity, wholeness, joy, peace, contentment, coherence of worldview, and overall well-being. It fosters transpersonal experiences, the emergence of transpersonal levels of consciousness, and an expanded sense of identity and connectedness. Healthy spirituality engenders individuals' virtues, such as compassion and justice, as well as relational webs of caring, respect, and support extending outward to other people and beings (Canda, 2008). It encourages groups to develop mutual support, philanthropic activity, appreciation of diversity, and actions for the common good of the society and the world (Edward & Leola, 2010).

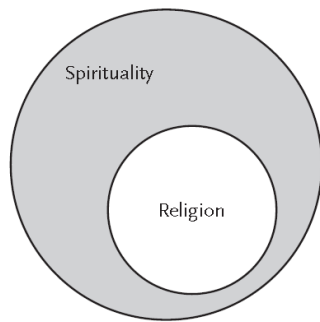


Figure 2. Spirituality including and transcending religion
(adapted from Edward & Leola 2010)

Religiousness (or religiosity) refers to the degree and style of someone's religious involvement. Not all individuals or societies are religious. Healthy religiousness, as an expression of spirituality, encourages a person's and a religious group's sense of well-being, coherent worldview, transpersonal development, virtues, and relational webs of caring, respect, and support that extend toward fellow adherents and toward community, society, and world (Edward & Leola 2010). Thus, spirituality includes and transcends religion (see Figure 2).

2.6. Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism

Shiri (2011) in her research stated that spiritual experience of an individual plays critical role in coping crisis. The longing of the heart during people's time of difficulties which Shiri calls 'the thirst for God' is deeply rooted in individual's hearts. This is craving for God ... and it is the movement that comes from the heart" (James, 1982). Shiri (2011) added that spirituality is more likely to be accessed in coping when it is part of the individual's orienting system; it also is accessed outside times of stress. Shiri stated that spirituality as well as its necessity as coping mechanisms becomes clear in response to life's most critical problems, since the 'sacred' has something special to offer when pushed beyond our immediate resources, once confronted with our vulnerability and lack of personal control.

By observing human being's existential condition in the world, Shiri said that the urge to use spirituality in coping is understandable. She added that human beings are in fact from birth

till death in a process of transition, negotiating change always and everywhere, negotiating relationships with oneself and others, yet facing the ongoing task of establishing and reestablishing a sense of continuity with self and others. Human beings become aware of their transitional position in life and their temporality on earth, thus creating a deep existential fear of death (Duberstein & Masling, 2000).

Shiri (2011) stated that the most exalted type of heroism involves feeling that one has lived to some purpose that transcends oneself. This is why spirituality gives human beings the validation that nothing else gives him. She further stated that when a person finally breaks through his character armor and discovers his vulnerability, it becomes impossible to live without massive anxiety unless he finds a new power source, and this is where the idea of God comes in, she contended. Spirituality as coping mechanisms therefore ... incorporates distinctive terminologies using concepts such as God, infinitude, omnipotence, transcendence and more (Shiri 2011).

2.7. Spirituality in Later Life

Vern et al (2009) in their book entitled “Handbook of Theories of Aging” stated that within the study of aging, there is ample evidence that as people age and get closer to the expected end of their lives, the spiritual dimension gains in prominence.

The theory of gerotranscendence, a developmental theory of positive aging was proposed by Lars Tornstam in 1989. As a mainstream gerontologist, his explorations of this explanatory framework for positive aging have appeared in the literature since the term was first brought to prominence as a reformulation of disengagement theory (Tornstam, 2005). His purposes have been to shift gerontological thinking from the despairing old age ideas ... into a paradigm that sponsors old age as a period of living worth achieving because of its own true benefits. Tornstam

(2005) questions the underlying assumptions of the “successful aging” concept “with the typical emphasis on activity, productivity, independence, efficiency, wealth, health and sociability”. Having observed the normative expectation that good aging is the continuation of the midlife patterns indefinitely, Tornstam asserts that there is continuous development into old age. This theory of the gerotranscendent individual depicts him or her as someone who experiences a redefinition of the self and of relationships to others and a new understanding of fundamental, existential questions. Tornstam added that in this stage of transcendence, the individual becomes less self-occupied, becomes more selective about social activities, has a greater affinity with past generations, and takes less interest in superfluous social interaction, even exhibiting a decreasing interest in material things and developing a need for solitary meditation (Vern, et al. 2009).

Spirituality motivates the elders to experience things in profound ways and to orient their experiences around central priorities. Usually they gear experiences to spirituality and look on to meanings of profound, transcendent, transpersonal, sacred, or ultimate significance.

Depth and ultimacy find their place in an elderly person’s spirituality. Spirituality means not just one compartment of life, but the deepest dimension of all life. The spiritual is the ultimate ground of all our questions, hope, fears, and loves... It concerns our struggles with loss; questions of self-worth and fear of reaching out to make new friendships (Fischer 1998).

Spirituality is also seen as spiritual development, a process of growth that can still flourish when all other growth has stopped and our physical and mental powers begin to decline. There is a relationship between spirituality and successful ageing that should be regarded as a spiritual journey towards wholeness which can transcend what is usually regarded as ill health and adversity (Jewell A., 2004). We can see that spirituality helps elders to transcend the challenges

they face. Thus, this study was carried out in order to understand how the elderly use spirituality as a coping mechanism for the challenges of loneliness.

2.8 Summary of Literature Review

Savikko (2008) identified loneliness amongst the elderly people and found various reasons that led them to loneliness in later life. He stated that shrinking of the social network, caused by loss of partner and friends, the death of spouse, marital breakdown, lack of income, illness and lack of friends are some of the reasons that lead elders to loneliness.

According to MOLSA (2006), in Ethiopia, the extended family system that traditionally supported the older persons rapidly changed due to the growth of cities and the emergence of complexities associated with social, economic and cultural changes that changed the family setting in Ethiopia. MOLSA further stated that the change of the family setting was not favorable for the elderly. The same report added that though family ties are still strong and vital in rural part of Ethiopia, industrialization, migration, education and modernization are gradually transforming this structure of extended family system into nuclear families in the cities. This situation has brought a challenge of loneliness into the lives of the elderly (MOLSA, 2006).

As indicated above, there are few studies results which showed different groups of people who utilized spirituality as a coping mechanism in different countries (Shah, et al, 2011; Jacobs and Niekerk 2017; Anderson, 2006).

Research on elderly is an emerging and growing area of study in Ethiopia. The researcher wanted to contribute on this field by exploring on the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism on the lives of the elderly people in the times of loneliness in the Ethiopian context.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Research Method

In this section, research design, description of the study area, study approach, study population, sample size and sampling and methods of data collection will be discussed. In addition, plan of data analysis and the ethical considerations will be included.

3.1 Research Design and Approach

Case study was used in this research because it allows the researcher to do in-depth and detailed investigation of the subject matter. Case study explains that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. In this process they develop a subjective meaning of their experiences (Creswell, 2009). This study used a qualitative approach since its principles are appropriate for describing and interpreting the subjective cases of the elderly who face loneliness. It had examined the life experiences in a subjective perception of how the elders use spirituality as a coping mechanism for the challenges of loneliness and way forwards as seen from their interpretation.

This research was implemented with the understanding, that reality is subjective to the people who are living it. As Creswell (2009) noted the goal of a research written under constructivist world view is to rely as much as possible on the participant's views of the situation being studied. In this particular study, the research had tried to make sense of the experiences of the elderly living in Yeka Subcity after collecting adequate data using tools like open ended interview questions and a case study strategy.

Qualitative research is interpretive in nature (Stake, 2010) and follows a holistic approach to understand the issue in detail (Yin, 2011). Qualitative design was preferred because of its ability to capture the views and perspectives of the participants in a study and it helps to study

the phenomenon in depth and detail. Understanding the perspectives of the elders was a major purpose of this qualitative study. Case study was used to extract in-depth understanding of the subject. The case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding a phenomenon within its natural setting. The advantage of a case study is that it allows deeper penetration into the core of the matter. The corresponding disadvantage is that it is often difficult to generalize on the basis of one single case and to draw general conclusions (Yin 2011).

Yin (2003), discusses combining exploratory research with qualitative case studies. Likewise, this study used exploratory research approach using case studies which was conducted cross-sectionally in June, 2019 in Yeka Subcity Woredas (districts) 01 and 03 in Addis Ababa.

The study employed a qualitative research approach with an assumption that “the approach enables the researcher to explore and understand multiple meanings the elderly attribute” to loneliness and how they use spirituality as their mechanism of coping (Creswell 2009). It explored the complex subjective understandings of the elderly in terms of their understandings of loneliness and spirituality. It has helped the researcher to uncover the loneliness the elders face, how they understand spirituality and how they use it as a coping mechanism.

As spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elderly facing loneliness is not a much studied subject in Ethiopia, case study approach was used to explore the issue.

3.2 Description of the Study Area

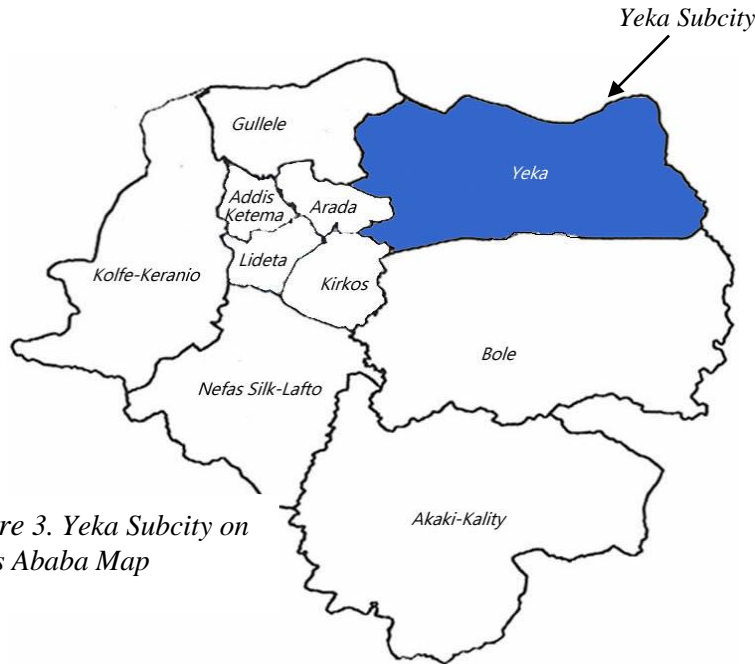


Figure 3. Yeka Subcity on Addis Ababa Map

This study was conducted in Addis Ababa city administration, the political and economic capital of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa is also a seat of African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The city administration is now divided into ten subcities (Kifle Ketema) and 99 Woredas (districts).

According to the 2007 population census data, the total population of Addis Ababa was 2,739,551 (CSA 2008). Population is dynamic and its growth is continuous. The United Nations in its issue of “The World’s Cities in 2016” stated that the population of Addis Ababa was 3,316,000 (UN 2016).

No	Subcity	No of Woredas (districts)	No of members
1	Bole	14	2,518
2	Yeka	13	4,509
3	Addis Ketema	10	2,576
4	Akaki Kaliti	11	1,761
5	Kolfe	15	1,823
6	Lideta	10	3,186
7	Nefas Silk	13	3,900
8	Arada	10	2,048
9	Kirkos	11	1,530
10	Gullele	10	3,000
	Total	117	26,851

Table 1. Numbers of the Elderly Association members in different Subcities

According to Addis Ababa Subcity Social and Labour Affairs office, the biggest number of the elderly people resides in Yeka Subcity. Though the number of list given to the researcher as indicated in the above table was that of the members of the elderly association, it was used as a starting point because the researcher was not able to get the exact number of the elders of the Subcities from any other sources. In addition, as the researcher lives in the adjacent Subcity, she found this Subcity to be convenient and accessible. Due to this reasons, the researcher chose Yeka Subcity in Addis Ababa as an important study area for this research.

3.3 Study Population

The study population for this research included: the elderly age group of 60 years and above. The selection was made with an assumption that they help the researcher understand their challenges of loneliness and how spirituality helped them as a coping mechanism. The elders of different religious backgrounds were included in the study to help understand how spirituality in their different religions influence them to cope with loneliness.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling

Creswell (2009) suggests that commonly five to six samples are identified during a case study approach, provided the samples are homogeneous. In this study, eight participants were selected to get more data and to reach to data saturation/redundancy. Data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Moreover, the study relied on purposive sampling which is also referred as judgmental sampling or expert sampling.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

For the data collection process, creating a good working relationship with the elderly association leaders was the first task. To that effect, a support letter from Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work was presented to Yeka Subcity office which was later forwarded to Woreda 01 and Woreda 03 elderly association chairmen. Then, the researcher made herself clear on who she was, what she intended to accomplish and how she wanted to do this research. After understanding the topic and the purpose of the study and the research objectives, the chairmen and their management committees, helped the researcher to go through the list of the elders in the Woreda to identify the required 8 elders of different backgrounds and religion. A maximum care was taken in selecting the subjects who met the criteria, i.e. the elderly who were 60 years old and above for the in-depth interview. In addition, the elders who could express themselves well were carefully selected to gain a better understanding about the subject being studied in order to get a diversified response.

The identified elderly from different walks of lives and different experiences were consulted with an in-depth interview. The major factors considered in an effort to diversify respondents include age, sex and religion. These factors served the research objective better, by giving a wider window into exploring the role of Spirituality as a coping mechanism for the Elderly who face loneliness in Addis Ababa. Unfortunately, the religion of the elderly who live in both Woredas were identified to be Orthodox Christians and Muslims. Elders who follow other religious denominations were not accessible.

In both Woredas, the chairmen and their management committees assigned one elderly respectively who could be a key person to facilitate and link the researcher with the individual elders for the in-depth interviews. In one of the Woredas, the key elder was not that cooperative

and a lot of going back and forth was involved which wasted a lot of time and resources of the researcher. After agreeing to be available to facilitate, this elder would have all the reasons and say things like, “It was a monthly feast and I went to church; somebody died and I went to bury him; there was a meeting in our neighborhood, etc.”

For Focus Group Discussion (FGD) purpose, additional eight people of different age groups from each of both Woredas were needed. Through the help of the management chairmen, they were identified from each of the two Woredas composed of both sexes from youth, women group, men group and the elderly from different religious backgrounds. Those elders who were involved in the in-depth interview were not included in the Focus Group Discussion. This group was purposely composed of people from different age groups. This has allowed the researcher to get different views of the different age group in the focus group discussion. The group from diverse age composition expressed their views on the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elderly challenged by loneliness.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary sources of data were employed in the study. The primary sources of data were collected through in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). In the in-depth interview, eight elders (5 males and 3 females) who aged from 62 to 92 participated and gave information. In the two Focus Group Discussions, participants of different age groups from their 20s to 70s took part.

The secondary sources of data were also collected through reviewing relevant books, journals, articles and related materials to these reports.

3.6.1 In-depth Interview

The researcher used in-depth interview and included guided semi-structured open-ended questions among the 8 (eight) participants to elaborate the questions and provide needed details. Interviews were included because it gave participants an opportunity to discuss ideas. Besides, participants were made comfortable with face-to-face conversations by introducing the purpose of the interview and the confidentiality of information that was collected. Throughout the interview Amharic language was used as a means of communication. During the interview sessions the researcher used a tape recorder and took notes with the consent of the participants. Each taped interview was transcribed and translated into English language by the researcher. The researcher listened and re-listened to the tapes and transcribed it into English script. Except for the unnecessary jargon that was not important for the report, the researcher transcribed and translated the main information into English language for the report word by word.

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion

Two focus group discussions were held with heterogeneous groups composed of six in Woreda 01 and a group of eight in Woreda 03 of Yeka Subcity. Though eight people were identified from each Woredas, those who came for the discussion in Woreda 01 were six. In Woreda 01, the participants were composed of 3 men and 3 women whose age ranged from 26 to 72. In Woreda 03, the group were composed of 3 men and 5 women whose ages ranged from 28 to 77. The Focus Group Discussion Group members were of different age on purpose so that the researcher can get a rich data on the topic. FGDs allowed more interactions among the discussants; who were strangers, to let the data emerge (Cohen et al. 2000). According to Bhattacharjee (2012), FGD allows deeper exploration of complex issues when a group's

reflection is needed. Due to its aforementioned advantage, this research employed FGD alongside the case study methods.

Since the role of the moderator is to draw out information from the participants regarding topics of importance to a given research investigation (Berg 2001), the researcher was responsible for moderating the discussions. The group discussion of Woreda 01 took place in the Woreda café (Meznagna) and in Woreda 03, it took place in the Woreda hall. As a moderator, the researcher tried to make the environment of the discussion to be encouraging and promoting freedom to talk. Thus, prior to the start of the discussion, the researcher asked the consent of the groups and made clear that any information they gave would not be used to threaten their privacy. After the introduction of the topic and the background introduction, ground rules for the focus group were laid and the discussions took place. During the discussion, one woman aged 67 was not that easily expressing her opinions and the moderator needed to call her attention and ask her about her views. Though she said that she was there only to listen to the discussion, the moderator encouraged her and got some of her views.

3.7 Data Analysis

For the data analysis, thematic analysis was utilized. It is a method mostly used for analyzing qualitative data. It is a tool that is applied to analyze texts such as interview transcripts. This tool helps the researcher to closely examine the data to identify common themes such as topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly.

This study relied on thematic analysis for which the researcher used coding under different themes which were later changed to topics. Coding was done by identifying the text that related to the research questions and objectives of the research. By reading and re-reading the data obtained carefully and repeatedly, different colors were used to help the researcher to mark

ideas for the different themes in the raw data. Initially, there were 9 codes used as follows:

1)loneliness and its contributing factors, 2)impacts of loneliness, 3)religious activities for coping for the times of loneliness, 4) elders being spiritual, 5)coping in the time of challenges, 6)spirituality for coping, 7)spiritual sources in their areas for the elders, 8)spiritual sources of growth, and 9)sense of connectedness in the elders. After the texts were highlighted with different colours under these codes, the similar kinds of information were grouped together in thematic categories. Then, the researcher tried to relate different ideas and themes to one another. Later on, this was developed under different topics and subtopics as presented in the data presentation section. Undetermined categories or ideas that emerged during the interview were also afterwards summarized and put under different topics.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

The study respected the ethical consideration of research such as confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and disclosure. The study used consent form that was written in English and translated into Amharic and later signed by participants. Subjects' consent was obtained before they started the interview. The subjects were informed of their rights to voluntarily participate or decline to participate, and to withdraw participation at any time without penalty or to skip any question they feel uncomfortable. Moreover, they were guaranteed confidentiality of information and the use of anonymity to uncover the identity of participants to protect participants from any type of possible or factual physical / psychological harm. Informed consent implied a responsibility to explain fully and meaningfully what the research was about and how it would be disseminated. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study which means subjects given names were not related with their responses. In this study anonymity was ensured by not disclosing the participants actual name during the interview and research reports

and detaching the written consent from the report. Participants were given pseudonyms by the researcher to relate to their responses. In general, the researcher tried to be ethical and minimize any risk to participants such as discomfort, anxiety, invasion of privacy, or demeaning or dehumanizing procedures.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data Presentation

As indicated in the previous chapters of this research, a case study strategy was employed to explore and examine the role of Spirituality as a coping mechanism for the Elderly who face the challenges of loneliness in Addis Ababa. Hence, a total number of eight cases were identified. Data was collected from eight elderly persons who were living in Yeka Subcity, Addis Ababa. The responses of the respondents are presented in the following sections according to the interview guidelines annexed at the back of this thesis.

4.1 Background Profiles: Age, Sex and Religion of the Participants

No	Name	Age	Sex		Religion		Remark
			Male	Female	Orthodox	Muslim	
1	Fatuma	62		✓		✓	
2	Tadesse	78	✓		✓		
3	Genet	76		✓	✓		
4	Hagos	73	✓		✓		
5	Yohannes	92	✓		✓		
6	Belaynesh	75		✓	✓		
7	Rahmeto	78	✓			✓	
8	Wondemu	80	✓		✓		
	Total		5	3	6	2	

Table 2. Age, sex and religion of the Participants

As shown in the above table, the age of the participant elderly ranges from sixty-two to ninety-two years old. The average age of these eight elders was 77 years old. Of the eight

participants, 5 of them were male and 3 females. Religion wise, the majority of the elders were Christians coming from the Orthodox Church. As indicated in the above table, 6 elders were Orthodox religion followers while 2 elders were Muslims.

4.2 Case Presentations: Brief Descriptions of the Participants

Case 1

Fatuma is 62 years old lady. She was married with 2 children, both boys. Her husband died 25 years ago. She is a Muslim religion follower. She was educated till 7th grade. Both Children have children of their own out of wedlock and they live with her. *“People consider me a heroine in the area,”* she said. There was no body to help her, so she managed all the hardships on her own since the death of her husband. All those 25 years, she took care of her children, brought them up and got them fed and educated. She had collected fire wood from the forest for sale and had worked in peoples’ houses. She worked as a cleaner, washed their clothes and cooked in people’s houses in some cases.

She shared how she was not supported by her family when she lost her husband. She said, *“When my husband died, I asked my father to take care of my children so that I could go to work. He responded, why don’t you give your children to the Oromos in ‘Gudifecha’? I admire the Oromos; they taught us ‘Gudifecha’ that is a good thing in the time of hardship. But then I said, ‘No, I will raise my children, nobody will take them away from me’. With this issue, I had a conflict with my father and when he died, I was not that sad. How can he tell me to give up my children? I am glad I raised them.”* She said that her children are her pride now. She is still sad that instead of encouraging her to take care of her children, her father encouraged her to give them up and give them to a stranger. She said that she had no gut to give her children up and now

she says, Allah has compensated her through her children. One of her sons is doing his 2nd degree and she is proud of him.

Case 2

Tadesse is 78 years old. He lives in Yeka Subcity. He was born in Amhara region in Wollo, Borena sient woreda. He was a soldier and had fought during the regime of Derg. He was married for fifty years and his wife died eight years ago. He lives on his own. He is Orthodox Christian and he was educated until 10th grade. He has five children: four boys and a girl. He lives on his own with a helper/ a worker in the house. All of his children are married and working. He is a pensioner from military and gets 800 Birr per month. He feels lonely many times after his wife's death. He stressed that his loneliness is mostly during feast days and when he is aware that his shopping are not used economically and many things are wasted in the house. If his wife was there he said, she would own the property and would minimize the cost of the running of the household. This loneliness makes him feel worried and stressed some times. Due to his old age, these days, he is not that active in many social activities.

Case 3

Genet is 76 years old woman, a frail lady. She is thin and uses stick for walking. She was born in west Shewa. She was married and had three children: two boys and a girl. Her husband died when the children were still small and she brought them up on her own. One of the boys was a graduate of 2nd degree from Russia. He came back, got sick and died during the time of Derg. The 2nd boy became a soldier during the time of Derg regime, got wounded during the civil war in the North of Ethiopia when the current government was on its way to Addis. Then he was brought back soon after the fall of Derge and was in need of hospitalization. The government

would not give him a free treatment and he died because he was considered to be opposing the incoming government.

She is Orthodox religion follower. She had attended literacy program during Derg regime. *“I can read my name; I can read the numbers of the city buses which is useful for me and that is enough,”* she said.

She said that, during the time of Emperor Haileseilasie, she used to visit the palace because she had property. Then all she had was confiscated during Derg regime and she ended up a beggar, she added. Now, she suffers from high blood pressure and gastritis. She lives in a poor kebele house. The only living child is the daughter and she is the eldest child. She comes often to visit her mother. She is a domestic worker in people’s houses and her income is very low so she does not have enough money to help her mother.

Case 4

Hagos is a 73 year old man who lives in Yeka Subcity. He was born in Tigray region. He is married and had three children, one boy and two girls. He is Orthodox Christian and he was educated to 12th grade. His children live abroad. His wife was sick for the last 18 years out of which for the last 4 years, she has come to be bedridden. For these 4 years she is completely dependent on him. He said that life has come to be hard. He has raised his nieces and nephews and they have grown-up and have already left him. So he lives with his sick wife who is now bed ridden. He has been very lonely for these 4 years. He stresses how hard it is to take care of a sick person who is bedridden on his own. His friends after their retirement from the Government office have been employed in different organizations and have continued to work until they really got tired of working. He did not want to get employed because of the sickness of his wife.

After retirement, for consecutive 18 years, he had served in one edir as a cashier and secretary in different times. He remembers those days with happiness and gratefulness.

Case 5

Yohannes is a 92 years old man. He was born in Wollo. He is married for the last 60 years and with five children: four boys and a girl. He is orthodox religion follower and he was educated to 11th grade. When he joined the military during the regime of derg, he was asked to go and fight so he stopped his study. He regrets that he was not able to finish at least to 12th grade. Four of his children are self-sufficient and have hatched out. He lives with his wife and one of his children, the daughter. It is obvious that he got married late. As a soldier, he had fought for 21 years in Eritrea. He sounds to be very outgoing person and has befriended and known a lot of people and places in Eritrea. He had lost a lot of his friends in the war and he said he had been feeling lonely since then, his adult ages. He remembers his friends who lost their lives in the war. In recent years, he served in the church and used to do chants in the church. He knows Qenie, as he was in the Qenie School before he joined regular school. Now and then, he would chant during the interview and obviously he had a beautiful singing voice even at this old age. He is a pensioner with 900 birr per month.

Case 6

Belaynesh was born in Yeka and is 75 years old. She is a mother of 6 children. She is Orthodox Christian religion follower and had followed basic education during the time of Derg. Of the six children, 2 boys and 2 girls are alive. *“One of my children was a father of 5 children when he died and His wife is taking care of the children.”* she said. The second one died when he finished 12th grade, she added. Both incidents are heart breaking for her. She expressed that it was already time for them to help her and then they both died. *“I raised my children with a lot of*

problems and I used to collect firewood and sell to be able to feed my children and to send them to school,” she said. Now she lives in a Kebele house. The safety net direct support program gives her 400 Birr per month through bank and she is grateful for that.

All of her children are married and she lives on her own. They have good marriage and good families she said. *“I divorced my husband 25 years ago, he was a drunkard and never liked to work,”* she said. He lives on his own and he is weak these days she added. She said that she is stronger comparing to him. She feels lonely but then she said she is better off without her husband who she said was lazy and drunkard. She said that her children give her food to eat and they buy her clothing. *“But then I am lonely as I live on my own”* she said.

Case 7

Rahmeto is a 78 years old man. He was born in Bale. He is Muslim religion follower. He is married for 48 years with three children out of which two are alive. He was educated up to 5th grade. Both children are married and he lives with his elderly wife. He had served as a guard for years and had retired many years ago. Since he retired, he had not been that healthy. His pension he complains is not enough to run his household and to get enough medication for him and his wife. He lives in a kebele house.

Case 8

Wondemu is an 80 years old elderly. He was born in south west of Shewa. He is a married man whose wife had died recently. He was educated to 12+1 and was a teacher before he retired. He is an Orthodox Christian. He is a pensioner. He has 7 children. Four are married and three are still living with him. He lives in a rented house. *“I feel lonely after my wife’s death. She left a big gap in my life and in my home and I feel lonely so much,”* he said.

In the elderly association of the Woreda, he used to be in the management team he said. He participated in different social activities that elders were involved in for many years. He gave free services for many years when he was stronger. *“Thinking of the services I have rendered gives me a feeling of satisfaction when I think back,”* he said. He added that sometimes he used to help the bed ridden elders and that makes him feel satisfied now.

4.3 Loneliness in Elderly and Contributing Factors

Seven of the elders interviewed had experienced loneliness in their lives before or now. They explained the factors that contribute to their loneliness. Many of them found old age as a blessing on one hand and a challenge on the other. Due to their old age, they have grown to maturity to be able to take time to savour life. They believe that this has helped them to grow more into spirituality. On the other hand, there are challenges they face contributing to their loneliness. Some of the factors that contributed to their loneliness expressed by the elders are grieving family members, their own and their family member ill health, children moving away and in some cases poverty. Here as follows are some of the challenges the elderly faced as their responses to the interviews:

4.3.1 Death of Loved ones

Fatuma said, *“Twenty-five years ago, in the same year, I lost my job and 2 important people in my life: my brother and my husband. I suffered loneliness and I lost a lot of weight; loneliness has been part of my life ever since then.”* She said she feels lonely; she brought her children up on her own. She said that nobody was there to help her during her time of trials and hardships. She added that she only trusted in her God and ignored people, who could not be a help to her. *“Only trusting in Allah helped me to pass that hard time,”* she said.

Tadesse said that he feels lonely many times after his wife's death, the last three years. He stressed, *"I feel lonely mostly during feast days and when I am aware that the shopping I purchase are not used economically and wisely and many of the shopping items are wasted in the house. If my wife was there, she would spend the items properly and would minimize the cost of the running of the household."* This loneliness makes him feel worried and stressed as he does not know until when he will be able to handle that.

Genet said *"I often feel lonely and it has been my companion for so many years. I have lost all my siblings, 7 brothers and sisters and have buried them in several years' difference. After coming from such a big family, now I am on my own, in a kebele house that is falling apart. I feel lonely, in fact very lonely. I don't know what to do about it. It is very hard. I don't want to blame God for that. Since my husband died on the 3rd day of the demotion of Emperor Haile Silassie, I have been on my own and life has been hard."*

4.3.2 Ill Health of the Elders and Their Family Members

Genet said that her sickness makes her feel lonely. *"I suffer from blood pressure and gastritis. The pills of Minilik Hospital and our Woreda Health centres are my food. My health condition makes me feel lonely."* Now, she lives with a grand son who is a mentally ill. He is her daughter's son. She brought him up and helped him to get a driver's license, trained him in hair dressing and construction work. After taking all those trainings, he got mentally sick one year and 2 months ago. She said, *"Now he would throw my clothes, throw the food we eat, and he always tries to kill me. It is lonely for me to live with such a person and try to help him; in fact, he should have been the one to help me if he was well."*

Hagos said that since his wife's sickness, he feels lonely for the last 18 years. As noted earlier, his wife was sick for the last eighteen years and became bed ridden for the last four years.

He said, *“My friends after their retirement, have taken other jobs in different places and have continued to work until they really got tired of working. I could not get hired or even look for a job because of the sickness of my wife.”* He said that he is lonely. He said that he needs to be available for her to take care of her and her for medications.

4.3.3 Poverty

Genet lives in an old kebele house, built of wood and plastered with mud, the roof leaking during rain. After her husband’s death, she carried firewood for sale, brewed local drink namely ‘tella’ and Span cotton which she sold for a living. Now, she does not have a lot of energy to do manual works. She gets some money from the safety net program. She said, *“I get 200 birr and my grandson gets 200 birr and that is thanks to the elderly committee who fought so I get this; so I get 400 birr coming through the bank for both of us. I am very grateful for them all. That is all my income now. I pay house rent, iddir contribution, electricity and water bills. Unfortunately, my only daughter who works as a domestic worker in peoples’ house is not included in the help I get from safety net program.”* She added that her poverty makes her feel alone.

4.3.4 Children Moving away and Lack of Social Support

Lack of social support makes the elderly feel lonely. Belaynesh said, *“I am lonely. All of my children are married and I live on my own. They give me food to eat and they buy me clothing. But then I am lonely as I live on my own.”*

Rehmeto said that loneliness robs happiness from him and the elders alike. The lonelier they are, the more they think about it and the more they feel lonely he added. He added, *“It weakens the mental health of the elderly and that is what it is doing to me. The effect of loneliness can be very hard and the elders might feel excluded. This might make life very hard for them and that is my own experience,”* he said.

Most of the participants of the Focus Group Discussions in Woreda 01 and Woreda 03 confirmed this saying that the elderly they know and live with feel lonely most of the times; most of the elderly have lost their spouses, have lost their jobs, they do not have energy any longer for a lot of movement and they are mostly lonely. Woreda 03 participant (male, aged 77) said that the elderly used to have many friends in their lives and when they get retired, they are on their own and that makes them loners. He added that he also feels lonely as he lives on his own. Woreda 01 discussant (aged 45 woman) said, *“The elderly do not meet people like before and they feel lonely, so when visited by people, they cry as they express their loneliness. Due to their loneliness, the elderly are mostly sad. Those who have their spouses and those who have children nearby are not as lonely as the ones who live on their own. Those who do not have children experience loneliness severely,”* she added.

4.4 The Effects of Loneliness in the Lives of the Elderly

Loneliness has negatively affected the lives of the elderly in many ways. Some effects of loneliness identified in the interviews have robbed their happiness as most elderly expressed.

Genet said that the effect of loneliness in her life is very vivid and she suffers from high blood pressure and gastritis. Therefore, *“The pills of Minilik Hospital and our Woreda Health centres are my food,”* she said.

Tadesse said, *“Loneliness makes me feel worried and stressed some times. It gives me sleep disturbances which usually results in lack of energy and motivation in my life.”*

Rahmeto said that effect of loneliness can be very hard and the elders might feel excluded. He added, *“I experience the feeling of being excluded and it had made life very hard for me.”*

Hagos said that his loneliness has turned his tomorrow into a darkness. Loneliness has made him a loner and let him stay at home. Because of this, he said that it had led him to turn to his creator.

On the other hand, Fatuma said that loneliness had made her a strong person. She said, *“I am a kind of person who always look for a solution in my life for a challenge I face. The challenge I faced with loneliness has forced me to be more open to grow stronger and to be resilient to loneliness.”*

The researcher met most of the elders sitting in their homes on their own looked lonely and sad.

4.5 The Elders’ Religious Activities and Their Roles as Coping Mechanisms

The researcher realized that all of the elderly who participated were religious people who attended worshiping places often. These people perform different worshiping approaches according to their own interest and the requirements of their worshiping places. Fatuma was a Muslim and said that she is a regular attendant of the Mosque. She said, *“I worship on Fridays as that is the only day women are allowed to worship in our mosque. As our mosque is small and could not accommodate everybody daily, the men take off the curtain that separates men’s side from the women, and they worship daily.”*

Fatuma added that the religious activity she undertakes is to worship Allah and to obey him and to give the offerings/alms required of her. Repeatedly she said, *“Whoever believes in Allah gets what his heart desires and the worship I performs helps me to cope with the loneliness I face. Allah supports and stands next to me and helps me during my time of hardships,”* she said. She worships and prays five times a day as prescribed by her religion. That helps her cope with her loneliness.

Tadesse was an Orthodox Christian. He said that he follows all the teachings of the Church all the time, prays regularly and serves the Church. He added that he used to be development work chairman for his Church and recently, he was replaced by another member of the Church. As there is a new Church under-construction, he said that he was contributing his share towards this construction. He said, *“The kind of worship I like to do is reading the Bible, praying always and fasting. Since my wife died, I am taking Holy Communion and I try to live a virtuous life.”* He added that worshipping together with the congregation makes him feel supported and his loneliness minimizes. *“Being together with my compatriots and friends together in the Church comforts me that I forget my loneliness,”* he said. *“I also give alms and in that regard, I give what I have; it could be feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. That helps me so much. I do in my own capacity. I share what I have with the poor people,”* he added. He believes that what made him pass through hard time was the support of the Church. When his wife died, the priests visited him and helped him all the time, he said. That gave him an inner strength he concluded.

Genet said that she likes her Church and worships by participating in the Holy Masses. She added, *“I fast and pray; and I have a spiritual father to guide me.”*

Hagos said that on feast and Sabbath days, he participates in Masses and Church services. *“In my worship, I pray for my family and children. In addition, I pray for the country, I gives alms to the needy, visit those who are sick and in problem and I give advices so that those people in problems may get a hope”*, he said.

“I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me, (Psalm 120:1); I called to God and he heard me...,” Psalm 18:6, he quoted the Psalm and said that the Lord hears him when he calls him in his private place. So to look for a help for his loneliness, he turned to his Creator. He

added, *“I sit in a private place and ask God and he hears me. Loneliness has turned me to the Lord and more to solitude and meditation.”*

Yohannes said, *“I fast always and take my breakfast at 11:00 am. I am not afraid of death as I trust in my God firmly.”* He added, *“I have a blood pressure and I had it for the last 41 years. My trust in God has kept me going in being faithful to taking the medication.”* The only thing he is afraid of is sin not death, he said.

Belaynesh said that she is often attending the Church services on Sundays and feast days. She values the fact that she believes in God and she said, *“Everything comes into being because of God and He accompanies me in my loneliness.”*

Rahmeto said that the religious activity he performs helps him feel connected and mix with people, by listening to the teachings of Allah. He added, *“The worshiping places help the elders to feel connected with other people. Sometimes on Fridays and feast days, I go to the mosque and pray 5 times a day for my needs and the needs of my family.”* He believes that their worship can help the elders cope with loneliness. He stated, *“By offering their loneliness to God, the elders can feel the comfort from their God. Those who feel lonely and do not pray and do not share in any worship feel much more hopeless.”* He added that those who go to worshiping places do not feel lonely as they are with their God.

“The reason I go to Mosque is to get away from my loneliness. I make sure I worship with others, I mix with people and that gives me happiness and makes me feel less lonely. When I pray to Allah, he keeps me from loneliness. Going to Mosque gives me an opportunity to meet my fellow elders and that gives me a chance to feel connected with others,” Rahmeto said.

Wondemu said that he is an Orthodox Christian. He said, *“I pray, I fast, I give alms and I get Masses offered for the dead. These worshiping activities help me to cope with loneliness.”* He

stated that there are 2 kinds of lonely elders: *“the first are those who are not so spiritual elders who complain against God for their loneliness and the second kinds of elders who take their time of loneliness into reflection/meditation and, who pray and who think of their spiritual life well. Their loneliness is turned into solitude,”* he said.

The participant in the FGD in woreda 01 (woman, aged 32) said that the elderly are more spiritual than the younger generation. Another woman aged 32 added, *“The elders see things beyond its appearance and are always trusting God and always attending the worshiping places of their respective religious institutions, the Churches or Mosques.”* She added that these institutions help the elderly to come across their compatriots and help them interact with others. *“Attending the worshiping areas help them interact with others and strengthens their social relationship,”* a 53 year old man added.

Some participants of FGD in Woreda 03 said that as long as the elderly are able to walk and move around, they go to the worshiping places often. An elder in the discussion group (aged 77) said, *“I am an elder myself and I cannot go to many places. My energy is limited. I only go to the nearby Church. Even when my energy is limited and am not able to go far, I pray in my home and thank God for his blessings and that makes me cope with my loneliness.”*

4.6 Spirituality and Its Meaning for the Elderly (መንፈሳዊነትና አረጋጭን የሚሰጡት ትርጉም)

Fatuma said that for her Spirituality is not showing off what she does; for her spirituality is humility of life. She does what she has to do in a hidden way so that she does not show off especially in the time of doing a good deeds.

She said, *“Spirituality helps me to go through during hard times. Man is born and man dies and that is a passage of life; when we think of that, we calm down in the time of hardship and times of grieving and look to a higher power; as for me, I look to my creator.”*

Fatuma added, *“Trusting in my creator and entrusting all in his hands has helped me to be strong enough to continue to live my life. During the death of my husband, life was hard. But I entrusted all in the hands of Allah and gave him all my worries and asked him to help me and give me all the courage to take care of my children and he did give me the strength. I am happy now that my children are successful. What I have asked for, I have received all, I am grateful for that.”*

Fatuma added that she worships her creator and prays 5 times a day and that gives meaning in her life. She also helps others who are less advantaged than herself, and helping them in any way that she could, gives her a feeling of self-satisfaction and gives meaning to her life.

For spiritual help, she said that she would go to nobody except to Allah. *“I have seen people and I did not get good things from them. Only Allah is good to me and He did all good things for me. I only worship him and go to him,”* she said.

Genet said that she is a spiritual person but she is aware of her limitations. Spirituality helps during the time of hardships. She said, *“When I mourned my sons, the pain I had to bore was deep. Then, I looked beyond my pain and that helped me to cross that hard time. That is spirituality for me.”*

Hagos said that life without spirituality has no meaning. He added, *“It is in spirituality I can see the meaning of life, it helps us to realize what is deeper in our lives.”*

Hagos added, *“I believe that the spirituality of my parents/family has helped me to choose a way of spirituality. My family had the inner strength to be able to see beyond the current*

hardships and that helped me to imitate them. They saw beyond the issue at hand and would also see back instead of drowning in the current situation when they face difficulty. Spirituality helps me to help others. As I apply spirituality to my daily life, others also look for help from me. They come to me for advice and guidance. Those people whom I had guided and helped met me later in life in a better condition and they had thanked me for my help in their difficulties.”

Yohannes considers himself to be a spiritual person and that helps him to cope with loneliness. He said, *“My spirituality has led me to go beyond the present suffering and I read books when I am lonely. When I was younger and when I was at war during the time of Derg regime, spirituality helped me to go through that. My spirituality helped me to cross the times of loneliness when all of my friends were killed in Ethio-Eritrean war. My spirituality helps me to get meaning out of my life now. Fortitude (inner strength) is important and you get that from spirituality,”* Yohannes said. He added that what comes in life would crush us if we give an attention and if we do not manage hardships and if we stay in that mood of failure, it would bring more hardships and sadness in our lives. But we have to manage and pass it with inner strength that can only come from spirituality he added.

A participant in the FGD in Woreda 01 (male aged 53), in the discussion said that the older the people get, the more spiritual they become. He added, *“These people are wise people, giving from the small they have and always praying. The elders are people who have tried everything and have already learnt what is good for them and others. They are always praying for their country, their children and for the intention of those who needed their prayers. The elders have a better trust in a higher power. They are stronger in their spiritual life.”*

4.7 How the Elderly Cope in the Time of Challenges

The elderly have different ways of coping challenges they face in their lives. Their coping means that emerged in the interview are discussed below.

4.7.1 Engaging in work

The elderly had made themselves busy in works in order to cope the challenges they face. In this regard Fatuma said, *“One of the ways I coped my husband’s death was by working in people’s houses, carrying firewood for sale and by doing small odd jobs.”*

Belaynesh collected firewood for sale and she baked injera in people’s houses to raise her children. She said that she coped the challenges she faced by engaging herself in any kind of daily work she was able to get.

4.7.2 Influence of their Parents/Families

A good family background is very important for individuals to cope with challenges. A home with good family figures inculcate an inner strength and courage for the future of its children. For example, Hagos said that his parents have always advised him to be strong during hard times. He said, *“I remember the advices of my parents when I face difficulties and that has given me strength and helped me to see beyond my loneliness to be able to go through the hard times I face.”*

4.7.3 Divine Help

Fatuma said, *“I realized that God was with me at that difficult time and He helped me to trust him continue to live my life. When my husband died, my children were small; now thank God, they have grown up and they are helping me.”*

Tadesse said that his way of coping is by reading his spiritual books. *“The Bible has consoling words and that gives me strength. The hopes and promises given in the Bible give me hope when I read and reflect on it,”* he added.

Yohannes said that he prays during the time of difficulty and that helps him to get through his difficulty. He said, *“Even if I get hungry and have no food to eat, I pray and that keeps me going, my hunger just goes away. This is my secret: I prepares clean water in a jar, I say all my daily prayers, I say additional prayer over the water, then that is holy water; I drink some from it and wash with the remaining, that keeps him going.”* The Scripture says, Man does not live on bread alone, (Luke 4:4 NJB).

Rahmeto said that spirituality during the times of hardships is a way that can get one out of problems. He added, *“Spirituality is a key for passing through hardships. This also works for loneliness. I believe in nearness of Allah to me. Spiritual life helps me in difficult times. I believe that the elderly can cross difficult times with the help of spirituality. Allah is a God of power and understanding; He thinks of us and He is our helper. Allah thinks of the lonely elderly,”* he said.

A FGD participant in Woreda 01 (26 year old man) said that the elders do not easily get emotional. He added, *“Life has taught the elders a lot and they are calm whatever comes in their lives. Because they deal with calmness, spirituality comes in whatever decision making they are involved in. It could be by prayer, discussing with others, etc, they do not find challenges as difficult as the younger generation would.”* A 34 year old woman from the same group stated that in comparison with other people, crossing hard times and hardships is easier for the elderly. She added, *“The commitment of the elderly and the presence of their creator in their lives makes them pass through hardships. Life experience has taught them a lot; they have passed through a lot and that helped them cope with hardships in their lives”*.

4.7.4 Social Support from Family and Friends

Belaynesh said that she has a good relationship with people and that helped her a lot. Her neighbors and her iddir members help her during hard times. (*Iddir is an informal mutual support network that is common in Ethiopia and it is formed to provide functional expenses for the times of burial and sometimes to help its weak and sick members.*) She said, *“I grew up in hardship and I am resilient to hardships. When I lost my son, I was so heartbroken that I did not want even to eat.”* People encouraged her to continue to live her life she said. They told her that, *“Even those who have one child have buried and continued to live life; so, that encouraged me to manage my sadness.”* When she was working in people’s houses, she said her son told her one day, *“I am almost ready to help you, be courageous and take heart. When I get work, I will help you and you will not need to work in people’s house.”* He was 12th grade student; he got sick and he died not long after that, she said. Her husband was not a hardworking man, she said. *“When I was collecting firewood, my husband was getting drunk in the middle of the day. I breast fed all the 6 of my children; those days, we didn’t have enough to eat and I used to get hungry after breast feeding my children and I used to feel dizzy.”* Belaynesh’s 2nd child, the father of the 5 children got sick and died recently. She said, *“It is not easy to lose 2 sons. What helped me to cross this difficult time is my living children; they are my consolations. People are good to me and they helped me pass through the difficult times.”*

He added that being connected with other people and sharing of ideas with others gives him strength. In addition, he said that his children have been his source of joy.

Wondemu said, *“I had a hard time during the time of my wife’s death. I know death is inevitable. My parents have died, other people are dying and I know I will die one day. So I accepted the death of my wife with that understanding. It has brought a lot of sadness into my*

life, it has broken my heart. I had to console my children who missed their mother so much. Then life has to continue and I had to continue living for my children.” Therefore he added, he had to cope this challenge to bring up his children.

4.8 Spiritual Sources of Support

Fatuma said that her source of spirituality comes from within her. *“I have trusted Allah and I was able to listen to my inner voice which guides me, so spiritual source that comes from within me supports me, guides me and consoles me”*, she said.

Tadesse stated that the Word of God is the source of spirituality for him, the true peace that comes from Jesus Christ.

Genet said that spiritual support is found only in God, from deep within her and from the guidance of her spiritual father. She added, *“During the times of loneliness, consoling and supporting spirituality comes from within me through meditation and reflection.”*

Hagos said, *“I believe that it is the word of God, meditation and prayer that helped me to grow in spirituality. I ask my spiritual father to pray for me and I believe that the prayers of my spiritual father had helped me during my times of hardships and loneliness.”* He added that the ability to have patience, to stop and think and meditate on issues at hand and being able to make a calculated decision is spirituality. He quoted Amharic saying “ትዕግስት ፍርሃት አይደለም” which translates as, *“Patience is not fear,”* and said that to take time and make a calculated decision helps him.

Belaynesh said that her spiritual support comes from her friends who are also elderly people like herself. She added, *“The source of spirituality is from God. I am a grateful person and I thank God all the time, day and night which helps me to grow into spirituality.”*

Rahmeto said that spirituality comes from believing in Allah and that makes him strong. *“I consult Allah for my spiritual need and then, my spiritual support comes from Him,”* he said. He added, *“If everybody worshipped God within his/her religion, and if they looked beyond the situation at hand, spiritual support is like food and drink s/he can find from his/her creator.”*

Wondemu said that his source of spirituality comes from God. He said, *“My wife is gone to her creator. I still feel connected to her through my prayers. In addition, I have a good relationship with my children and find my spiritual help from them also. I usually consult God for my Loneliness and that had helped me to cope with it.”* In many incidents, he had consulted his spiritual father and his advice had helped him in many times, he added.

A Focus Group Discussion participant (72 year old man) of Woreda 01 stated, *“Spiritual help and support comes from worshiping places like Church and Mosque, iddir, a good family life, neighbors and in their surroundings. Spirituality does not come only from attending the worshipping places, it also comes in being connected to their surroundings and their creator. It could also come from being connected to their culture and their daily lives ups and downs,”* he added. In the same group, a 32 year old woman gave an example and said that if the elderly think taking care of an orphan child is a holy deed, the more they do such a thing, they grow and mature in spirituality, she said. She added that the more they become concerned about the poor and vulnerable people and go out to help them, their spirituality grows, she argued. She therefore concluded, *“Spirituality comes from the daily involvement of the elderly, their environment and their willingness to do a charitable deeds.”*

FGD participant in Woreda 03 (aged 30 man) said, *“Sources of spirituality for the elderly is a worshiping place such as the Churches and Mosques. In addition, the scripture gives hope to the elders. The sources of strength during hardships for the elderly is their family and their*

faith,” he added. A 77 year old man in the same group discussion stated that the word of God /scripture also serves as “*the soul’s food for the elderly which can strengthen them*”. He added that the hope of the elderly is their God; by trusting him, their loneliness is changed to solitude.

4.9 Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism in the Times of Loneliness

In the responses of the elders, it was shown that spirituality has been their coping mechanism for their times of loneliness.

Fatuma said that spirituality gives her an inner strength which contributes to direct her in the right path. She added that Loneliness is usually very difficult thing to deal. “*When I see loneliness with the eyes of spirituality, I can look beyond the current situation and then it becomes smaller and I get the strength to manage it. Spirituality gives us inner strength and it contributes to direct oneself in the right path, then, I get the wisdom to manage and cope my loneliness,*” she said.

Tadesse said, “*Spirituality for me is doing meditation, reading of my spiritual books and reflecting on what I read. It has kept me going in my life and has helped me to cope with loneliness. Spirituality has guarded me from losing hope, drinking and getting involved in other addictions,*” he said.

Belaynesh said that spirituality for her is a wisdom which she gets from above. To look for it, she said, “*I consult with wiser people which helps her to be a person of integrity. If you know God and search from him, you become a spiritual person, loneliness would not be hard to manage*”. She repeats that sharing with others about her loneliness and looking for the advice of others helps her in her time of loneliness.

Rahmeto believes that those elderly who are spiritual people will have stable life. He said, “*If they are spiritual, their life is stable and they can live their lives happily. Because,*

spiritually strong people have good relationship with others and they would not have a difficulty and they will have a good coping ways in the time of loneliness”, he added.

4.9.1 Spirituality as a Source of Strength for Hard Times

The elderly believe that there is power coming from high above that help them to see beyond their current situation when it comes to loneliness. Spirituality links us with a higher power and that gives us wisdom, understanding and the ability to see beyond. They stated that spirituality matures their lives, their ways of behaving and their livelihood. Spirituality leads them to hope beyond hopes, they all stated. In the time of difficulty and hardship, spirituality supports them to be hopeful and to be strong to cross the difficulties they come across.

Yohannes said, *መንፈሳዊነት ለአረጋዊያን ጋሻ ነው ...* ፣ which translates, *“Spirituality is a shield for the elderly. It makes them strong and resilient for the times of loneliness; it is a shield s/he can carry around to be protected by and it provides a strength.”* Genet said, *“Spirituality is a grace to have wherever we may be.”* The elders added that spirituality can make everyone strong and stable beyond they can think of.

Yohannes added, *“Spiritual people believe that life is more than loneliness and it goes beyond. Those who have strong spirituality have this belief that life is full of good things yet to come. Those who are spiritually strong and those who believe in the best of others will go out to help others and they get hope from there. That makes them strong and gives them hope.”*

Wondemu said, *“I have lived all those years and have seen a lot. I am planning to pull myself more into spirituality. That gives inner strength and hope in our lives. When I face difficulty, I know spirituality does not allow me to bend to hardships and hardships cannot break me because of my spiritual life.”* He added that when faced with hardships, we come out of our hardships stronger as hardship makes people strong. *“There is hope and inner strength in*

spirituality”, he said. He added that when we pray and meditate, we feel satisfied and feel comforted. Even though there is inflation and hardships in his life added to his own loneliness, God helps him to pass through it all he said.

A participant in the FGD in Woreda 01 (41 year old man) said that spirituality is more than religiosity; it is reflecting and listening to our inner voice that is good and positive and the willingness to act according to that inner voice. He added that spirituality is a power for human being that needs to be tapped. In the same Woreda a 45 year old woman said that the elderly are mostly in the houses, and if they have friends, it is the children in the house with a big generation gap. She added that with those children the elderly do not communicate well and they do not understand each other well to a deeper level because, psychologically and mentally, they do not have the same level of understanding, she said. In Woreda 01, a 53 year old man said that the elders feel lonely which they usually they turn it into solitude. He added, *“The elderly feel that there is a higher power who leads and guides them and they feel safe in being close to their God and they consult him. When they feel close to their God, they cope their loneliness; in difficulties, they get hope, strength and consolation,”* he said.

A 72 year old man in the FGD in Woreda 01 argued, *“The elderly live their lives in a renewed way when they are spiritual people. They don’t think of their death, rather their life after death. A person who is near to God/Allah/creator gets away from sin and then, the more s/he gets closer to God. In doing that, the more the elder is not worried for tomorrow. S/He does not worry of the things s/he misses here but thinks of the higher things in heaven. They are not worried for today and what today holds for them. They worry more for the future, and on how they can be closer to their creator. They are strong and spirituality makes them stronger people.”*

A 28 year old man in FGD in Woreda 03 said that the reason the elderly become spiritual because they are freed from the stress of work and the family responsibility, specially educating children. He added *“The burden of taking responsibility of their family and sending children to school had been reduced from their shoulders. Therefore, the elderly have time to look up higher,”* he said. In other words, the older a person gets, the more s/he gets closer to his/her creator. A 46 year old woman in the group insisted, *“Even those people who have never been spiritual in their younger years, become one when they age. When people have time and they are alone, they start to think of their lives and they start to calm down and become spiritual.”* She added that for people of all age category, spirituality can help protect them from addictions and other useless practices.

Most of the group discussants in Woreda 03 stressed that spirituality can help the elderly to cross hardships. A 30 year old man in this Woreda said, *“Spiritual people usually have spiritual fathers who help them in the time of mourning and other times of difficulties and that help them cross during the times of hardships.”*

In Woreda 03 FGD, a 42 year old woman in the group argued that the life of an elderly is a well lived life full of experiences. She added that their life has shown them much and they are calm people who started to reflect and meditate on their lives, she added. *“With spirituality, they become nearer to God/Allah/creator. The elderly are engaged in meditating and reflecting on their lives and their God and they have no time to think about their loneliness.”* A 30 year old man in Woreda 03 Group Discussion said, *“Those who read their spiritual books/Bible/Quran and those who understand the stories in their spiritual books will try to put their hardship in the context and will never think it to be harder than what their prophets passed through; for example the life of Jesus in the context of Christian’s life. The stores of Job, Paul and others will be their*

sources of consolation during the time of loneliness and will help them get meaning out of their own hardships. The suffering of loneliness will not go away but s/he will compare his suffering and will get consolation out of the stories,” he concluded.

4.10 Spirituality as a Source of Hope, Peace and Joy

Most of the elders have found spirituality as a source of hope, peace and joy in their lives. Fatuma said that spirituality is trusting in Allah and this makes her hopeful; then nothing disturbs her. She said that she felt lonely when people rejected her; that experience had helped her to pull up her strength. *“Rejection from people had been my strength. It has made me to be resilient. My secrets confided to people were disclosed and that gave me strength to more trust in Allah. My hope is Allah”*, she said.

Tadesse said that doing charity works to others makes him feel very happy. His experience of the battle when he was a soldier, how he prayed during those days of fighting in the battle, how the Lord protected him when most of his friends were killed gives him a big meaning and he is grateful for his being a spiritual person.

Genet stated that her strength comes from deep within her and she believes that is from God. She added that she has an open mind which helps her to lead a good life. *“My effort to live a good life leads me to live my life spiritually and that gives me inner strength which I believe comes from God,”* she said.

Genet added that what gives meaning in her life is spirituality which comes from God. *“If I get what I need and if I am happy in life, what else is there?”* she said.

Hagos said that Life is meaningful for him and he is happy with his life. *“The wisdom of God is with me. My children are self-sufficient. If they want, they can help me, if not, they do not need to and I am ok with that. I always pray before I start my day and God hears me,”* he said.

Spirituality helps him during his loneliness he said. In addition, it has helped him to pass through hard times, has given him inner strength and he was able to see beyond what was at the sight. He said that spirituality comes from God and from the word of God. Hagos concluded that spirituality gives him wisdom.

4.11 Spiritual Sources of Growth and Transformation

The elders expressed that their spirituality has helped them to grow and transform. This finding is in line with the theory of Gerotranscendence, the work of Tornstam in 1989 in which he revealed that the gerotranscendent individual experiences a redefinition of the self and of relationships to others and a new understanding of fundamental, existential questions. He added that aging was a natural developmental process towards maturity and wisdom (Tornstam 1989).

In the interview, Genet said, *“What helped me to break through what was hard in my life was my spirituality; thus my patience, my ability to reflect and meditate before I acted upon whatever came in my life helped me to pass through difficult times. The source of spirituality that helps me to change and to grow was continuing to focus on my God and on my purpose in life that helps me to change and to grow.”* She added that God helps her to forgive. When she forgives others, God forgives her trespasses and that helps her to continue to forgive. She believes that God never carries grudges against her.

Hagos said that he prays to remain closer to God. He repeats the quotation from the Bible, *“... let me be neither rich nor poor. If I have more, I might say that I do not need you. But if I am poor, I might steal and bring disgrace on my God.”* Proverbs 30: 8-9

He said, *“I always seek for wisdom and this has helped me to go through hard times. When I face hardships, I meditate over it and chooses the way that I consider to be a wiser one that would bring understanding and consolation to my life and to those who will be involved in*

the matter. Doing good deeds to others and giving alms are the expression of my love to God that can make me grow and change. Meditation and reflection in solitude make me meet God within my being,” he stated. Nothing matters in my life except God, and that is spirituality for me he said.

Rahmeto said, *“The grace of Allah is the only source of growth and change. It is only Allah who can give me grace and growth.”* He added that spirituality comes from Allah which can give him inner spiritual happiness.

4.12 Spiritual Well-being: Sense of Purpose, Sense of Connectedness

In the interviews, it is seen that there is spiritual well-being in the elderly. They are persons who are forgiving, who try to get meaning out of their lives, people who are full of hopes and are connected to their creator/God/Allah.

4.12.1 From Sadness to Happiness

Life is full of ups and downs. Hagos said, *“Spirituality has been a ladder which had helped me to climb up from sadness to happiness, from despair to hopefulness, to be able to continue to live life anew. Spirituality shows me ways that I should go through. Spirituality has helped me to go out to help others, to go beyond my own sufferings to touch the sufferings of others. Spirituality has helped me to say enough with what I have, encouraged me to go out to serve others, to be companion to others especially the lonely, to love others and to help others.”*

He said that spirituality gives meaning to his life, helps him to have a wider outlook and be linked to his God. He acknowledges his loneliness and limitedness, so he looks up, he tries to ask for help from his God. He feels close to his God and quotes his Bible. *“In my trouble I called to the LORD. I cried out to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my call for help reached his ears.”* Psalm 18:6.

Belaynesh said that spirituality gives inner strength and hope to her. She added, *“You have to be a person who believes in God and who believe in the power that comes from him. He gives the strength to those who trust in him.”* She insisted that she is aware that she is a poor lady who loves the poor. She added, *“Even if I have to give the clothes from my back, it is my willingness and I know it gives me self-satisfaction. I had a hard life and passed through a lot of difficulties. The Lord was guiding me in disguise by giving me inner strength. The source of spirituality that gives me satisfaction is from God. I am a grateful person and I thank God all the time; day night,”* she concluded.

Rahmeto said that living his life happily, being satisfied with what he has, gives meaning to his life. He added that his spirituality helps him to say, *“What I have is enough.”* He stated that spirituality helps him to pray and he prays for good health, for his family and children. Life is more than wealth and what we could get from this world, he said. He concluded saying *“If I get a good health, what I have is enough and that gives meaning to my life. Life is beyond this world’s things, it transcends. My hope and longing is beyond this earthly things.”* He concluded that it is only a spiritual person who can forgive and it is Allah who teaches compassion.

Yohannes said, *“To grow old is a blessing, age is a grace, age is a school that teaches me a lot, the older I grow, the more I trust in God, and the more I learn; life is meaningful for me.”*

What is stated in the Gerotranscendence theory is observed in the life of Yohannes who transcends beyond his loneliness and turned it into solitude. In his solitude, he focuses on spirituality that helps him to focus on things that matter most in his life.

A 45 year old woman of FGD participant in Woreda 01 in the discussion said, *“The elderly are mostly thinking of the future and their final destiny; so they try their best to be spiritual people. The elderly try to avoid hurting others and they forgive those who hurt them.”*

They usually try to be interested in spiritual matters which helps them to see beyond the situation at hand let it be loneliness or other challenges in their lives.

Looking beyond their own loneliness and their pains helps them to cope through difficult times. The elderly have inner strength and they are convinced that the only ones who can decide for themselves are themselves. To make a decision for an issue, they look up and they get an inspiration which they see as coming from their creator. They put all in the hands of God/Allah and forgive others as He is the final judge. They learn to forgive, they see positive things, and they see that all is dependent on God.

A Woreda 01 Group Discussion participant (41 year old man) stated, *“The elderly see there is a purpose in life and that is why they are afraid of death. Tomorrow is a different day and there will come a better day. They see purpose in their lives, in their children and grandchildren, in their experience, they compare themselves with the ones who went before them, and they thank God for giving them more days and long life and they are grateful for that.”*

A participant in the Focus Group Discussion (26 year old man) said that for the elderly who are spiritual, life is not that hard to cope with loneliness or different kind of hardships. He added that those who did not develop spirituality in their lives are not wise people and find life to be difficult when facing with loneliness and difficulties. He argued that, in comparison, the elderly who have developed spirituality in their lives cope better with difficulties and loneliness than those who did not develop spirituality in their lives.

4.12.2 Connectedness to Their God/Allah

Fatuma does not feel connected to Allah since He is beyond understanding and beyond all wordings. She said that there might be others who are very dedicated and who are far away

from the world and can get connected to Allah and be near to him. As for me she said, *“I cannot say that I am connected to Allah; and He only knows that.”*

In his research, Bonab, B. G. (2013) stated that seeking proximity to Allah is the ultimate goal of the rituals and practices of Muslim people. Reciting daily prayers, almsgiving, going on pilgrimage, and visiting sacred shrines are among rituals that are performed with the intent to obtain closeness to Allah. He added that the core of individuals' worship and rituals is succinctly described in the following Qur'anic verse (6: 162), which emphasizes the proximity-seeking function of ritual: [O Prophet] Say: Surely my prayer, my devotions, my life, and my death are all for [the proximity of] Allah, the Lord of the world (P.93).

For Tadesse, Spirituality is a source for being hopeful in the time of loneliness. Tadesse is a humble man who enumerated his weakness that keeps him away from being tightly connected to God. Yet he said, *“I am not close to God but He is close to me; I know this because he listens to me and to all my prayers, I am very grateful to Him.”*

Genet said that she is connected with her God and she says that God is near to her. This is how she depicted her near death experience a year ago: *“I died and was taken to a place where there were 2 people; one was a dignified man “ጌድኅገዳለም” (Holy Savior) she calls him and there was a second one, ugly looking who was so happy I was taken there and he wanted to take me away. The dignified man said, ‘You will not take her, she has to go back; she will not die.’ Then this dignified man took me by hand and showed me where there was a beautiful flower garden where there were olive trees and he said, ‘This is where I will bring you when you die’.”* She added, when she woke up, she was surrounded by family and friends who thought she was dead.

When Yohannes talked of his connectedness to God he said, *“I don't separate from Him even for one minute. God has me in his hands. He is with me always.”*

A FGD in Woreda 01 (32 year old woman) stressed that the elderly are connected to God and their age makes them nearer to Him. She said, *“This is their time to reflect the path they passed through in their life journey. Most of the elderly are retired people and they have time for reflection and meditation. If they did not do well in life, this is their time to ask forgiveness, if they did well, it is their time for thanksgiving. Their only hope is their God when life comes to its close; that is where they hope to go, to their God,”* she said.

A Woreda 01 FGD participant (45 year old woman) added that what helps the elderly to hope and to look for a new life is that they are always looking up in order to see higher things. She added that the elderly think of the prophets in the scriptures, for example in the case of Christians, they look at Job and his response in the middle of his adversity and suffering, *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,” Job 1:21.* Then they look for a better tomorrow. Those who believe, have their God/Allah to trust.

FGD Participant (72 year old man) in Woreda 01 stated that nobody can be exempted from suffering. He stated that when we take a spiritual elder, we can see that they bear their suffering wisely and see beyond their current suffering he added. None of the scriptures are void of suffering. He further said, *“For example, Christianity is a religion where the Lord Jesus himself was mocked and suffered death on a cross. To follow Christ who suffered for us is to choose suffering with him. Being tested in suffering makes the elderly stronger people.”*

A Muslim in Woreda 01 FGD (32 year old woman) said that Allah sends suffering to his faithful. She quoted Quran, *“We have tested those before them, so that God would know the truthful ones and He would know the liars,” 29:3.* She also quoted, *“We will surely test you through some fear, hunger and shortage of money, lives and crops...” 2:155.* She further stated

that to pass the test, the believer must maintain his belief that only Allah can relieve his hardship. The believer will always maintain his prayer and call unto Allah. *“If we grant the human being a blessing he turns away and distances himself, yet when adversity touches him he implores profusely,” 41:51.* She added that adversity and hardship is a very effective reminder for those who are too much absorbed in this worldly life; thus they may not be as devoted to Allah as they should be. Due to their being too preoccupied with this worldly life they do not seek Allah nor call on Him as they should she concluded.

It is indicated in both group discussion that the more the elderly have passed through hardships, the more they get stronger as they grow older and that helped them develop inner strength. When people are younger and are able to do things, they act with impulse and they have no time to think and reflect, they said. When people get older, it gets easier for them to forgive others, to handle different issues wisely and to look up for a higher purpose. The spiritual elders look and see beyond their own hurt and their own conditions, they argued.

It can be concluded from the discussion that those who do not bother about spiritual matters lose hope easily, they look down instead of up and lose heart. Those who are spiritually strong are able to pass difficult circumstances easily and they are able to see beyond their own weaknesses and capacities.

The elderly are good in practicing their beliefs and that makes them to go to confession for their sins and helps them to try their best to be near their creator. They pray, fast, worship and they are usually strong in their faith. God/Allah is their hope and their strength. From Loneliness, they transcend and constantly praying they soar to solitude, so that they can talk to and live with their Creator even while on earth.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Discussion

In line with its objectives, this study described the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elderly people facing the challenges of loneliness in Addis Ababa city. This study focused on the factors that contribute to the loneliness of the elderly, the effects of loneliness in the lives of the elderly, the elderly's understanding of spirituality, available sources of spirituality for the elders, spirituality as a coping mechanism for the elders who are faced with the challenges of loneliness and Spirituality as sources of growth and Transformation.

5.1. Factors Contributing to the Loneliness of Elderly

The finding show that the factors that contribute to the elders loneliness are grieving family members, their own health and their family members ill health, children moving away and in some cases poverty. Some elderly lost their spouses and some others lost their children which brought a lot of suffering and loneliness in their lives.

The death of family members like a spouse and children affects the elders immensely. Due to the closeness of these family members, the gap they leave in the lives of their dear elderly is obviously big. Therefore, these elders become lonely. In line with this, Savikko (2008) showed that older people face loneliness due to the death of a spouse and lack of friends. In addition, the elderly feel lonely due to the illness of their loved ones. Taking care of their ill close family members, seeing to their medication and attending to their needs makes the elderly feel lonely. Savikko (2008) added that older people taking care of their ill family members face loneliness.

In Ethiopia, as indicated by MOLSA (2006), extended family system is changing gradually to a nuclear one in the cities which left elderly parents on their own in their homes.

After the children grow up and get married or go away looking for jobs, the elderly live on their own faced with the challenges of loneliness. MOLSA further indicated the gradual change of extended family system to nuclear one due to industrialization, migration, education and modernization. This study shows the same reality in line with MOLSA. Being left at home on their own has exposed these elders to feel lonely.

It was also observed in the study that poverty has brought loneliness in the lives of some of the elders. The elders who did not have a regular employment earlier and who do not have any pension suffered lack of income.

With the change of extended family system which used to support the elderly and lack of social security for the elders in the country has brought economic challenges in the lives of the elderly which leads them to loneliness.

5.2 Effects of Loneliness in the Lives of The Elders

In the research it was observed that there were a lot of negative effects of loneliness in the lives of the elderly. Loneliness had brought distress in their lives which has affected the health of the elderly. Some of them suffer from high blood pressure, arthritis, feeling of being excluded, lack of energy and motivation. In line with this, Killeen (1998) showed negative side of loneliness in the alienation-connectedness continuum and stated that the negative side of loneliness are estrangement and alienation, a rejection by others or a feeling of a complete worthlessness. She added that loneliness ... is an "*emptiness due to an unfulfilled social and/or emotional life*".

The effects of loneliness has brought the elderly to get chronic sicknesses indicated above from which they suffer. Their sickness has made the elders complete dependent on injection and pills of the health centers/hospitals. In addition, lack of energy and motivation has made the

elders stay home which even aggravates their loneliness. The more they stayed at home, the more they feel excluded from the society. In line with disengagement theory, it is observed that due to lack of motivation and energy, the elderly isolate themselves from the society which even aggravates their loneliness. These effects have loneliness have affected the lives of the elderly negatively.

5.3 Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism

The finding shows that spirituality has given the elders an inner strength during the times of loneliness. It has given them a wisdom on how to manage their loneliness and it has given them hope in the times of difficulty. During the times of mourning and pain, it has helped the elderly to look beyond their pain and has helped them cross hard times with hope.

Spirituality had helped the elders to turn their loneliness into solitude and see beyond the challenges they face daily. It has kept them connected with other people and sharing ideas with others that gave them strength. Spirituality guided them to be hopeful beyond hopes and to be strong to cross difficulties and hardships. It has made them to believe that life is full of good things yet to come. Those who were spiritually strong elders and those who believed in the best of others go out to help others and they get hope from there. Spirituality has helped them not to give in to the difficulty that comes to their lives. Spiritually strong cannot give in to any hardship and nothing can break them down. There is hope and inner strength in spirituality. In line with this, Shiri (2011) stated that in crisis, the spiritual experience of the elders plays a vital role in keeping them strong. She added that spirituality as a coping mechanism becomes clear when faced with problems and when confronted with personal vulnerability; then the 'sacred' has something special to offer.

For all the elders, the source of spirituality is God/Allah. They added that God communicates to them through the scriptures both in the cases of Christians and Muslims. The word of God consoles and gives them strength. They stressed the importance of meditation and prayers for their spiritual growth. They added that spirituality is listening to one's inner voice that is good and positive and the willingness to act according to that inner voice. Spirituality is a power for human being that needs to be tapped. As Hagos expressed, for the elderly, spirituality has been a ladder which helps to climb up from sadness to happiness, from despair to hopefulness, to be able to continue to live life anew.

The elders have found spirituality not only as a coping mechanism for loneliness but also as a source of hope, peace and joy in their lives. For them, Spirituality is trusting in God/Allah and this makes them hopeful thus nothing disturbs them. Because, spirituality helps them to go beyond the challenges they face daily.

5.4 Spirituality as Sources of Growth and Transformation

The elders stated that their spirituality has helped them to grow and transform to a better people. In hard times, the elders were able to reflect and meditate before they acted that helped them pass through difficult times and helped them grow wiser. Focusing on God/Allah and the purpose of life helped them to grow. What makes sense in their lives is endeavoring to grow gracefully and transcending to their God. In line with this, Tornstam (1989) in his theory of gerotranscendence, stated that aging is a natural developmental process towards maturity and wisdom. The finding shows that the spiritual wellbeing, sense of purpose and sense of connectedness is part of the growth that is expressed by the elders in their lives. The elders expressed that they have become to be persons who forgive, and try to get meaning in their lives who are full of hopes and connected with their creator/God/Allah.

Vern, et al. (2009) stated that the elders in this stage of transcendence, become less occupied, more selective about social activities, develop a greater affinity with the past generations and take less interest in superfluous social interaction and become less interested in material things and developing a need for solitary meditation. The writers added that the elders gear experiences to spirituality and look on to meanings of profound, transcendent, transpersonal, sacred, or ultimate significance. The finding of the research confirms this. It can be seen from the interviews and the group discussions, the importance of spirituality as a coping mechanism in the times of loneliness was very much stressed. The elderly expressed that spirituality has helped them to look up and transcend beyond their challenges to get strength and consolation during their time of loneliness. They stated that spirituality has given them wisdom, secured them from drinking and other addictions and made them happy people. With spirituality, they became strong people who are resilient to difficulties and problems they face daily.

What Jewell A. (2004) depicted in his research, is observed in the responses of the elders in Yeka Subcity. Jewell showed a relationship between spirituality and successful ageing that should be regarded as a spiritual journey towards wholeness which can transcend what is usually regarded as ill health and adversity.

In the research, the finding can be concluded that spirituality as a coping mechanism can help the elderly to cope with loneliness and age gracefully and see the development and change in their lives as a process of growth that can still flourish when all other growth has stopped and the physical and mental powers begin to decline. Spirituality is a virtue that helps the elderly to observe life as a journey that goes beyond this world and transcends with joy, hope and peace.

CHAPTER SIX

6. Conclusion and Social Work Implication

6.1 Conclusion

The general objective of this study was to explore the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism on the lives of the elderly people who are challenged by loneliness and how they get meaning from this challenge.

In the research, it was observed that majority of the elders face the challenges of loneliness. The major factors that bring loneliness to the elders in Yeka Subcity were grieving family members, especially their spouses, their own and their family members ill health condition and in some cases poverty. Those elders who lost their spouses at early ages and who brought up their children on their own are the ones who mostly suffered loneliness for a long time and continue to suffer from it.

In the interviews, it was identified that loneliness had negative impact on the lives of the elderly in many ways. Some effects the elderly identified have robbed the happiness of most of the elderly. Some suffer from high blood pressure, some are stressed with sleep disturbances, lack of energy and motivation in life, feeling of excludedness which makes life hard for the elderly and feeling of a loner which made them stay at home. On the contrary, some have been resilient to the challenges of loneliness and have turned to their creator and tapped spirituality as a coping mechanism and have turned their loneliness into solitude.

All of the elderly people interviewed happened to be religious people. They said that they attended worshiping places often. These people perform different worshiping approaches according to their own interest and the requirements of their worshiping places. Attending the

worshiping places and performing different worshiping activities has helped them cope with their loneliness.

The understanding of the elderly on spirituality was also explored during the research. It was seen that the elderly's understanding of the spirituality in the context of their religion is wide and not limited to their own religions. From the interviews it was observed that the elders understood that spirituality is beyond religiosity and they stressed that spirituality is being connected to their creator and being connected to others. In this regard, looking beyond their own challenges, pains and looking to a higher power, and helping others and doing a good deeds were some of the definition they gave.

As indicated above, all of the elderly who participated in the interview were religious people. They stressed that spirituality can come from God/Allah and in believing in him. For them, the source of spirituality is their creator. Sources of spirituality available identified by the elders are their creator/God/Allah, their own worshiping places a good company of their family and friends.

For the development of their spirituality, it is observed that the elderly go to their worshiping places, read their scriptures and reflect on it, do meditation and visit sacred shrines.

The elderly have several ways of coping challenges in their lives. In this research it was observed that some spiritual books especially the scriptures were mostly used by the elders as they find consoling words in the word of God/Allah. They find the hopes and promises given in the scriptures to be consoling. Some of the elders found prayers during the time of challenges to be their coping mechanism. This is how Yohannes copes; *“Even if I get hungry and have no food to eat, I pray and that keeps me going, my hunger just goes away. This is my secret: I prepares clean water in a bottle, I say all my daily prayers, I say additional prayer over the water, then*

that is turned into a holy water; I drink some from it and wash with the remaining. That gives me strength and keeps me going. 'Man does not live on bread alone, Lk 4:4''

The feeling of the nearness of God/Allah helps some elders going in difficult times. They believe that the power of God, his love and protection keeps them to cope with difficulties. Some elders said that being connected with other people and sharing of ideas with others gives them strength.

The main objective of this research was to explore spirituality as a coping mechanism in the times of loneliness in the lives of the elderly. It was observed that all of the elders who have been interviewed and all the participants in the 2 focus group discussions have stressed the importance of spirituality in the lives of the elders and its importance as a coping mechanism in the times of loneliness. On this regard, the elders stressed how spirituality has helped them to deal with loneliness by helping them look beyond their challenges, how it gave them strength and consolation during their time of loneliness. It has given them wisdom, protected them from drinking and related addictions, made them persons of integrity, made their lives stable and happy, it has been a source of strength, linked them with the higher power, enabled them to see beyond, made them resilient to difficulties and come out stronger, helped them see life to be more than loneliness, helped them to go out to help others.

From the Focus Group Discussion, it was observed that spirituality was more than religiosity and the group participants saw it to be reflecting and listening to our inner voice that is our best and positive, and acting according to that. Most of the elders have turned their loneliness into solitude and they are aging gracefully. As they are religious people, they are mostly focused on life after death. The burden of taking responsibility of the family is reduced from their shoulders. Therefore, the elderly have time to look up higher and their focus is fixed

to their creator to get closer to him. Spirituality has been a source of hope, peace and joy for them. It has given them a sense of purpose and connectedness in their lives. Connectedness to God/Allah/creator has inspired them to go from sadness to happiness, from despair to hope and from impatience to patience. They transcend from loneliness to solitude to be connected to their creator.

6.2 Social Work Implication

It is notable that the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (NASW, 2005). It is observed from the interviews, group discussion and the literature reviews that most of the elders experience loneliness and they are vulnerable to it.

This research shows that spirituality has been a coping mechanism for the elderly who were challenged by loneliness. Since the study found spirituality to be an important factor in playing a role as coping mechanism from loneliness for the elderly, it is recommended that further research on a larger scale on this area would be valuable and important to understand the issue in depth. The researcher wonders if this research was done with a larger and generalizable sample, what the result of the study would be.

Social Workers who are working with the elderly should take the importance of spirituality in the elder's life journey. The government and non-governmental bodies who work for and with elders should encourage the elderly to tap into the spiritual aspect of their lives and develop more into spirituality in order to transcend beyond the challenges they face daily.

The finding also implies that Social Work Education could add spirituality as a coping mechanism for older people challenged by loneliness into its list of courses. As indicated in the

literature review, the numbers of the elderly people is growing very fast and focusing on education that relates to help the older people are much needed. Thus, the role of School of Social Work is high to enforce the issue the older people challenged by loneliness and to inculcate to its trainees the importance of spirituality as a coping mechanism and how it could help them transcend of all the challenges they face in their lives and to maintain their wellbeing is vital.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

My name is Felekech Bezabih and I am a Social Work graduate student at Addis Ababa University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study exploring the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism for the challenges of loneliness. The data collected from your participation will help fulfill the requirements for a Master of Social Work at Addis Ababa University. Your participation in the study will involve to be interviewed for estimated length of sixty to ninety minutes. The interview will be audio recorded for later analysis.

Regarding your privacy, your participation in this study and your responses will be kept confidential. Your actual name will not be cited in any reference to keep your privacy. This document and any notes or recordings that might personally identify you as a participant in this study will be kept in a protected place that only the researcher will have access to.

Regarding risks and benefits, the researcher does not see any physical risk for those who participate in the study. However if you experience a negative reaction, you may choose to skip the question, to withdraw from the study. On the other hand, the benefits that the participants are expected to obtain are feeling of satisfaction for their altruistic activity of sharing their experiences that has contribution to know about elder spirituality as a coping mechanism for the challenge of loneliness, for getting attention to their experiences as an elder, and having the opportunity to have their voices heard on this topic. If you have any question or concerns, you may contact the researcher.

Please, by signing below you agree that you have read and understood the above information, and would be interested in participating in this study.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Thank you for your participation,

Felekech Bezabih

Email- srfele@yahoo.com

Phone no. – 09 17 84 11 81

Appendix 2: Interview Guide Questions for Spirituality

Guiding Questions

I. In-depth Interview Checklist for the Elderly

I. Introduction, Establishing rapport, Clarification about the interview process

Personal profile of participant

Name _____

1. Sex Male _____ Female _____
2. Age in year _____
3. Place of birth: region _____ Zone _____ Woreda _____ Kebele _____
4. Marital status: Married (in relationship) _____ Single _____ Separated _____
Divorce _____ Widow _____
5. Religion: Orthodox _____ Muslim _____ Catholic _____ Protestant _____ Others _____
6. Educational attainment: Illiterate _____ Read and write _____ Primary level _____
Secondary level _____ Tertiary Level _____
7. Number of children alive Female _____ Male _____

8. Do you have a child/ children? _____

If yes, how many children do you have? _____

9. With whom are you living currently? _____

II. Loneliness:

- Do you feel lonely? If yes, how often do you feel lonely?
- What is the factor that contributes to your loneliness?
- How does it impact your life?
- How long since you experienced this/loneliness?
- What is your social contact with other people?

III. Religious/spiritual Activities

- How often do you attend a place for religious practice, such as a church, temple, mosque, or a ceremonial site in nature? Please describe.
- What kinds of religious activities do you perform (alone or with a spiritual group)?
- In what ways do you find these activities helpful for loneliness you face?

IV. Being spiritual and the extent of spirituality

- Please describe your current understanding of being spiritual.
- Do you consider yourself as a spiritual person? _____ If yes, to what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?
- When you experienced loss, grief or crisis, what did you do?
- When you have been at a time of crisis previously, what spiritual or religious supports helped you most? Would these supports be helpful to you now?
- How did your spiritual life help or hinder you in dealing with that?

V. Coping –

- How do you deal with challenges especially loneliness?
- Does spirituality give meaning and purpose to your life? If yes, how?
- Where do you look for strength to cope with the challenges you are face?
- How does the aspect of your spirituality help you in maintaining your hope and inner strength during the time of challenges?
- What currently brings a sense of meaning and purpose to your life?

VI. Spiritual Sources of Support

- What spiritual sources of support would be useful for you now? These might relate to your inner strengths, spiritual practices, family, religious or spiritual communities, nature, or the sacred realm, however you understand that.
- When you have spiritual concerns, whom do you talk to or whom would you talk to if you could?
- What spiritual sources give you a sense of protection, comfort, and reassurance?

VII. Mechanisms of spirituality influencing coping mechanism in the times of loneliness:

- How does spirituality influence your coping mechanism in times of loneliness?

VIII. Spirituality and being hopeful in the time of loneliness?

- Does your being spiritual help in maintaining hopeful in the time of loneliness? If yes, please explain.
- What are the most important sources of strength and help for you in getting through tough times of difficulty or crisis?

- What were your sources of peace, joy, and strength in time of past trouble that helped you get through and how can they be applied to loneliness? Examples please.
- What have been the most profound and moving experiences that gave you a sense of peace, wisdom, insight, or grace? Please describe them.

IX. Spiritual Sources of Transformation

- What spiritual sources help you to grow, change, and thrive?
- What spiritual sources help you to break through at times when you feel stuck in life?
- What helps you to forgive and to experience forgiveness?
- What helps you to work through feelings of loss, grief, anger, despair, or crisis into recovery, joy, hope, and new life?

X. Spiritual Well-being

- How clear is your sense of meaning and purpose in life? Please explain how your spirituality relates to this.
- How often do you feel like life is joyful and worthwhile? Please explain how your spirituality relates to this.
- How strongly do you feel a connection with something inspiring that is greater than yourself, like God, Allah, nature, or sacredness? Please explain.

XI. Ending

- Anything you want to mention?
- Do you have any question for me?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview!

Focus Group Discussion Guiding Questions

Two focus group discussions were held with heterogeneous groups composed of six and nine group of people who resided in the same Sub City. The questions are the same as In-depth Interview Checklist for the elderly listed above excluding the Personal profile of participant. The reason the check list is the same was to make it easier for later processing of the data.

1. Loneliness:

- Do the elderly feel lonely, how often do you think they feel lonely?
- How does it impact their lives?

2. Religious spiritual Activities

- How often do the elderly attend a place for religious practice, such as a church, temple, mosque, or a ceremonial site in nature? Please describe.
- What kinds of religious activities do they perform individually or with a spiritual group?
- In what ways do they find these activities helpful for loneliness they face?

3. Being spiritual and the extent of spirituality

- a. Please describe your current understanding of being spiritual.
 - What kind of elder do you consider to be a spiritual person?
 - When faced crisis, what spiritual or religious supports helped elders most? Would these supports be helpful to now?
 - When you elders experienced times of loss, grief, or crisis, how did their spiritual life help or hinder them in dealing with that?

4. Coping

- How do elders deal with challenges especially loneliness?
- Does spirituality give meaning and purpose to the lives of the elders? How?
- Where do they look for strength to cope with the challenges they are face?
- How does the aspect of their spirituality help them in maintaining their hope and inner strength during the time of challenges?

5. Spiritual Sources of Support

- What spiritual sources of support would be useful for you now? These might relate to your inner strengths, spiritual practices, family, religious or spiritual communities, nature, or the sacred realm, however you understand that.
- When you have religious or spiritual concerns, whom do you talk to or whom would you talk to if you could?
- What religious or spiritual sources give you a sense of protection, comfort, and reassurance?

6. Mechanisms of spirituality influencing coping mechanism in the times of loneliness:

- How does spirituality influence the elders coping mechanism in times of loneliness?

7. Spirituality and being hopeful in the time of loneliness?

- Does their being spiritual help in maintaining hopeful in the time of loneliness? Please explain.
- What are the most important sources of strength and help for the elderly in getting through tough times of difficulty or crisis?

- What are their sources of peace, joy, and strength in times of trouble that help them get through and how can they be applied to loneliness? Examples please.

8. Spiritual Sources of growth and Transformation

- What spiritual sources help them to grow, change, and thrive?
- What helps them to forgive and to experience forgiveness?
- What helps them to work through feelings of loss, grief, anger, despair, or crisis into recovery, joy, hope, and new life?

9. Spiritual Well-being

- How clear is the orderly's sense of meaning and purpose in life? Please explain how their spirituality relates to this.
- How often do they feel like life is joyful and worthwhile? Please explain how their spirituality relates to this.
- How strongly do they feel a connection with something inspiring that is greater than themselves, like God, Alah, nature, or sacredness? Please explain.

10. Ending

- Anything you want to mention?
- Do you have any question for me?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview!

Appendix 3: Amharic Translation of Consent Form and Guiding Questions

የተሳትፎ ፈቃደኝነት መጠየቂያ /ስምምነት/ ቅፅ

ስሜ ፈለቀች በዛብህ ሲሆን በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ የሶሻል ወርክ ዲፓርትመንት የሶሻል ወርክ የማስተርስ ፕሮግራም ተማሪ ነኝ። በዚህ የመጠይቅ ስምምነት ቅፅ መንፈሳዊነት በአረጋዊያን ህይወት ውስጥ ብቸኝነትን ለመቋቋም ምን ያህል ሚና እንደሚጫወት የሚመረምረው ጥናት ውስጥ እንዲሳተፉ የጋብዘኖት ሲሆን ከእርሶ የሚገኘው መረጃ ለሶሻል ወርክ የማስተርስ ፕሮግራም ማሟያ የምርምር ጥናት ግብአት እንደሚሆን ልገሌፅልዎ እወዳለሁ። በዚህ ጥናት ተሳትፎዎ ለቃለመጠይቆቹ ምላሽ መስጠት ይሆናል። ቃለመጠይቁ በግምት ከስልሳ እስከ ዘጠና ደቂቃ ሊወስድ ይችላል። ቃለመጠይቁ ለመረጃ ትንተና ጥቅም ሲባል በድምፅ የሚቀዳም ይሆናል።

ሚስጥራዊነትን በተመለከተ በዚህ ጥናት በመሳተፍ ለቃለመጠይቁ የሚሰጡአቸው ምላሾች ሚስጥራዊነታቸው ይጠበቃል። ስምዎት በማንኛውም ሁኔታ በጥናት ፅሁፍ ውስጥ አይጠቀስም። ማንኛውም የእርሶን ማንነት ያካተቱ የድምፅ መረጃዎች የጥናቱ አጥኚ ብቻ ሊያገኛቸው በሚችልበት ቦታ ይቀመጣሉ። ከጥናቱ ጋር በተያያዘ ጉዳት እና ጥቅምን በተመለከተ ከጥናቱ ጋር የተያያዘ አካላዊ ጉዳት አይኖርም፤ ነገር ግን ምናልባት አንዳንድ ቃለመጠይቁን ጥያቄዎች ከመመለስ ጋር በተያያዘ ሙግት፣ አለመስማማት እና አሉታዊ የሆኑ ስሜት ሉኖሩ ይችላሉ። እንደነዚህ አይነት አሉታዊ ስሜቶች በሚኖሩበት ጊዜ ጥያቄዎችን እንዲመልሱ አይገደዱም። መመለስ የማይፈልጓቸውን ጥያቄዎች የመዘለልም ሆነ ተሳትፎን የማቋረጥ መብትዎ የተጠበቀ ነው። ጥቅማጥቅምን በተመለከተ በዚህ ጥናት በመሳተፍ የሚያገኙት ቀጥተኛ የሆነ ጥቅማጥቅም የሌለ መሆኑን እገልጻለሁ። በሌላ መልኩ ለዚህ ጥናት በመሳተፍዎ መንፈሳዊነት በአረጋዊያን ህይወት ውስጥ ብቸኝነትን ለመቋቋም ምን ያህል ሚና እንደሚጫወት የሚመረምረው ጥናት ውስጥ ስለተሳተፉና ለጥናቱ ተባባሪ ስለሆኑ የመንፈስ እርካታ ይሰጥዎታል። ማንኛውም ጥያቄ እና ሀሳብ ካለዎት የጥናቱን አጥኚ በስልክም ሆነ በአካል ማግኘት ይችላሉ።

ስም _____
ፊርማ _____
ቀን _____

ስለ ተሳትፎዎ ከልብ አመሰግናለሁ፤ እ/ር ይስጥልኝ።

የጥናቱ አጥኚ ስም: ፈለቀች በዛብህ
ስልክ: 09 17 84 11 81

የቃለመጠይቁ መሪ ነጥቦች

I. የተሳታፊዎች መሠረታዊ መረጃ

ስም _____

1. ፆታ ሀ/ወንድ ለ/ ሴት
2. ዕድሜ _____
3. የተወለዱበት ቦታ: ክልል _____ ዞን _____ ወረዳ _____
ከበሌ _____
4. የጋብቻ ሁኔታ: ሀ/ ያገባ ለ/ ያላገባ ሐ/ የተለያየ መ/ የተፋታ
ሠ/መበለት/ሚስት የሞተበት
5. ሀይማኖት ሀ/ ኦርቶዶክስ ለ/ ሙስሊም ሐ/ ካቶሊክ መ/ ፕሮቴስታንት ሠ/ ሌላ

6. የትምህርት ደረጃ: ሀ/ ያልተማረ ለ/ ማንበብና መጻፍ የሚችል ሐ/ አንደኛ ደረጃ
መ/ መ.ሁለተኛ ደረጃ ሠ /ሁለተኛ ደረጃ ረ/ 3ኛ ደረጃ
7. ልጆች አሉዎትን? ካሉዎት በህይወት ያሉ ስንት ናቸው ወንድ _____ ሴት _____
8. አሁን እርሶ ከማን ጋር ይኖራሉ? _____

II. ብቸኝነትን በተመለከተ

1. ብቸኝነት ተሰምቶዎት ያውቃል? መቼመቼ/ በየስንት ጊዜ?
2. ብቸኝነት እንዲሰማዎ የሚያደርግ ምክንያት ምንድን ነው?
3. በሕይወትዎ ላይ ያሳደረው ተፅዕኖ አለ?
4. ይህ የብቸኝነት ስሜት ከጀመረዎ ምን ያህል ጊዜ ይሆነዋል?
5. ማህበራዊ ግንኙነትዎ ምን ይመስላል?

III. ሐይማኖታዊ እንቅስቃሴዎችን በተመለከተ፡

1. የሐይማኖት አምልኮ ቦታዎችን ማለት ቤ/ክንን፣ መስኪድን ወይም ቸርችን ምን ያህል ያዘወትራሉ? እባክዎ ይግለጹ፡፡
2. እርሶ ምን አይነት አምልኮ ነው የሚያደርጉት /የሚያከናውኑት?
3. እርሶ የሚያደርጉት አምልኮ ብቸኝነት በሚሰማዎ ጊዜ በምን መልኩ ረዳት?

IV. የመንፈሳዊነት ደረጃ

1. መንፈሳዊነት ማለት ለእርሶ ምን ማለት ነው?
2. “እኔ መንፈሳዊ ሰው ነኝ” ብለው ያስባሉ? መንፈሳዊ ነኝ ካሉ እስከምን ድረስ?
3. በከባዱ ጊዜና በሐዘን ጊዜ ለመቋቋም ምን ያደርጋሉ?
4. ከዚህ በፊት ባለዎ ልምድ በሐዘን ወይም በከባድ ጊዜ የትኛው የሐይማኖት ወይም መንፈሳዊ ነገር አሻግሮኛል ይላሉ?
5. “በከባዱ ጊዜ መንፈሳዊነት ረድቶኛል” የሚሉበት መንገድ ካለ ይግለጹ፡፡

V. ብቸኝነትን መቋቋም

1. የህይወት ተግዳሮቶችን በተለይ ብቸኝነትን እንዴት ይቋቋሙታል?
2. መንፈሳዊነት ለህይወትዎ ትርጉም ይሰጣልን?
3. በከባዱ ጊዜ ብርታትና ጥንካሬን ከወዴት ይፈልጋሉ?
4. መንፈሳዊነት በምን መልኩ ነው በህይወት ተግዳሮቶች ውስጥ ተስፋና የውስጥ ጥንካሬን የሚሰጠው?
5. በአሁኑ ጊዜ ለህይወትዎ ዓላማ ትርጉም የሚሰጥዎ ምንድን ነው?

VI. መንፈሳዊ ድጋፎች መገኛቸው

1. አሁን ለእርሶ ምን አይነት መንፈሳዊ ድጋፍ ይጠቅምዎ ነበር?

2. መንፈሳዊ ጉዳዮች ሲኖሩዎ ማንን ነው የሚያማክሩት ወይም ማማከር የሚፈልጉት?

3. ከየት የሚመነጭ መንፈሳዊነት ነው ለእርሶ ከለላ የሚሆን? የሚያፅናናዎና የሚያረጋጋዎ?

VII. መንፈሳዊነት ብቸኝነትን ለመቋቋም ያለው ሚና

1. በምን መልኩና እንዴት መንፈሳዊነት ብቸኝነትን ለመቋቋም ድጋፍ ሊያበረክት ይችላል?

VIII. መንፈሳዊነትና በብቸኝነቱ ጊዜ ተስፋ ማድረግ

1. መንፈሳዊነት በብቸኝነቱ ጊዜ ተስፋ እንዲያደርጉ ይረዳዎታልን? ከሆነም በምን መልኩ?

2. ለእርሶ አስፈላጊ የሚሉዎቸው ከባዱን ጊዜ ለማለፍ የብርታት ምንጮቹ ናቸው የምሏቸው እነምንድን ናቸው?

3. በችግርና በመከራ ጊዜ የሰላም፣ የደስታና የጥንካሬ ምንጮች ሆነው የረዱዎት ነገሮች፣ አሁን ለብቸኝነትስ ያገለግላዎ ይሆን? በምሳሌ ያስረዱ እባክዎ።

4. በህይወቴ በጣም የነካኝ ሰላምን፣ ጥበብን፣ ብርሃንን፣ ፀጋን የሰጠኝ የሚሉት አጋጣሚ አስታውሰው ያካፍሉ እባክዎ።

IX. መንፈሳዊነት እንደ የህይወት ለውጥ ምንጭ

1. ምን አይነት የመንፈሳዊ ነገር (ከየት የሚመነጭ) ነው ለእርሶ ለማደግና ለመለወጥ የሚረዳዎ?

2. የሰመጥኩ መስሎ በታየኝ ጊዜ ሰብሬ እንዲወጣ ረድቶኛል የሚሉት የመንፈሳዊነት ምንጭ የቱ ነው?

3. ይቅርታ ለማድረግና ይቅር ለመባል የሚረዳዎ ምንድን ነው?

4. ከሐዘን፣ ከንዴትና ተስፋ ከመቁረጥ ወደ ደስታ፣ ወደ ተስፋና ወደ አዲስ ህይወት እንዲጓዙ የሚረዳዎ ምንድን ነው?

X. መንፈሳዊ ጤናማነት

1. የህይወትዎ አላማ ለእርሶ የቱን ያህል ትርጉም ይሰጥዎታል? ይህ ከመንፈሳዊነት ጋር ይያያዛልን? እባክዎ ይገለጹ።
2. ምን ያህል ጊዜ ህይወት ደስታና ትርጉም ያለው ነገር ነው ብለው አስበው ያውቃሉ? ይህ ከመንፈሳዊነት ጋር ይያያዛልን? እባክዎ ይገለጹ።
3. ከእርሶ በላይ ለሆነው በመንፈስ ለሚያጸናዎ /አምላክ፣ አላህ፣ መንፈስ ቅዱስ/ ቅርብ ነኝ ወይም ሁልጊዜ ከሱ ጋር ተያይዣለሁ ብለው አስበው ያውቃሉ? እባክዎ ይገለጹ።

XI. መደምደሚያ

1. የሚጨምሩልኝ ነገር ካለ ወይም
2. ጥያቄ ካለዎ?

ጊዜዎትን ሰውተው ይህንን ቃለመጠይቅ ለመመለስ ስለተባበሩኝ ከልብ ለማመስገን እወዳለሁ።

የግሩፕ ቃለመጠይቅ

I. ብቸኝነትን በተመለከተ

1. አረጋዊያን ብቸኝነት ይሰማቸዋል? መቼ/በየሰንት ጊዜ?
2. በሕይወታቸው ላይ ያሳደረው ተፅዕኖ አለ?
3. ማህበራዊ ግንኙነታቸው ምን ይመስላል?

II. ሐይማኖታዊ እንቅስቃሴዎችን በተመለከተ:

1. አረጋዊያን የሐይማኖት አምልኮ ቦታዎችን ማለት ቤ/ክንን፣ መስኪድን ወይም ቸርችን ምን ያህል ያዘወትራሉ?
2. ብዙዎቹ ምን አይነት አምልኮ ነው የሚያደርጉት /የሚያከናውኑት?
3. እነርሱ የሚያደርጉት አምልኮ ብቸኝነት በሚሰማቸው ጊዜ በምን መልኩ ይረዳቸዋል?

III. የመንፈሳዊነት ደረጃ

1. መንፈሳዊነት ማለት ለእነርሱ ምን ማለት ነው?
2. በከባዱ ጊዜና በሐዘን ጊዜ ለመቋቋም አረጋዊያን ምን ያደርጋሉ?
3. አረጋዊያን በሐዘን ወይም በከባድ ጊዜ የሚያሻግራቸው ምንድን ነው?
4. “በከባዱ ጊዜ መንፈሳዊነት ያሻግራቸዋል” የሚሉበት መንገድ ካለ ይገለፁ::

IV. ብቸኝነትን መቋቋም

1. አረጋዊያን የህይወት ተግዳሮቶችን በተለይ ብቸኝነትን እንዴት ይቋቋሙታል?
2. መንፈሳዊነት ለህይወታቸው በምን መልኩ ትርጉም ይሰጣል?
3. በከባዱ ጊዜ ብርታትና ጥንካሬን ከወዴት አረጋዊያን ከወዴት ይፈልጋሉ?
4. መንፈሳዊነት በምን መልኩ ነው በህይወት ተግዳሮቶች ውስጥ ተስፋና የውስጥ ጥንካሬን የሚሰጠው?

V. መንፈሳዊ ድጋፎች መገኛቸው

1. ለአረጋዊያን በአሁኑ ጊዜ ምን አይነት መንፈሳዊ ድጋፍ ይጠቅም ነበር?
2. አረጋዊያን ብዙ ጊዜ መንፈሳዊ ጉዳዮች ሲኖራቸው ማንን ነው የሚያማክሩት ወይም ማማከር የሚፈልጉት?
3. ከየት የሚመነጭ መንፈሳዊነት ነው ለእነሱ ከለላ የሚሆን፣ የሚያፅናናቸውና የሚያረጋጋቸው?

VI. መንፈሳዊነት ብቸኝነትን ለመቋቋም ያለው ሚና

1. በምን መልኩና እንዴት መንፈሳዊነት ብቸኝነትን ለመቋቋም ድጋፍ ሊያበረክት ይችላል? እባክዎ ያስረዱ::

VII. መንፈሳዊነትና በብቸኝነቱ ጊዜ ተስፋ ማድረግ

1. መንፈሳዊነትታው በብቸኝነቱ ጊዜ ተስፋ እንዲያደርጉ ይረዳቸዋልን? ከሆነም በምን መልኩ?
2. ለአረጋዊያኑ አስፈላጊ የሆኑ ከባዱን ጊዜ ለማለፍ የብርታት ምንጮቹ ናቸው የምትሏቸው እነምንድን ናቸው?
3. በችግርና በመከራ ጊዜ የሰላም፣ የደስታና የጥንካሬ ምንጮች ሆነው የሚረዷቸው ነገሮች ምን ምንድን ነቸው፣ በምሳሌ ያስረዱ እባክዎ::

VIII. መንፈሳዊነት እንደ የህይወት ለውጥ ምንጭ

1. ምን አይነት የመንፈሳዊ ነገር (ከየት የሚመነጭ) ነው ለአረጋዊያኑ ለማደግና ለመለወጥ የሚረዳቸው?

- 2. ችግር ውስጥ ዘፍቀው በገቡ ጊዜ ሰብረው እንዲወጡ የሚረዳቸው የመንፈሳዊነት ምንጭ የቱ ነው?
- 3. ይቅርታ ለማድረግና ይቅር ለመባል የሚረዳቸው ምንድን ነው?
- 4. ከሐዘን፣ ከንዴትና ተስፋ ከመቁረጥ ወደ ደስታ፣ ወደ ተስፋና ወደ አዲስ ህይወት እንዲጓዙ የሚረዳቸው ምንድን ነው?

IX. መንፈሳዊ ጤናማነት

- 1. የህይወት አላማ ለአረጋዊያኑ የቱን ያህል ትርጉም ይሰጣቸዋል? ይህ ከመንፈሳዊነት ጋር ይያያዛልን? እባክዎ ይገለጹ።
- 2. አረጋዊያን ምን ያህል ጊዜ ህይወት ደስታና ትርጉም ያለው ነገር ነው ብለው አስበው ያውቃሉ? ይህ ከመንፈሳዊነት ጋር ይያያዛልን? እባክዎ ይገለጹ።
- 3. አረጋዊያኑ ከእነርሱ በላይ ለሆነው በመንፈስ ለሚያጸናቸው /አምላክ፣ አላህ፣ መንፈስ ቅዱስ/ ቅርብ ነኝ ወይም ሁልጊዜ ከሱ ጋር ተያይዣለሁ ብለው አስበው ያውቃሉ? እባክዎ ይገለጹ።

X. መደምደሚያ

- 1. የሚጨምሩልኝ ነገር ካለ ወይም
- 2. ጥያቄ ካላቸው?

ጊዜያችሁን ሰውታችሁ ይህንን ቃለመጠይቅ ለመመለስ ስለተባበራችሁኝ ከልብ ለማመስገን እወዳለሁ።