

Exploring meaning in life amongst tribal leaders in a Sepedi context

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Mini-dissertation accepted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Positive
Psychology at the North-West University

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Declaration by Researcher

I, Khomotso Germina Khoza, hereby declare that this research study: *Exploring meaning in life amongst tribal leaders in a Sepedi context*, is a product of my own and has not been submitted to any other institution for examination.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kg Khoza', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

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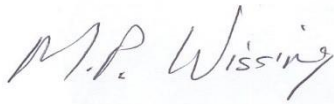
Khomotso Khoza

Letter of Permission

The co-authors hereby give permission to the first author to submit this article for purposes of a mini-dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Magister Artium in Positive Psychology*. The first author contributed to theme development, wrote the major part of the literature review, conducted the qualitative analyses, and interpreted the findings. She drafted the manuscript and incorporated suggestions and guidelines from the co-authors into the manuscript.

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Declaration by the language editor



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To whom it may concern

March 2021

This is to testify that the master's dissertation titled

‘Exploring meaning in life amongst tribal leaders in a Sepedi context’

by

Khomotso Khoza

has been professionally language edited.

The language practitioner in question is registered at the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) with membership number 1003382 and thereby fully qualified and authorised to provide said services.

Should there be any queries, please feel free to contact the language practitioner at the number provided below.

Kind regards

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Preface

This mini-dissertation is submitted in article format as indicated in the 2021 General Academic Rules (A4.10.5 and A4.10.8) of the North-West University. The mini-dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master of Arts degree requirements in Positive Psychology, where it accounts for 60 of the total 180 course credits. The manuscript has been prepared as per the South African Journal of Psychology requirements, to which it will be submitted. Although the manuscript in Section 2 meets the selected journal's requirements, some exceptions are made for the purpose of the mini-dissertation, especially regarding the manuscript's length, which exceeds the intended journal's prescribed length. In addition, the referencing and formatting of the mini-dissertation have been done according to the guidelines provided in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition*, for the sake of uniformity.

For this mini-dissertation, the page numbering of the whole mini-dissertation is consecutive. However, for submission purposes to the selected journal, the manuscript will be numbered starting from page one. Before submission to the journal, the document will be shortened. The mini-dissertation consists of three sections. Section 1 covers the initial stage of the research in preparation for the main phase and consists of the research proposal and the ethics application as approved by the relevant committees. Section 2 includes the research report as per article format for examination purposes, and Section 3 provides the conclusion of and recommendations from the study and a reflection on the research process.

Summary

Keywords: Meaning in life, Culture, Africa, Sepedi, Tribal leaders, COVID-19

Meaning in life is a construct of fundamental importance in positive psychology.

Meaning in life is often considered to consist of three aspects: one's life has value and significance, one has a larger purpose in life, and one's life is coherent. Although there is a preponderance of literature on meaning in Western countries, there is minimal evidence from specific cultural groups such as tribal leaders in the Sepedi context in the Limpopo province of South Africa.

Theories on meaning in life need to consider cultural values when looking at, for example, the sources of meaning in life. Individualism and self-sufficiency focus on the individual as a separate being and characterise the Western cultural contexts. In contrast, the African cultural context is characterised by respecting community concord above personal preferences. Cultural differences can influence how people develop meaning in their lives and how they view their world.

In view of the lack of contextualised bottom-up research on meaning in life in African groups, and the importance of cultural values in the manifestations of meaning, the study aimed to explore experiences of meaning in life among the tribal leaders in a Sepedi context and investigate the unique cultural sources of meaning in life. The explanations of the experiences of meaning in life in the Sepedi context were attained by collecting qualitative data.

A qualitative descriptive research design was applied, and ten participants were selected using non-probability purposive sampling. The data were gathered using semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to code the data and organise the data into coherent themes.

The study found that the Sepedi tribal leaders experience meaning through familial interaction and support (these familial bonds include friends and neighbours), commitment to

and appreciation of spiritual beliefs, community reciprocal and leisure activities, and community members. Traditional celebration (culture preservation, cultural rituals, and social bonding in the community) and proverbs were revealed as unique cultural sources of meaning in life. Alternative ways of support and appreciation provided meaning for tribal leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While very informative, the findings are limited to the Moletjie context and cannot be generalised to tribal leaders in other communities. Different conclusions may emerge if the study is replicated in another Sepedi or other African community. However, the current research findings are relevant for practice in this and possibly similar contexts and display the need for further studies in other African contexts, using similar theoretical and empirical approaches.

The study contributed to the existing knowledge of meaning in life. A key contribution is that the study produces additional evidence on the role of culture in experiences of meaning in life. Relationships emerged as very important in participants' experiences of meaning in life, which corresponds with other research, but experiencing meaning when children realise their goals is noteworthy. This is a form of generativity that goes beyond providing for family members' needs to prioritising their goal accomplishment. Within familial interaction, the value of respect in holding together the family has been highlighted. This corresponds with other studies on family in the African context.

Section 1

Background Orientation

This mini-dissertation is submitted in article format as indicated in the 2021 General Academic Rules (A4.4.2 and A4.10.5) of the North-West University. This section will present material that was submitted to the various approval bodies as part of the initial phase of the research process. After approval had been obtained, the main research report for examination, which will be presented in Section 2, was developed in article format.

A research proposal was developed that was firstly approved by a subject research group and secondly by the Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research (AUPeR) Scientific Committee. After approval of the proposal by the AUPeR Scientific Committee, an application for ethics approval of the study was prepared and submitted to the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University. The approved documentations are included in this section with some minor technical editing. The appendices specified in the HREC application are not included in this mini-dissertation. The referencing and formatting of the research proposal have been done according to the guidelines provided in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition*.

The overlap between these documents will be apparent and the documents also overlap with parts of the manuscript in Section 2. The research proposal, ethics application, and manuscript for examination all concern the same research project in different phases, with the manuscript in Section 2 being the final research report. Section 3 presents conclusions, recommendations, and a reflection.

Approved Protocol for this Study



Cover Page for Research Proposal	
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Discipline	Positive Psychology
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Title of thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation	Exploring the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context		
Study leader/promoter	Dr. A. Wilson Fadiji		
Help-/co-leader/promoter	Prof. M. P. Wissing Prof. L Schutte		
Number of times of submission of this protocol (Mark were applicable)	1 st	X	
	2 nd		
	3 rd		
Does this project fall under a greater umbrella project?		Yes	
		No	x
If yes, Ethical number of the umbrella project			
Title of the umbrella project			
Leader of the umbrella project			
Specific aims of an umbrella project whereby this study links			

Will new data be collected?		Yes	X
		No	
Names of small group panel within the school/unit that approved this research protocol (before sending to AUTHeR)	1	Prof. Marie Wissing	
	2	Prof. Schutte, L.	
	3	Ms. Liversage, L.	
	4	Ms. Cromhout	
	5		
Date of approval by the panel as mentioned above			

Executive Summary

Researchers in positive psychology usually consider meaning as one of the aspects of happiness or the good life. The ability to find meaning and purpose in life has been defined as making sense of one's life and is a fundamental mechanism for handling hardship. Although there is a preponderance of literature on meaning in Western countries, there is minimal evidence from specific cultural groups such as tribal leaders in the Sepedi context in the Limpopo province, South Africa. Given that the study aims to understand experiences among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context, the intended research will use qualitative research techniques and apply an exploratory research design. This study's aims can best be achieved by speaking directly with people and permitting them to tell their stories free from the researcher's anticipations or biases encountered in the literature. Participants will be recruited through a purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews will be used to collect data telephonically, and thematic analysis will be used to analyse the data. The proposed study seeks to add to existing knowledge on meaning in life from a culture-sensitive perspective.

Keywords: meaning in life, culture, tribal leaders, Sepedi context

1. Title

Exploring the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context

2. Introduction and Problem Statement

Meaning in life is a construct with fundamental importance in positive psychology. The ability to search out meaning and purpose in life has been defined as creating a sense of one's life (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013) and is a fundamental mechanism for handling hardship (Kalayjian & Eugene, 2010). Mason (2013) views meaning as a desire for individuals to produce behaviour that focuses on influencing others in a meaningful way. Consequently, meaning on a personal level can be understood as how a person recognises others' existence, lives with respect to others, and focuses on goals and attainment of purposes, all of which occur without harming others (Mason, 2013). Steger (2009) defines meaning as the degree to which human beings realise, experience, or see the importance in their lives and the degree to which they understand themselves to have a purpose. Thus, meaning provides us with a sense that our lives are essential.

Steger (2009) also indicated that meaning refers to a web of networks, understandings, and explanations that help us comprehend our experience and frame plans and direct our energies to the achievement of our anticipated future. Steger (2009, p. 20) defines cognitive components of meaning in life as "the understanding that we develop of who we are, what the world is like and how we fit in with and relate to the grand schemes of things". Thus, one of the imaginary traits of the comprehension component of meaning in life is the knowledge that oneself is essential.

Steger, Oishi, and Kashdan (2009) specified some transformations in meaning in life among four life stages: emerging adulthood, early adulthood, middle-age, and older adulthood.

Younger people are likely to report higher levels of searching for meaning. At the same time, those in later phases indicate a more significant presence of meaning in life.

It is important to note that individuals derive meaning differently. Sources of meaning tend to differ based on shared values and cultural tendencies, both of which are crucial to how individuals make sense of their world. What is unknown is the understanding of meaning in life among traditional leaders, who are constantly navigating the cultural contours of their context, and whether their understanding of meaning will differ from what is typically reported in previous research or whether they uniquely experience meaning. The population that the researcher is interested in is the Sepedi-speaking tribal leaders who know Sepedi customs, specifically in rural communities (Moletjie Tribal Authority). Therefore, the present study will explore experiences and cultural sources of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context.

2.1 Models and Theories of Meaning in Life

There are different models of meaning in life. This theoretical background will provide some understandings of meaning in life.

2.1.1 Park and Folkman's meaning model. In their meaning-making model, Park and Folkman (1997) state that people have global meaning orientations that offer them some frameworks to look at their lives and interpret their experiences. On the other hand, their lived experiences are also affected by available traumatic events that will challenge their global meaning system.

Once this happens, they develop situational meaning, which refers to their attribution of meaning to the event that may help reduce the inconsistency with global meaning. This process, once successful, can make for a much better approach to managing stress. As a result, persons under stress are going to be reinforced to cope with their life challenges.

2.1.2 Wong's PURE model. Wong's PURE model is based on the four essential components, namely: Purpose, Understanding, Responsible action, and Enjoyment/Evaluation (Wong, 2010, 2011). *The purpose* is the most critical element in meaning because it supports many human life goals. Purpose concerns people's motivations. A crucial role of purpose is to provide direction in life. *Understanding* is the cognitive component of meaning. All of us make sense of the circumstances we find ourselves in. We have some information about who we are, how we determine ourselves; we know our strengths and limitations. Understanding is fundamental because we want to possess a sense of who we are, live well, and understand what makes us sad or happy. Understanding provides us with a sense of unity that we are a whole person. *Responsible action* is the interactive part that supports people to create correct decisions and responses, doing what is typically accurate, finding the proper resolutions, and making amends. *Evaluation* is the expressive part and embodies assessing the degree of fulfilment or dissatisfaction with a situation or life as a whole. This component includes four primary mental ways of living a good life, namely: psychological feature, cognitive, social/moral, and affectional (Wong, 2010, 2011).

2.1.3 Meaning model of Steger. According to Martela and Steger (2016), meaning incorporates three elements, namely: the *cognitive* aspect, which refers to making sense of one's experiences in life, the *motivational* issue that involves a pursuit and attainment of worthy goals, and the *affective* element that is about feelings of satisfaction, fulfilment, and happiness related to goal attainment.

In their study, Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006) identified two critical dimensions or components of meaning in life: the presence of meaning and the search for meaning. *Presence of meaning* refers to how significant an individual regards his or her life to be, whereas *the search for meaning* is the drive to seek meaning in one's life. These two dimensions play a crucial role in understanding meaning in life: once a person understands that

their life is purposeless, they will rummage around for it; on the other hand, once they experience their life to have a sense of purpose, it will be experienced as significant. The significance of meaning for the experience of well-being is discussed next.

2.2 Meaning and Psychological Well-being

When discussing associations between meaning and well-being, it is necessary to consider two diverse approaches to well-being: hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being (Huta & Waterman, 2014). *Hedonic well-being* refers to the pleasure-pain or happy-sad difference (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011; Huta & Waterman, 2014; Wissing, Khumalo, & Chigeza, 2014). It is sometimes related to ideas like positive and negative affect and life satisfaction. *Eudaimonic well-being* has been associated with flourishing, human actualisation, and personal growth (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Wissing et al., 2014). Constructs related to eudaimonic well-being include meaning in life, positive relations, self-acceptance, and life purpose (Wissing et al., 2014). One of the well-being models that fit with the eudaimonic approach to well-being is the mental health continuum (Keyes, 2002, 2005, 2007). Meaning/purpose in life is classified as one of the six components of psychological/personal well-being (PWB).

Numerous studies have shown that the experience of meaning in life can shield against trauma and improve physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being (Reker & Woo, 2011; Ryff, 2013; Wong, 2012). Steger, Mann, Michels, and Cooper (2009) to this end indicate that individuals who have less meaning might experience psychological distress and seek assistance from psychologists or health professionals to alleviate their problems in the later stages of their lives. Wissing et al. (2014) support these findings and indicate that when people experience meaningfulness in life, they tend to experience more happiness and less distress. On the other hand, an absence of meaning in life relates to mental anguish, which incorporates higher suicide rates, temper problems, and drug abuse (Steger, 2009; Wong, 2009). When individuals

are going through terribly tough times, meaning, instead of positive emotions, becomes more imperative in maintaining some level of well-being (Wong, 2010, 2011). Park (2016) highlights that people who have effectively created meaning in stressful life experiences adjusted better to stressful events than people who were not able to find meaning in stressful events.

Meaning in life can be viewed as a protective feature of psychological well-being, improving life fulfilment, and emotional well-being (Psarra & Kleftaras, 2013). Research has reliably revealed that a sense of meaning in one's life relates to many facets of psychological well-being, whereas a meaningless life consistently correlates with psychological ill-being (Reker & Woo, 2011; Ryff, 2013; Steger et al., 2009). Individuals create meaning from different sources: what is meaningful to one person might not be relevant to the other. Some sources of meaning are discussed below.

2.3 Sources of Meaning

Sources of meaning constitute a commitment to specific parts of life from which meaning is derived (Schnell, 2009). Mason (2013) conducted a study among university students in South Africa, where he identified three significant sources of meaning, namely, relationships, education, and religion. Lambert et al. (2010), in their study done in the United States of America, found that family relationships were the primary source of meaning for their sample. Family relationships are associated with higher meaning because the family provides people with support and protection during trials. Delle Fave, Brdar, Wissing, & Vella-Brodrick (2013) also found that family was one of the most important sources of meaning for people from seven countries. Selman et al. (2011), in their study on HIV patients, found similar results; the participants identified family relationships and a sense of peace as essential sources of meaning in life. In Mason's (2018) study about the relationship between purpose and

sources of meaning among university students in South Africa, participants identified self-transcendence, collectivism, and individualism as essential sources of meaning.

Also, Schnell (2009) identified 26 sources of meaning, which were grouped into four dimensions, namely, *self-transcendence*, which involves a commitment to intentions beyond one's direct needs; *self-actualisation*, which has to do with engaging, inspiring, and nurturing one's capabilities; *order*, which is about embracing philosophies, practicality, kindness, and the tested and verified; and *well-being and relatedness*, which is about nurturing and enjoying life's pleasures in privacy and with others.

The present study will explore whether meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context manifests itself in similar forms as found in previous studies and will explore the cultural sources of meaning of the Sepedi tribal leaders. A cultural perspective on meaning will be discussed below.

2.4 Culture, Context, and Meaning

Culture serves as a critical lens through which individuals make sense of their world (Baumeister et al., 2013). How humans view themselves, the creation, their neighbourhood, what offers meaning to their lives, and what initiatives and desires they go for are all influenced by culture, relevant and situational factors, along with language and place (Delle Fave et al., 2013; Wong, 2011). Studies to understand meaning in life are increasingly conducted worldwide in many different cultural settings (Alea & Bluck, 2013; Church et al., 2012). According to Baumeister et al. (2013, p. 506), "all known cultures use language which enables them to use meanings and communicate them". It is crucial to consider culture when attempting to grasp people's stories and behaviours, because culture shapes philosophies of what existence is, thereby providing a meaning-making system (Delle Fave & Bassi, 2009).

Cultural differences can influence how people develop meaning in their lives and how they view their world. Individualism, self-sufficiency, and a focus on the individual as a

separate being characterise the Western cultural context. In contrast, the African cultural context is characterised by respecting community concord above personal preferences (Wissing et al., 2014). Ryff (1995) found that Koreans measured high on positive relations with others as compared to the U.S. adults who placed much emphasis on individual growth. Burnell, Beukes, and Esterhuyse (2009) also found that cultural and societal variables influence how individuals perceive meaning.

Uwah (2012) states that self-construal in an African context focuses on a sense of belonging shaped by social and cultural aspects. The African worldview is defined as a “cultural orientation characterised by assembly of unity, shared responsibility and value, a comprehensive sense of the self, religiousness, and living in harmony with nature” (Arndt & Naude, 2016, p. 268). Thus, culture is used to assess life concerning purpose, morals, and other meanings.

Some parts of the South African community can be characterised as a collective where relationships are essential above the self. These relationships are shaped through interaction with family members and with other individuals in the community (Wissing et al., 2014). This might be the case in a traditionally collectivist Sepedi context, where the study is situated.

2.4.1 Context of the present study

The present study will be done among tribal leaders living in the Moletjie district in the Limpopo province of South Africa. The people in this region stems from the Moloto royal family who originated in Botswana. They were cattle farmers who relocated to South Africa in search of grazing for their herds. The people of Moletjie believe in the worship of the ancestors and God. They recognise two types of weddings, namely the Western and traditional marriage.

The traditional marriage involves paying a bride price (*Magadi*), followed by an animal's slaughtering to introduce the newly married couple to the family's ancestors (go *hlabiswa*). Children are considered to be an important achievement among African people

(Zwane, Venter, Temane, & Chigeza, 2012). This is also true for the Pedi people; they value children and consider them as wealth. If a woman does not have a child, she is called barren, and the elders encourage the husband to marry a second wife so that the family's name will live forth.

Ewuso and Hall (2019) pointed out that community participation and fellow community compassion are two critical characteristics of the relationship in the Ubuntu philosophy. The same holds for Moletjie Tribal Authority communities; people assist each other in completing tasks that might take an individual more days to complete.

Funerals are respected, and the deceased are treated with the utmost respect. When there is a funeral in the community, the family sends a representative to the tribal leader (*ntona*) to inform him about the death and get permission to enter the graveyard. The young men are expected to dig the grave (*diphiri*), and one must comply.

Stock and subsistence farming are still an essential means of sustenance in most of the villages of Moletjie. However, young generations are changing this perception as they attend universities and work across South Africa. The aged people rely on government grants for their upkeep.

2.5 The Present Study

Studies on meaning in life have been conducted amongst adults and students in South Africa in Sotho, Afrikaans, and English contexts (Mason, 2013, 2017; Wissing et al., 2014). There is no literature on meaning in life of tribal leaders in Sepedi; consequently, this research aims to narrow this gap and conduct empirical research on the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context. Moletjie Tribal Authority was chosen because it represents villages with rich Sepedi customs that the student-researcher hopes to learn from while exploring meaning in life in this context. Furthermore, Moletjie was selected because of

its socio-economic status, which varies from high to low. The researcher hopes to learn how tribal leaders experience meaning despite varying socio-economic statuses.

Tribal leaders have been chosen because a secondary aim of the study is to tap into cultural sources of meaning in life. The proposed sample is more likely to be knowledgeable in Sepedi cultural practices than the general population. The outcomes will be utilised to give the king suggestions to enhance the well-being of the tribal leaders and the community. For the purposes of this study, *meaning* and *meaningfulness* will be used as synonyms.

3. Research Aims

The proposed study explores how tribal leaders in a Sepedi context experience meaning in life. The following objectives will facilitate the achievement of this aim:

1. To explore how Sepedi tribal leaders experience meaning in life.
2. To explore the cultural sources of meaning of the Sepedi tribal leaders.
3. To explore Sepedi tribal leaders' experiences of meaning in life in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Research Questions

1. How do tribal leaders in a Sepedi-speaking context experience meaning in life?
2. What are the cultural sources of meaning in life among tribal leaders of a Sepedi community?
3. What is Sepedi tribal leaders' experiences of meaning in life in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

In the proposed study, a qualitative research approach will be followed. In qualitative research, the aim is to describe and understand a unique context from a participant's perspective rather than from a generalised perspective (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Poth,

2016). This approach is suitable to dive deeply into participants' experiences of meaning in life. Due to the limited quantity of research in traditional African cultures, adopting an explorative research design will be most suitable to investigate the target population without prior expectations (Bowen, 2005).

This design considers participants' personal experiences to be the primary source of knowledge and provides the best description of how they make sense of their social worlds (Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006). The research study will be aiming to comprehensively describe meaning in life within a Sepedi context according to the tribal leaders.

5.2 Participants

5.2.1 Population and sampling. In this study, non-probability purposive sampling will be used as randomisation is less critical when following a qualitative research approach. Non-probability techniques such as purposive or judgment sampling allow for selecting participants according to specific characteristics required to answer the research question (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). These characteristics will be outlined by using a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The population of interest in the suggested study is tribal leaders of Sepedi communities in South Africa. Sepedi communities, also known as Northern Sotho tribes, are predominantly located in the Limpopo province in South Africa. Pedi, the mother tongue of this region, is spoken by 80% of Limpopo and will be the most suitable province to gather participants of Sepedi descent (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Motivated by the challenges that often arise when researching communities, the district of Moletjie will be selected to recruit participants as the researcher has an existing relationship with the communities' prospective gatekeepers. This relationship will only allow for access to the community but will not confound the study's findings. In addition, these villages were chosen because they represent a group with rich Sepedi customs that the student-researcher hopes to learn from in exploring meaning in life in this context.

Moletjie, consisting of more than 50 villages, spreads between the borders of Bochum and Matlala districts. In the proposed study, four villages will be selected and approached to participate in the study. A list of the villages was obtained, and then four were selected based on their geographical location around Moletjie and to ensure maximum variation in participants' responses (a type of purposive sampling). They are from different parts of Moletjie, with varying distances to the headquarters.

The four villages were *Ga Komape* (29.3 km from Polokwane city); *Sengatane* (22 km from Polokwane); *Chebeng* (25 from Polokwane); and *Mabokelele* (31 km from Polokwane). Each village has "*Mantona*" (tribal leaders) who oversee the activities in the community. The number of leaders within a village can vary according to the village's size, and some villages may have one leader while another has 10. As per a hierarchical structure, the tribal leaders of the Moletjie village report to the Chief's committee, which then reports to the chief Moloto himself. The Chief's committee and tribal leaders meet weekly at the Moletjie head office to resolve issues presented by tribal leaders or sometimes by the villagers. The tribal leaders, male or female, are elected by the Chief to act as overseers within the community and are well respected. These tribal leaders are tasked with ensuring the community's well-being in the Chief's absence and acting as a communication medium between the Chief and the villagers.

As per Creswell (2009), the minimum number of participants suggested in qualitative research is 10 participants. This is the golden standard used to reach the point of data saturation successfully. Saturation occurs when the investigator reaches a point where no new data is obtained from more data (Creswell, 2009). A minimum of 12 participants will be recruited – ideally, three from each village to ensure maximum variation in participants' responses. The researcher will oversample with two participants if the participants decide to drop out of the research; this will help the researcher to continue with the study with a minimum of 10

participants (please see section 5.4 on recruitment of participants). The sampling will continue until data saturation is reached.

5.3 Data Collection Method

Qualitative studies' data is most frequently people's words or behaviour and therefore requires techniques that permit the researcher to capture the participants' language and experiences (Henning, van Rensburg, & Smit, 2011). In this study, the research data will be gathered using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews will allow the researcher to obtain personal and narrative descriptions of the participants' experiences of meaning in life, while contributing to the study's scientific rigour by ensuring that each participant is asked the same questions (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Additionally, using semi-structured interviews also acts as a guideline to ensure that the participants remain on topic. Although the interview is considered structured, a significant amount of flexibility allows participants to speak freely and share their experiences. Unlike in a survey or questionnaire, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer room for probing and reaffirming what the participants have said (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2016). This subsequently helps ensure that the data collected will provide a vibrant and accurate description of the participant's experiences of meaning. The interview schedule will serve as a guideline during the interview, ensuring that the same information is obtained from all participants (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Section 1 of the interview schedule includes the socio-demographic questionnaire. The purpose of the socio-demographic questionnaire is to provide information on the sample profile to interpret the findings. Section 2 of the interview schedule will include a welcome note and instructions for participants about the entire process of collecting data. The following questions will be asked during the interview (see Addendum D):

1. What are your experiences of meaning in life?

2. What aspects of the Sepedi culture provide meaning to your life as a tribal leader?
3. What are your experiences of meaning in life during the COVID-19 pandemic?

With permission granted by the participants, the interviews will be recorded using an audio-recording device. The interviewer will also make field notes during the interviews. These notes will include cues picked up from the participants, for example, pauses, hurried answers, tones, etc. The interviews will be conducted in Sepedi or English to allow the participants to select the language they feel comfortable with when answering the study's questions. The researcher is fluent in both languages and does not require a translator to be present during the interview proceedings.

5.4 Data Collection Procedure

Permission will be sought from the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC) before the study's commencement. Following the provisional approval from the NWU-HREC, a request will be submitted through the Chief's secretary's office for the goodwill permission of Chief Moloto to grant permission to conduct the research (see Addendum B). Once the goodwill permission letter from the Chief has been granted, and the researcher has permission to approach the Tribal Authority committee, participants' recruitment can begin. The first author will first consult Mr Manamela, who has been a tribal leader for the past 30 years in Peter Nchabeleng village. He has a vast knowledge of the work done by tribal leaders, the culture, and proceedings in the communities. He will act as a mediator to the tribal authority committee. He will introduce the first author to the committee. The letter of approval from the Chief will be submitted to the tribal authority committee for further assistance. The Tribal Authority committee acts as the mediator between the community and the Chief regarding the study. Once the meeting with the Tribal Authority committee is secured, the researcher will meet with the committee to inform them about the purpose of the intended research, distribute the research advert (see Addendum A), indicate

who the independent person in the study will be, and explain the intention to use the tribal leaders in the research. As per the tribal guidelines, the education liaison officer from Moletjie tribal authority will help the researcher recruit an independent person. The independent person will be a respectable person in the community. The independent person will assist the researcher in the recruitment of the participants and administering informed consent. The ward councillors for each village will be the gatekeepers. The ward councillors are elected by the community to represent them to the local government. They are well respected in the communities and they can either be male or female. Their role is to ensure that the basic needs of communities are met and to present their challenges to the government. They are also involved in community leadership and engagements. The ward councillors will assist the first author to gain entry to the villages.

The pamphlet will indicate that prospective participants can contact either the researcher or the independent person if they have any questions about the research. The pamphlet will state the purpose of the study, what will be expected of the participants, incentives for participating in the research, what the data from the study be used for, that their participation is voluntary, and that confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured. The opportunity to withdraw from the study before analysing data without consequences will also be clearly stated.

The participants will be given adequate time (one week) to decide to participate in the research. Interested individuals will be asked to contact the independent person (either in person or telephonically) if they would like to participate in the research. After that, the independent person will contact willing participants to explain the study again and obtain verbal informed consent.

Although the study started before the COVID-19 pandemic, the study coincided with COVID-19. Specifically, in the time between participant recruitment and data collection, the

COVID-19 pandemic struck South Africa. An amendment is requested from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) to conduct the interviews telephonically to align the study with guideline for data gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic and an additional aim and research question entailing meaning experiences in the context of COVID-19 is added.

The researcher will contact willing participants to explain the study once again after an initial meeting with them due to the new development of the COVID-19 pandemic and obtain verbal informed consent. The participants will be offered the opportunity to decide if they feel comfortable doing the interview telephonically because the researcher will not meet with them face to face again due to the restriction of COVID-19 lockdown. The reason for doing the interviews telephonically is that this new strategy will protect the participants and the researcher from the risk of exposure to infection. Most participants in the study are older than 60 years and even more susceptible to complications if infected, as stipulated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines about COVID-19.

While the critics' arguments against telephonic interviews carry some weight, literature also exists that suggests no real distinction in the quality of data when researchers used the telephone in contrast to face-to-face interviewing and that results do not necessarily differ (Tucker & Parker, 2014). Farooq and de Villiers (2017) conclude that telephonic qualitative research interviews have many advantages, such as being cost-effective, less time-consuming, and can be experienced as less intrusive, thereby increasing the likelihood of participation. While telephonic interviews' potential limitations are acknowledged, the advantages thereof, particularly in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic and with the sample being mostly above 60 years of age, are considered to outweigh the disadvantages.

After contacting potential participants, written informed consent forms will be sent to the participants by the researcher via courier services. The researcher will cover the cost of courier services. The researcher will contact the participant to arrange for the written informed

consent to be completed while the participants are linked with the researcher via WhatsApp video call and this video call will be recorded. There might be the challenge of poor internet connectivity since the participants live in rural areas. Furthermore, since the study will involve the elderly, some might have difficulty in operating video calls. If the participants do not have WhatsApp, the informed consent forms will be discussed over the telephone and audio-recorded. The participants and their witnesses will co-sign the informed consent. The researcher will also co-sign the informed consent with her witness to ensure that the process is done ethically. Although most of the participants can read and write, those who cannot write or read will be told to request that their secretaries or their family members read the documents on their behalf. In such cases, they will be advised to consult with their family members in this regard before they sign the informed consent. The signed original informed consent will be collected after the lockdown has completely lifted.

The researcher will schedule the interviews at a date and time convenient to the participants (Mealer & Jones, 2014). The researcher will inform the participants to ensure that they are comfortable, the room is quiet, and there is no risk of interruptions (Chapple, 1999). Participants will be encouraged to negotiate with the family members to give them privacy during the interviews. If the participants take care of their grandchildren, the researcher will request that prior arrangements be made with their relatives to take care of the children during the interviews.

Given that some of the participants might not be able to participate in the interviews telephonically, the researcher has oversampled by two participants in case there is a need to replace a participant. The interviews will continue until saturation is reached or a minimum of 10 participants has been interviewed.

The data will be collected from the participants telephonically while they are at home. The participants will be asked to sit on comfortable chairs to support the elderly and a warm

and well-ventilated place. The researcher will start the interviews by asking the participants if they are sitting comfortably and ready to proceed with the interview. The conversation will be audio-recorded using the researcher's mobile phone and external recorder, then be immediately downloaded to the researcher's personal computer and stored in the researcher's locker. The same will be done with the field notes. The researcher will cover the cost of the telephone call. The participants will be provided with recharge vouchers worth R100, which will be loaded directly to their mobile phone 24 hours before the interviews to avoid technical errors. They will use the airtime to connect with the researcher if they decide to take body breaks and contact the counsellor.

The researcher will ensure that the place which she uses to conduct the interviews is private with a functioning closing door and with no noise. The researcher will put up a 'do not disturb' note on the door during the interviews. Interviews will be conducted by the researcher, as she is fluent in both English and Sepedi. The researcher will follow all the protocols required when conducting the interviews stipulated by the Chief. The researcher has received guidance from Moletjie tribal authority on the protocol on how to interview the elderly leaders of the communities in the times of COVID-19. Moletjie authority does not restrict women from researching with the community members. The Chief of Moletjie supports the research activities in his villages; hence he has appointed a dedicated person to oversee the research projects for Moletjie communities. The researcher will reaffirm that participation in the study is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the study before data analysis without consequence. The participants' safety, confidentiality, anonymity, and well-being will be ensured throughout the data collection process (please see section 5.6 on ethics considerations).

The researcher has been trained to conduct interviews during the Master of Arts in Positive Psychology research module and during internship training to qualify as a registered counsellor. She received specific training on conducting telephonic interviews as part of the

training as a registered counsellor. The supervisor will assist in this regard where necessary. The interview schedule will serve as a guideline during the interview, ensuring that the same information is obtained from all participants (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The pilot study was only going to be used to test the language and whether minor revisions are needed. The pilot test included four tribal leaders in Makgofe village in Moletjie district. They were asked the same questions to determine the comprehensibility of the questions. It was found that they understood what meaning in life was all about.

The interviews will be conducted via telephone due to lockdown constraints to protect participants and the student researcher against the coronavirus. The interview session will last for approximately 40-60 minutes. The interviews will be audio-recorded using the mobile phone and external recorder as a backup with the participants' permission. The participants will be given R50 as a token of appreciation for participating in the study. The researcher will send the money via money market vouchers services to the participants' mobile phones after the interviews. The participants will withdraw the money to buy a gift themselves since the researcher will not be able to give them gifts personally due to the restriction of lockdown.

5.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis according to the six steps described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) will be used to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a flexible technique to analyse qualitative data where the researcher repeatedly moves between the data, codes, and themes. The six steps are as follows:

- 1. Familiarising yourself with your data.** The researcher familiarises him- or herself with the data by listening to the interviews and reading and re-reading the transcripts and fieldnotes. This helps the researcher to absorb and engage with the data. First thoughts should be written down.

2. **Generating initial codes.** Once the researcher is familiarised with the data, the researcher must start classifying primary codes, which are the features of the data that seem exciting and meaningful. These codes are more frequent and detailed than themes but provide an idea of the conversation context.
3. **Searching for themes.** This step in the procedure is the start of the descriptive analysis of the organised codes. Applicable information concentrates are arranged (consolidated or split) as indicated by all-encompassing themes. The researcher should recommend the association between codes, subthemes, and topics.
4. **Reviewing themes.** In this step, the researcher scrutinises the identified themes, and considers whether they should be themes. This step involves a more in-depth evaluation of identified themes where the researcher needs to question whether they are to be combined, refined, separated, or discarded. The information inside themes should genuinely tie together, while there should be clear and recognisable refinements between themes.
5. **Definition and naming of themes.** In this step, the researcher further refines the themes and subthemes. The researcher now names the themes and subthemes and formulates working definitions that capture the essence of the theme or subtheme.
6. **Production of the report.** The researcher now reports the findings in writing and illustrates the themes and subthemes extracts from the data.

The significance of the extracts for the research question is considered and the findings are discussed in view of existing literature related to the topic and findings. The report must persuade the reader of the investigation's legitimacy and validity. It must go past a simple depiction of the themes and depict an analysis supported with observational proof that addresses the research question.

The co-coder will be a qualified researcher, fluent in Sepedi and English, who will assist the student researcher with the co-coding and corroborating the findings. The co-coding process includes the following: the student researcher and the co-coder will work independently to code the data, then it will be compared for similarity. The student-researcher and the co-coder will discuss codes that do not agree and come to a consensus. After deciding on the codes, the student researcher will develop thematic areas that explain the research findings. The co-coder will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement before proceeding with coding. The trustworthiness of the data analysis will be discussed in the next section.

5.5.1 Trustworthiness. Cypress (2017) suggested that a research study's scientific accuracy is essential to evaluate its value. Trustworthiness is established by considering the study's credibility, transferability, conformability, dependability, and reflexivity. Each of these aspects will now be described.

5.5.1.1 Credibility. Credibility involves that the researcher ensures that an accurate account of participants' responses is presented (Schurink, Fouché, & de Vos, 2011). In the current study, credibility will be ensured by recording and transcribing interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A review of the study findings by the researcher's supervisors will also help scrutinise and challenge the researcher's assumptions. The researcher will ensure that she builds rapport with the participants to obtain honest and open responses. During the interview, the researcher will repeat information and request the participants to determine its accuracy. The researcher will then take the analysed data back to the participants to clarify their intentions, comment on findings, correct errors, and provide additional information, if necessary, to check if the data was captured correctly.

5.5.1.2 Transferability. Transferability considers the extent to which the results of a qualitative study can be transferred to a different context or setting with similar characteristics compared to the current study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Transferability will be ensured by

describing the context, participants, settings, and circumstances of the research study in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

5.5.1.3 Dependability. Dependability refers to the study's research strategies' outline to be recurrent (Schurink et al., 2011). This may be ensured by providing detailed data of the data gathering method, indicating all the steps taken and strategies applied. The interviewer will also make field notes during the interviews to provide additional information on, for example, cues picked up from the participants, possible disturbances, etc. (Holt, 2010). The interviewer's feelings, prejudices, expectations, and preconceptions will also be recorded to ensure the management of any possible bias.

5.5.1.4 Confirmability. Confirmability involves that it should be possible for other researchers to confirm the outcomes of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To this end, proof is kept of verifications that validate the findings and the analysis (Schurink et al., 2011). An audit trail will be kept that contains details on all the steps taken from the beginning of the study. This includes that the researcher will keep all evidence of data and analysis.

5.5.1.5 Reflexivity. One aim of reflexivity is to guarantee the validity of results by diminishing the probabilities of the researcher biasing the study. Reflexivity can likewise help the researcher become mindful of how the ideas, sentiments, and knowledge they have brought to the study can be positive. Reflexivity is very significant in subjective research because there are many such ways by which researcher's predisposition could influence the study, from the creation of data gathering tools to collecting the data, analysing it, and reporting it.

To ensure reflexivity, the researcher will examine and consciously acknowledge the assumptions and prejudices she will bring to the research, shaping the outcome. This will be an exercise keeping a diary, keeping up an open discourse, and talking with supervisors (Haynes, 2012). The student will manually conduct the thematic analysis with the assistance of a co-

coder. No computer programmes will be used to analyse the data, with all the steps taken adequately documented.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

The current study will adhere to the ethical guidelines of the North-West University's Health Research Ethics Committee. Ethical approval to conduct the intended research will be obtained from the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC). Permission to enter the communities will also be obtained from Chief Moloto.

5.6.1 Goodwill permission / consent / legal authorisation. After the researcher gets the provisional approval to carry out the study from the North-West University's Health Research Ethical Committee (NWU-HREC), a request will be submitted through the king's secretary's office for the goodwill permission of Chief Moloto to conduct the study. The Tribal Authority committee acts as the mediator between the communities and the king. They attend to the complaints or requests of the communities and give a verdict. If the issue is not solved, it is then referred to Chief Moloto. They further submit reports of the cases they have dealt with to the Chief. The Tribal Authority committee works directly with the tribal leaders. After receiving the Chief's goodwill permission letter, the researcher will send a request to meet with the Tribal Authority committee. The researcher will further submit the permission letter to research from the king to NWU-HREC before the research's commencement. Once the meeting is secured, the researcher will meet with the committee to inform them about the intended study and the intention to use the tribal leaders in the study.

The tribal leaders from all Moletjie meet weekly at tribal offices to discuss issues and receive messages from the Chief. Since the participants will be from different villages, the researcher will request the committee to identify the tribal leaders from four communities: *Ga Komape*, *Chebeng*, *Sengatane*, and *Mabokelele*. These four villages will allow maximum variation in participants' responses as the tribal leaders will be from geographical locations that

are not very close to each other. The gatekeepers for the four villages will introduce the first author to the community and the tribal leaders. The researcher will then schedule a meeting with the tribal leaders from four selected communities. The reason for the meeting will be to tell them about the intended study.

Once all parties involved in the research have been informed of the study, the researcher will distribute pamphlets to the tribal leaders from four villages to recruit participants (see Addendum A). The pamphlet will indicate that prospective participants can contact either the researcher or the independent person if they have any questions about the research. The pamphlet will state the study's purpose, what will be expected of the participants, incentives for participating in the research, what the data from the study be used for, that their participation is voluntary, and that confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured. The prospective participants will be given one week to decide if they want to participate or not. The interested participants will be requested to submit their names to the independent person.

5.6.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent. A critical ethical code of social research is that research *participation must be voluntary*. The principle of voluntary participation necessitates that people not be forced to participate in a study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Closely associated with the view of voluntary participation is the requirement of *informed consent*. This implies that prospective research participants should be informed concerning the procedures and risks of research and should provide their consent to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Participants will receive informed consent forms via courier services. The researcher will also explain to the participants the purpose of the study telephonically. Participants will be given adequate time (one week) to allow them to consider their involvement in the research. After a week, the researcher will contact participants again to enquire whether they are interested in participating. The participants will be provided with airtime vouchers worth R100.

The researcher will call the participants to schedule a date to obtain informed consent. The researcher will contact the participants on the agreed dates to take them through informed consent. The participants will be requested to co-sign the informed consent with their witnesses. The researcher will also co-sign informed consent with a witness. The whole process will be video-recorded via WhatsApp; for participants who do not have smartphones, it will be audio-recorded with the participants' permission.

The researcher will then schedule an interview time with the participant. The researcher will seek verbal re-consent from the research participants who agreed to participate in the telephone interview on the interview date. The researcher will cover the cost of telephone calls and airtime vouchers. The signed original informed consent will be collected after the lockdown has completely lifted.

The researcher will be sensitive to participants' values and rights by being mindful of the participants as well as of their personal biases. The researcher will ensure that the participants will be treated with the utmost respect. Contact information for the researcher and supervisor will be provided on the informed consent form in case participants have questions.

5.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity. Participants' distinguishing data will not be accessible to anyone who is not directly involved in the study (Neuman, 2014). In the present study, research participants' information will always be treated with strict confidentiality. Furthermore, pseudonyms will be used to refer to research participants throughout the study. The researcher will use a transcriber who does not know the participants or are not close to them to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The transcriber will have access to the interview content and recordings to do the transcriptions. They will be shared through One Drive through a link with restricted access. A password will be created to protect other people from accessing the data. The system allows the people who have access to view who last worked on the

documents, and the researcher will be able to monitor access and delete the data once the co-coding is finalised.

The transcriber and the co-coder will be requested to sign a confidentiality contract to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. The recordings will be removed from the mobile phone and external recorder directly after the interview and stored on a password-protected computer. The hard copies of the data and the signed informed consent forms will also be safely kept in a locked file cabinet to which only the researcher has the key. Both the computer and the file cabinet are locked in an office at the researcher's workplace that only the researcher can access. After the researcher has finalised a study report, the electronic data and the signed consent forms will be submitted to the NWU for safekeeping for seven years after the publication of the results. The hard copies of the data will be submitted to the NWU for destruction as per the institution's policies.

5.6.4 Inclusion criteria. Since qualitative research usually involves a relatively small number of cases, the study will comprise a minimum of 14 tribal leaders (either male or female) who meet the following research criteria:

1. Participants should be fluent in Sepedi or English. The language was limited to English or Sepedi because these are the two official languages of communication at the study sites. In addition, given that the study aims to explore cultural sources of meaning in life and language being a core component of culture, it was necessary to recruit participants fluent in Sepedi.
2. Tribal leaders (male or female) with at least three years of experience (*Ntona*) leading the Moletjie community to ensure that participants can comprehensively discuss the research topic.
3. Participants should be willing to be voice-recorded during interviews for the researcher to capture everything mentioned in the interviews.

4. Participants must be residents at *Ga Komape, Sengatane, Chebeng, or Mabokelele* village. These villages were selected based on their geographical locations across Moletjie to get the maximum variation in participants' responses. Furthermore, they represent a group with rich Sepedi customs that the student-researcher hopes to learn from while exploring meaning in life in this context.
5. Participants should have access to mobile phones since the interviews will be conducted via telephone.
6. Participants are from different parts of Moletjie, with varying distances to the headquarters.
7. Participants must be willing to participate

5.6.5 Exclusion criteria. If the participants do not adhere to the inclusion criteria, they will be excluded from participating in the research.

5.6.6 Risks and benefits. The potential risks and benefits are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Risks and benefits

Risks	Indirect benefits
• Possible feelings of boredom or fatigue. • Emotional distress due to past experiences that the interview may elicit.	• Participants have a chance to contribute toward the knowledge domain on meaning in life in African contexts, and their contribution may profit the community and society at large • The community at large may benefit from the study, as the findings may allow the younger and older

	generation to learn more about the different cultural sources of meaning in the lives of leaders in the Sepedi context.
• The benefits outweigh the risks.	

This is a minimal risk research study. The research team will do what they can to ensure that participants are not put in a situation where they might be at risk and subjected to any form of harm. The student researcher will guard against manipulating the participants or treating them as objects instead of individuals. This can be done, as an example, by respecting the leaders as a practice in Sepedi culture, being attentive to the providing of information concerning the planned research, giving the main points of the purpose of the proposed study, and information concerning the time and venue where the data collection will occur.

However, should a participant communicate emotional distress during the research, the student researcher will refer the affected participants to a psychologist or counsellor. Necessary arrangements will be shared with the counsellor before the study commences. The contact details for the counsellor will be made available to the participants. The participants will be provided with recharge vouchers worth R100, which will be loaded directly to their mobile phone 24 hours before the interviews to avoid technical errors.

To minimise the risks and deal with fatigue and boredom, the student researcher will allow the participants to take short breaks during the interview if needed. Participants will be informed before the discussion to alert the student researcher if they need to rest during data gathering. People will not be forced to participate in research; hence, recruitment will be conducted ethically as per the ethical guidelines of the NWU-HREC.

5.7 Data Management Plan

The information management setup can involve the following: the collected data and recordings are going to be stored on a password-protected laptop with an antivirus software package and protected on a USB disk (memory stick) and external hard drive which will be secured in a cabinet inside the locked office of the student researcher.

The electronic data (transcribed interviews) will be stored on cloud storage (OneDrive) for backup, and it will be accessible to the student researcher and promoter of the study. When the student researcher is not busy with the research information, it will be locked away. Collected data will be stored in this manner for the whole research method. Transcripts and working documents, together with original recordings, will be safeguarded by storing them in the student researcher's locked office. The recordings will be removed from the mobile phone and external recorder and be downloaded to the student researcher's computer, the external hard drive, and the cloud storage. The researcher will further delete the recording on the digital recorder and smartphone as these can be lost or stolen. The researcher will be handling the information and will ensure that it is kept in a secure place to which no one else can gain access.

The co-coder and the transcriber will sign the confidentiality form and ensure that all the research data is always kept in a lockable office. The researcher will delete the data from Microsoft Teams files once they have completed their function, and team members will also be requested to delete the downloaded data if there is any from their computers. The written informed consent forms, together with the collected data, will be filed and stored separately for seven years after the study has been finalised and published. The raw data will be submitted to NWU and be stored in a lockable office. The electronic data will be kept on a password-protected, virus-free computer in the lockable office of NWU and the student researcher's office. The research team, namely, the student researcher and supervisors, will have access to

this electronic data. The electronic data will be destroyed seven years after completing this research by a research team member.

5.8 Dissemination of Results

The researcher will schedule a meeting within three months after having received a final positive outcome for the study in which feedback will be given verbally to all four villages simultaneously to ensure that anonymity and confidentiality remain protected as well as presenting the findings to the Chief and the Chief's counsel. The researcher will also use the psychodrama technique to give feedback to participants. The participants will roleplay by switching the role and sharing their experiences of what they have felt in the role and what came up for them. This will help the participants to express themselves fully and let go of the feelings they do not want. It will also help the participants get perspectives on what is going on in their lives and others' lives. The researcher will seek training before conducting this technique.

The research results may be presented at workshops, lectures, and local and international conferences. One article will be submitted for review to a scientific journal (e.g., South African Journal of Psychology). The findings of this study will be used for the intended research only.

5.9 Monitoring of Research

The NWU-HREC requires that the study must be monitored regularly. To comply with the requirements of HREC, the supervisor will submit a monitoring report annually. The study leaders will supervise and ensure that the research is done as described in the approved protocol. The researcher was made aware of NWU rules and the postgraduate manual during course training. The link to get the manual was also provided.

5.10 Competence of Researchers

The study leader is Dr Wilson Fadji. Dr Wilson Fadji holds the following qualifications: B.A. Psychology (University of Ghana), MPhil Health Promotion (University of Bergen), and PhD Psychology (Stellenbosch University). She has more than three years' experience in higher education in Psychology and Positive Psychology (including teaching postgraduate students and supervising master's and PhD students in doing their research). She has published articles in accredited journals. Her research is focused on adolescents and well-being, positive psychology interventions, meaning, and relation well-being. She has experience doing qualitative research and is currently working at the Human Sciences Research Council.

The study co-supervisor is Prof. M.P. Wissing. Prof. Wissing is an experienced senior researcher at AUTHeR at North-West University and has supervised more than 100 students. She also has more than 100 peer-reviewed publications. She has published studies that applied qualitative methodologies. Her research focus includes exploring and understanding meaning in life. Prof. Wissing holds a PhD in Psychology and is a registered clinical psychologist.

Another study co-supervisor is Prof. L. Schutte. She is a senior lecturer at AUTHeR at the North-West University. She holds a PhD in Psychology and a Master's degree in Statistics. She is also a registered clinical psychologist. She has published scholarly articles on meaning in life and has supervised several master's students in Positive Psychology.

The student researcher is K. G. Khoza. The student has obtained a degree in Psychology, honours degree in Psychology, and honours degree in Development Studies. The student researcher worked in higher education for ten years. The combination of psychology and being a registered counsellor with the HPCSA gave the student researcher the ability to better understand the research process, particularly issues of confidentiality and sensitivity towards how data must be handled. The student researcher has been trained to conduct individual interviews and do thematic analysis in the research module of the Master of Arts in Positive Psychology programme.

5.11 Conflict of Interest

The student researcher is a resident of *Mmotong* village (*Makgofe* section). She knows the tribal leader Mr Manamela who oversees the section where she stays. He will not participate in the research but act as a mediator. The researcher does not know other tribal leaders in other sections or have any relationship with them. The researcher and supervisors have no conflict of interest to declare.

6. Expected Contribution

The findings will contribute to the scientific knowledge on meaning in life in a Sepedi cultural context. Our findings will elucidate the cultural contours that come into play in how meaning is experienced. The results will assist in developing future interventions relevant to the context of the study. Furthermore, the findings will contribute towards integrating the indigenous understanding and perspectives with that of the existing knowledge system towards a universal understanding of the phenomenon, in this case meaning in life, as described by Nwoye (2017).

7. Choice of Journal and Structure of Research Report

The structure of the research report is as follows:

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Summary

Solemn declaration

Preface

Letter of permission

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Approved HREC Application

Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support health-sciences.ac.za/health_ethics

HREC Health Research Ethics Committee (REC-130913-037)

Standard Full Ethics Application Form

to apply for the approval of **single** or **larger**
health and **health-related** scientific projects involving **human participants**
and **biological samples** of **human origin** for research or education/training
HREC 01-01a, version Nov 2016

CONFIDENTIAL! This document contains confidential information intended exclusively for the applicant(s), the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University and the designated reviewers. Should this document or parts thereof come into your possession in error, you are requested to return it to the HREC without delay or destroy it. The unauthorised possession, reading, studying, copying or distribution of this material, or any other form of abuse, is illegal and punishable.

NWU Ethics Number:
(issued upon 1st submission)

NWU00502-19-S1

Instructions and recommended path for the completion of your application:

- a. The research proposal forms the base document that is evaluated in conjunction with this application form. This application form gives the researcher the opportunity to expand on specific ethical issues required for approval.
- b. All applicants complete § 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7.
- c. Select and complete the research-specific sub-sections from § 6 as applicable to the specific requirements of your study (utilise the table of contents).
- d. Ensure that a proposal that has been approved by an appropriate Scientific/Research Proposal Committee is attached to the application form as well as proof of its approval according to the standardised template (see § 4.1).
- e. Also attach an executive summary of the study (see § 4.1.1).
- f. The applicants should ensure that a copy of the informed consent form for approval, that has been compiled according to the informed consent template and checklist supplied by the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support, is submitted with the ethics application form.
- g. Any questionnaires or interview schedules that will be used in the completion of the study have to be attached
- h. Any advertisements that will be used in the study have to be attached
- i. Attach any permission letters received from governing bodies.
- j. Attach any contracts with collaborators/sponsors.
- k. For applications of collaborative studies being conducted on more than one site, it is required that copies of the proposal and the informed consent forms from all centres involved in the study are included with the application.
- l. Attach a 2-page narrative CV for each of the researchers involved in the study.
- m. Liaise with the appropriate officials and colleagues mentioned in § 8, complete and sign a printed copy.
- n. Submit scanned copies of the signed pages.

- o. Include copies of proof of ethics training for all researchers involved in the study (not older than three years).
- p. Submit the completed Ethics Application Form (with all the required attachments) via e-mail to Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za.
- q. All required documentation (as previously outlined) should be attached separately to the e-mail as indicated in point p.
- r. Applicants must please ensure that all required finalised documents as indicated above are included with the application. **No additional attachments or version correction(s) will be accepted.** If this does occur and the application was incomplete, then it will have to be resubmitted with the application form and all the required attachments which could mean that the application may miss the deadline for the closing of the agenda for the HREC meeting.

NWU Ethics Number			
[NWU00502-19-S1]			
Campus	[Potchefstroom Campus]	Faculty	[Health Science]
Principle Investigator/Study Leader	[Angelina Wilson-Fadiji]	Research entity	[AUTHeR]
[Exploring the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in			
Study Title	a Sepedi context]		

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1. SECTION 1: STUDY IDENTIFICATION

Provide the necessary descriptions below to identify this study application:

1.1 Full, descriptive title of the study

Exploring the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context

1.2 Name of the Study Leader/Primary investigator **NB!** Not the student's name

Angelina Wilson-Fadiji

1.3 Name and Surname of the Student (if applicable)

Khomotso Germina Khoza

1.4 Student number

29811414

1.5 Discipline e.g. Consumer sciences

Health Sciences

1.6 Researcher involvement

Self-initiated research with no student involvement	☐
Self-initiated research with student involvement	☐
Honours study for publication purposes	☐
Masters degree	☒
PhD degree	☐
Other: Specify Click here to enter text.	

1.7 Type of study

Single study	☒
Larger study	☐
Single study affiliated to another study	☐
Educational	☐
Other: Specify	Click here to enter text.

1.8 In this study use is made of

Mark ALL options as “Yes” or “No” with X in the appropriate box – more than one option may be marked as “Yes”.

Description		Yes	No
Human participants (subjects)	Qualitative	☒	☐
	Quantitative	☐	☒
	Mixed method	☐	☒
	Other e.g. program evaluation	☐	☒
Filed privileged information (e.g. medical files) or stored biological samples of human origin (e.g. samples collected for another study or medical diagnosis)		☐	☒

1.9 Envisaged commencement and completion date of the study*More information*

Here you can indicate the expected commencement and ending dates of the study, which may be anything from a day to a few years. The full expected duration of the study must be filled in below. Even if the expected duration of the study is uncertain, you can still make an estimate here and report the progress with the annual report. Ensure that the commencement date is at least a few weeks after the date of the HREC meeting at which your application is to be reviewed. The HREC will only grant ethics approval for a one year period. If the study should take longer, a monitoring report requesting permission for continuation must be submitted to the HREC two months before the expiry of the study.

Commencement Date	Completion Date
2020/03/01	2021/03/30

2. SECTION 2: STUDY CLASSIFICATION

Complete every option of all the questions in this section. This section is used to classify your study and select suitable reviewers.

2.1 Name of the Ethics Committee handling the application

NWU-HREC

2.2 Dates of applications

Fill in below the date of the first submission and revised submission (*of applicable*) of this ethics application

Date of first application	Date of revise application (<i>if applicable</i>)
Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter a date.

2.3 Version number

Fill in the number of times this application has been submitted.

Version	1
---------	---

2.4 Estimated risk level

Please indicate the estimated risk level of the research by using the two risk level tables indicated for adult human participants or children/incapacitated adults.

Estimated risk level for adult human participants	
Minimal risk	☒
Medium risk	☐
High risk	☐

Estimated risk level for children/incapacitated adults	
No more than minimal risk of harm (negligible risk)	☐
Greater than minimal risk but provides the prospect of direct benefit for the child/incapacitated adult	☐
Greater than minimal risk with no prospect of direct benefit to the child/incapacitated adult, but a high probability of providing generalizable knowledge	☐

2.5 Context of the Study

Mark ALL options as “Yes” or “No” with X in the appropriate box – more than one option may be “Yes”.

Description	Yes	No
Scientific Research	☒	☐

	Study falls outside a research entity	☐	☒
	Study includes postgraduate students (e.g. masters or doctorate)	☒	☐
	Study includes contract work	☐	☒
Education and training (e.g. undergraduate practicals)	For staff of the North-West University	☐	☒
	For students (undergraduate or postgraduate learners)	☐	☒
	For other learners (not associated with University)	☐	☒

2.6 This study encompasses aspects that require additional ethical explanation

Mark ALL options as “Yes” or “No” with X in the appropriate box – more than one option may be “Yes”. If a specific option is marked please complete the corresponding section in Section 6.

Description	Yes	No
Vulnerable participants	☒	☐
Infection, genetic modification and commercialisation of cell and tissue lines	☐	☒
Use of drugs / medicines	☐	☒
Use of drug delivery systems	☐	☒
Use of food, fluids or nutrients	☐	☒
Use of radio-active substances	☐	☒
Use of toxic substances or dangerous substances	☐	☒
Measuring instruments and questionnaires that need psychometric interpretation	☐	☒
Possible impact on the environment	☐	☒
Any other aspect of potentially ethically sensitive nature (specify below)	☐	☒

Other aspects (specify)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

2.7 For this study the following persons will be included in the study team

Fill in the number concerned with ALL options. Ensure that the participant numbers in this table correspond with the individuals indicated in Section 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4.

More information

The **study leader** is generally viewed as the individual who takes the final responsibility for all aspects of the study e.g. study leader or principle investigator.

The **study supervisor** is generally the individual responsible for the day-to-day management of the study.

Description		Number	
		Local	Foreign
Only for research studies	Study Leader (e.g. study leader/principle investigator)	1	0
	Study supervisor (day to day manager)	2	0
	Co-workers (researchers of the North-West University)	0	0
	Co-workers (researchers outside the North-West University)	0	0
	Co-workers (postgraduate students of the North-West University)	1	0
	Assistants/field workers	0	0
Only for education and training (e.g. undergraduate practicals)	Educator	0	0
	Co-workers (lecturers of the North-West University)	0	0
	Co-workers (lecturers outside the North-West University)	0	0
	Students (undergraduate learners of the North-West University)	0	0
	Students (postgraduate learners of the North-West University)	0	0
	Other learners (not associated with the North-West University)	0	0
	Assistants/field workers	0	0
Sponsors		0	0

Other members of the study team not mentioned above (specify)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

2.8 The following professional supervisory persons are involved in this study (may in no way be directly part of the research team)

More information

Supervisor indicates that the individual is an independent monitor involved during data gathering of the study and acts as an advocate for the participants/patients. (Fill in the number involved in ALL options.

Researcher / Supervisor	Number	Researcher / Supervisor	Number
Supervisory Doctor		Supervisory Psychologist	
Supervisory Nurse		Supervisory Pharmacist	
Supervisory Psychiatrist		Supervisory Social worker	

Other supervisory person (specify)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

I hereby declare that the above information in “Section 2: Study Classification” is complete and correct and that I did not withhold any information.

Yes	No
☒	☐

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

3. SECTION 3: DETAIL OF STUDY LEADER/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, CO-WORKERS AND SUPERVISORS

3.1 Details of Study Leader/Principle investigator

More information

NB! Only NWU staff, or extraordinary professors in collaboration with staff of the North-West University, may register as Study Leaders/Principal Investigators. The Study Leader/Principal Investigator accepts final, overall responsibility for the total study.

Surname	Full Names	Title
Wilson-Fadiji	Angelina	Doctor

NWU Campus	Faculty	Research entity/School
Potchefstroom Campus	Health Science	AUTHeR

Position	University No.	Professional Registration (body & category)
Senior Lecturer	28380746	Click here to enter text.

Telephone			NWU-box or Postal Address
Work	Home	Cell	Internal Box 500, AUTHeR, North-West University: Potchefstroom Campus Potchefstroom 2520 South Africa
018-299-2603.	Click here to enter text.	+27604084832	

E-mail Address

wilson.angelina1311@gmail.com; 28380746@nwu.a.c.za

[PLEASE ATTACH THE TWO-PAGE NARRATIVE CV OF THE STUDY LEADER]

More information

NB! A 2-page CV in a narrative format, giving a brief overview of:

- a researcher's qualifications
- career path to date
- specific research experience applicable to the present study (e.g. methodology or skills required)
- supervisory experience
- publication list (for the past 4 years)

3.2 Details of Study Supervisor

Is the Study Leader also the study supervisor?
(Please mark with X in the appropriate box.)

More information

*Where the Study Leader is not physically present or consistently available and where supervision of the research activities is necessary, a suitable researcher/lecturer may be designated as **study supervisor**. The study supervisor is part of the study team.*

Yes	No
☒	☐

If “Yes”, this part can be left blank.

If “No” (i.e. if the Study Leader is not the Study Supervisor) give details below.

Surname	Full Names	Title

NWU Campus	Faculty	Research entity/School

Position	University no.	Professional Registration (body & category)

Telephone			NWU-box or Postal Address
Work	Home	Cell	

E-mail Address

[PLEASE ATTACH THE TWO-PAGE NARRATIVE CV OF THE STUDY SUPERVISOR]

More information

NB! A 2-page CV in a narrative format, giving a brief overview of:

- a researcher’s qualifications
- career path to date

- *specific research experience applicable to the present study (e.g. methodology or skills required)*
- *supervisory experience*
- *publication list (for the past 4 years) (if applicable)*

3.3 Professional Supervisors

This section is completed if applicable and mentioned in Section 2.8.

More information

Professional supervisor does not refer to the study leader or the study supervisor. In all cases where medical emergencies may possibly arise, the physical presence of a doctor and a registered nurse is required. For the drawing of blood samples (e.g. diet manipulation and similar studies) the presence of a registered nurse is sufficient.

3.3.1 Name and qualifications of all supervisory professional persons

Name	Qualifications	Professional Registration	Function
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

(Type one name per row, or type “Not applicable” if there is no supervisory person.

In last table cell, click on [tab] to add another row)

[PLEASE ATTACH THE TWO-PAGE NARRATIVE CV OF THE PROFFESIONAL SUPERVISOR/S]

More information

NB! *A 2-page CV in a narrative format, giving a brief overview of:*

- *a researcher’s qualifications*
- *career path to date*
- *specific research experience applicable to the present study (e.g. methodology or skills required)*
- *supervisory experience*
- *publication list (for the past 4 years) (if applicable)*

3.4 Other Members of the Study Team

Names, qualifications, professional registration and functions of all the other co-workers (researchers, postgraduate students in the case of a research study, or lecturers (in the case of training) and assistants/field workers who form part of the study team) should be indicated. The information given in this table should correspond with the number of team members given in Section 2.7 (Add extra rows to the table if required.)

Name	Qualifications	Professional Registration	Function
Prof Marie Wissing	PhD (Psychology)	Clinical Psychologist (HPCSA)	Co-Supervisor
Prof. Lusilda Schutte	PhD(Psychology); MSc (Statistics)	Clinical Psychologist (HPCSA)	Co-Supervisor
Khomotso Germina Khoza	BA (Hons) Psychology	Registered Counsellor (HPCSA)	Student -researcher

Note: Type one name per row, or type “none” if there is no other team member.

[PLEASE ATTACH A TWO-PAGE NARRATIVE CV FOR ALL THE MENTIONED RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS IN THIS SECTION]

More information

NB! A 2-page CV in a narrative format, giving a brief overview of:

- a researcher’s qualifications
- career path to date
- specific research experience applicable to the present study (e.g. methodology or skills required)
- supervisory experience
- publication list (for the past 4 years)

3.5 Conflict of Interests and Sponsors (if applicable)

3.5.1 Declare with full details any conflict of interests that any member of the study team or professional supervisor (see § 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4) might have.

More information

Examples of conflict of interest: financial, non-financial: intellectual, bias, overly optimistic promises of potential benefits, role of the researcher/s, desire of professional advancement, desire to make a scientific breakthrough, relationship with participants.

Name of Researcher	Complete description of the conflict and how it will be managed
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Note: Type one name per row, or type “Not applicable” if there is no member of the study team or professional supervisor with a conflict of interest.

3.5.2 Give full details of all sponsors of the study.

Name of Sponsor	Contact Details	Affiliation & Contribution	Nature & Extent
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Note: Type one name per row, or type “Not applicable” if there are no sponsors. Add extra rows to the table if required.

- 3.5.3 Is any participant in the study directly or indirectly involved with one or more of the sponsors or the researchers? Give full details.

Name of Participant	Association with Sponsor/Researcher
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Note: Type one name per row, or type “Not applicable” if there are no such participants. Add extra rows to the table, if required.

- 3.5.4 Does any member of the study team receive any form of remuneration or other benefits from the sponsor(s), either directly or indirectly? Give full details.

Name of Team Member	Details
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Note: Type one name per row, or type “Not applicable” if there are no such team members. Add extra rows to the table if required.

3.6 Collaborations (if applicable)

Declare with full details all collaboration agreements, e.g. with researchers or lecturers from another institution, national or international, who will be working on a defined section of the study.

More information

Your local team may collaborate with a team from a different national institution in South Africa or internationally, and thereby incorporate and benefit from their expertise and/or facilities. Typically, in such cases, functions and responsibilities differ for certain parts of the study. These functions and responsibilities must be fully described.

Name of Collaborator	National/International (Indicate which)	Full Description of functions and responsibilities
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Note: Type one name per row, or type “Not applicable” if there are no contractors. Add extra rows to table, if required.

3.7 Contractual Agreements (if applicable)

Declare with full details all contractual agreements (e.g. with team members, collaborators and sponsors) on the study. Please note: A copy of any contractual agreements must be submitted to the Health Research Ethics Committee, together with the submission of this application. Add extra rows to the table, if required.

More information

Sometimes there are contractual obligations with co-workers or organisations outside the University. These contractual obligations may e.g. place restrictions on certain aspects on the availability of raw data i.t.o. intellectual right of ownership. Particularly where foreign co-workers are involved, these contracts can get complex. Therefore you must indicate here what these contractual obligations encompass, whether the University approved and sanctioned it and declare and describe any other potential legal and ethical implications thereof.

Name of Contractor	Full Description of the agreement
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Note: Type one name per row, or type “Not applicable” if there are no contractors. Add extra rows to the table, if required.

[PLEASE ATTACH ALL CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS]

3.8 Confidentiality

Note: Other people involved in the research that could pose a risk to confidentiality should sign confidentiality agreements e.g. transcribers and co-coder/s.

[PLEASE ATTACH ALL CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS (SEE CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS AS APPROVED BY THE LEGAL OFFICE OF THE NWU)]

3.9 Indemnity

Note: If people are involved in the research as part of the research team but are not as staff on the payroll of the university or by contract on the payroll of the university, they will not be covered by the insurance of the university and have to sign an indemnity form.

[PLEASE ATTACH ALL INDEMNITY FORMS (SEE INDEMNITY FORMS AS APPROVED BY THE LEGAL OFFICE)]

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

4. SECTION 4: RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE APPROVAL

4.1 Executive summary and research proposal

4.1.1 Executive summary of the study

Provide an executive summary (maximum 150 words) of the study in the following format:

- brief problem statement (approx. 3 sentences)
- aims and objectives of the study
- study design and method

Executive Summary

Researchers in Positive Psychology usually consider meaning as one aspect of happiness or good life (Wong, 2011). The ability to find meaning and purpose in life has been well-defined as making sense of one's life (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013). It is a fundamental mechanism for handling hardship (Kalayjian & Eugene, 2010). Although there is a preponderance of literature on meaning in the Western countries, there is minimal evidence from specific cultural groups such as tribal leaders in the Sepedi context in the Limpopo province, South Africa. Given that, the study aims to understand the experiences among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context. The intended research will make use of qualitative research techniques where an exploratory research design will be applied. It can best be achieved by speaking directly with people and permitting them to tell the stories free from the researcher's anticipations or bias encountered in the literature (Creswell, 2013).

Participants will be recruited through a non-probability purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews will be used to collect data, and thematic analysis will be used to analyze the data. The proposed study seeks to add to existing knowledge on meaning in life from a culture-sensitive perspective. |

4.1.2 Proposal

Note: For each study a descriptive proposal has to be submitted and is used as the main document for evaluation. The proposal should reflect the ethics of the research throughout. Attach a proposal approved by the Scientific/Proposal Committee of your research entity.

[KG KHOZA proposal -04 August 2019.docx](#)

4.1.3 Scientific/Proposal Committee approval

This study should have been reviewed and approved by a Scientific/Proposal Committee.

More information

The proposal needs to be approved by a Scientific/Proposal Committee before it will be reviewed by the HREC. The HREC relies on the scientific expertise of this committee regarding the evaluation of the scientific merit and design of the study.

Yes ☒	Details	
	Name of formal Scientific/Proposal Committee:	Africa Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research Scientific Committee
	Title, initials and surname of all the members of Scientific/Proposal Committee present during the review.	Prof Petra Bester Dr Lanthe Kruger Dr S Prinsloo Dr C Chidrawi
	Date of approval:	2019/08/14
No ☐	Reason:	Click here to enter text.

4.1.4 Letter confirming approval of protocol

The HREC has to have proof of confirmation of approval by the Scientific/Proposal Committee.

[ATTACH CONFIRMATION OF APPROVAL OF THE STUDY PROPOSAL BY THE SCIENTIFIC/PROPOSAL COMMITTEE ON THE MANDATED TEMPLATE.]

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

5. SECTION 5: ADDITIONALLY REQUIRED INFORMATION ABOUT ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH NOT PROVIDED IN THE PROPOSAL

Note: The information contained in this section is *additional* to what is contained in the proposal.

5.1 What will be expected of participants during data gathering?

What will be expected of participants during data gathering e.g. a one hour interview, venepuncture, needle prick, etc.

More information

Highlight what participants will be expected to do and what will be done to them, and how long it will take? This includes aspects such as procedures, sample collections and methods of information gathering and what the probable associated experience of participants will be. Provide particular details on any step that might violate privacy e.g. having to undress. This section supports you in the completion of the section in the informed consent form entitled, “What will your responsibilities be?”

Participants will participate in individual interviews, which will take place at their respective homes. Arrangements will be made before the commencement of the interviews with the participants about the nature of the interviews; what is expected from them, including the environment where the interviews should take place; for example, we need a quiet place where there won't be any interruptions, place with less noise and whereby the participants will feel comfortable during the interviews. The dates and time will also be agreed on beforehand for participants to prepare themselves and make necessary preparations to ensure that the dates do not clash with their planned personal duties. The research team has decided to use interviews as a technique to collect data. All the questions will be asked during one data collection session, which is the telephone interview. Participants will be expected to participate in an approximately 40 to 60 minutes interview. All questions will have some probing questions to elicit further information. The whole activity will last about five days and will commence in August 2020. |

5.2 Risks and precautions

Name and explain *all the possible risks* for *all procedures* that the participants might experience during the research. Use the template at the back of the approved risk level descriptor document to guide you into identifying all the possible types of risk as well as the probability and magnitude of harm. Ensure that you also include the reference to various biological sampling techniques e.g. venepuncture, buccal swabs, etc. By completing this section it will help you to answer the two sections on “Are there risks involved in your taking part in research?” and “What will happen in the unlikely event of some form of harm occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?” in the informed consent form.

Risks (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal, economic, dignitary and community) Identify all the possible risks.	Precautions (When describing these precautions be clear on how they will mitigate all the identified risks)
Possible feelings of boredom or fatigue. Emotional distress due to past experiences that may be elicited by the interview.	To minimize the risks and to deal with the issue of fatigue and boredom, the student researcher will allow the participants to take short breaks during the interviews. The participants will be allowed to stretch their legs for 5 minutes after every 20 minutes during the interviews. Participants will be informed before the discussion to alert the student researcher should they feel a need to rest during the process of data gathering. The student researcher will request the participants to sit on comfortable couches or chairs with pillows for those who want to support their backs or legs. Should a participant display emotional distress during the research, the student researcher will refer the affected participants to a counsellor which is already arranged. Necessary arrangements will be communicated with the counsellor before the study commences. The contact details of the counsellor are provided in the Informed consent forms.

5.3 Benefits for participants

Describe 1) the potential *direct* benefits that the study might hold for the *individual participants*; or 2) the *indirect* benefits that the study holds for the *society at large* or for *the researchers and the organisations/institutions* they are working for, through the knowledge gained. By completing this section it will help you to answer the section on “Will you benefit from taking part in this research” in the informed consent form.

Direct benefits for participants	Indirect benefits for society at large or for the researchers/institution
There will be no direct benefits for participants of this study	

Participants can have a chance to contribute toward the knowledge domain on meaning in life in African contexts, and their contribution may profit the community and society at large

The community at large may benefit from the study, as the findings may allow the younger and older generation to learn more about the different cultural sources of meaning in the lives of leaders in the Sepedi context.

5.4 Risk/benefit ratio analysis

The overall benefits should, in general, *always outweigh the risks*, for a study to be considered ethical. If this is not the case, there needs to be a *strong justification* for why research ethics approval should be given.

Benefit outweighs the risks

☒

Risks outweigh the benefit

☐

Justify:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

5.5 Facilities

Describe the place(s) and facilities in detail where the study will be implemented. This description is applicable to both institutions and the community. Also describe the availability of measures to handle emergencies in an applicable manner and how this will be executed.

Participants' homes will be used to conduct the interviews. Participants will be asked to ensure that the places are comfortable, warm, and well ventilated. The aged participants will be advised to use the chairs with pillows to support their legs and backs. They will request to sit at places that have less noise and with closing doors to prevent intrusion. If they take care of their grandchildren, they will be asked to make prior arrangements with their family members to assist them when they are busy with the interviews.

5.6 Legal authorisation

Describe in detail *which bodies* must grant legal authorisation for this study (e.g. Department of Health, Medicine Control Council, etc.). Mention *whether authorisation has already been obtained*, with reference to attached proof, or *how you will go about getting authorisation* before the study commences.

Conditional approval will be granted to obtain this authorisation, but the study cannot commence before the HREC has received the final documents.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

[PLEASE UPLOAD ALL DOCUMENTS INDICATING LEGAL AUTHORISATION]

5.7 Goodwill permission /consent

Describe in detail *what interest group representatives* must give permission for this study (e.g. community leaders, church leaders, tribal chiefs or other). Also mention *whether permission has already been obtained*, with reference to attached proof, or *how you will go about getting* permission before the study commences.

Conditional approval will be granted until proof of goodwill permission has been granted but the study cannot commence before the HREC has received the final documents.

The student will make two requests through the office of the King's secretary; one will be to request goodwill permission from the King to carry out the study and permission to meet with the Tribal Authority committee for assistance. After receiving the goodwill permission letter from the King, another request will be made to meet with Tribal Authority committee to meet up with them during their meetings to present or inform them about the intended study and to seek permission to use the tribal leaders in the intended study and assistance in with the appointment of the mediator and independent person. The student researcher will then request to meet with the tribal leaders of four villages, namely: Ga Komape, Chebeng, Sengatane and Mabokelele villages. The reason for the meeting will be to tell them about the intended study and distribute the research advert for further reading

[\[Addendum B \(letter to the chief\) new.docx\]](#)

5.8 Criteria for participant selection and recruitment

Describe in full which inclusion and exclusion criteria will be used to select participants and justify each of your choices. If you include one of the following in your exclusion/inclusion criteria, the need for it in the research has to be justified i.e. *race or ethnic origin, person's health or sex life, a person's inherited characteristics or biometric information*. Ensure that your exclusion criteria are not merely the opposite of the inclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria	Justification
1.Participants should be fluent in Sepedi or English.	The student researcher needs information about the way Sepedi Tribal leaders understand and experience meaning in life as well as their cultural sources of meaning in life. The selected villages are under the
2.Tribal leaders (male or female) with at least three years of experience (Ntona) in leading Moletjie community to ensure that	

participants can comprehensively discuss the research topic. 3. Participants should be willing to be voice recorded during interviews. 4. Must be residents at Ga Komape, Sengatane, Chebeng, and Mabokelele villages. 5. Must have a mobile phone	Leadership of King Moloto which forms part of Moletjie Tribal Authorities. To address the aims of the study, the researcher needs people with Sepedi knowledge and custodians of the culture. One of the requirements of being the tribal leaders in touch with the roots and cultures of the communities they serve so that they can pass the knowledge to the community and young generation. Participants should agree to be voice recorded because the device will assist the researcher in capturing all the information.
Exclusion criteria If the participants do not adhere to the inclusion criteria will be excluded from participating in the research.	Justification These exclusion criteria were chosen based on the location of the study, a number of years as an experienced tribal leader who is knowledgeable in the Sepedi customs. Individuals who do not want to be recorded were excluded because it will difficult to make handwritten notes and language was limited to English or Sepedi because these are the two-mode of communication common at the sites of the study.

5.9 Participant recruitment

Recruitment of human participants must take place within a specified time frame/schedule (i.e. specified starting and ending date) and cannot continue indefinitely. Explain how you will go about recruiting the participants.

More information

This process should take place in such a way that the participants do not feel intimidated by the process or implicitly “bribed”, but decide absolutely voluntarily to participate. It should be fair and equitable. Include aspects of community entry e.g. advertisements, community advisory boards and the use of gatekeepers and mediators, etc.

Participants will be recruited through the non-probability purposive sampling technique. Motivated by the challenges that often arise when researching communities, the district of

Moletjie will be selected to recruit participants as the researcher has an existing relationship with the community's prospective gatekeepers. Mr Manamela will act as the mediator for the Moletjie Tribal Authority. He will assist the researcher in approaching the committee. The request will be made through the Moletjie Tribal Authority committee's office to meet up with the tribal leaders of four villages: *Ga Komape*, *Sengatane*, *Chebeng*, and *Mabokelele* meetings to present or inform them about the intended study. A list of the villages was obtained, and then four were selected based on their geographical location around Moletjie and to ensure maximum variation in participants' responses. The gatekeepers (ward councillors) of the villages will assist the first author to approach the communities and the tribal leaders. Once all parties involved in the research have been informed of the study, the researcher will distribute pamphlets in the selected villages to recruit participants to accommodate those who did not attend the meeting. The pamphlet will indicate that prospective participants can contact either the researcher or the independent person if they have any questions about the research. The recruitment of participants will be transparent and without making use of force and intimidation. |

5.10 Informed consent (consent, permission, assent, and dissent)

The focus in this section is on a detailed informed consent *process description*. According to law all participants must be fully informed about the implications and risks associated with participation in the study.

More information

How will you go about contacting them and explaining the study and accompanying implications to all participants? Ensure that participants are aware that participation in the research is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time. Where research is not carried out in participants' mother tongue, explain how you will go about conveying the information in an understandable manner. Where participants are not literate, a witness should be involved in obtaining informed consent. Be clear on who will obtain the informed consent (independent person) and how the researcher will be included to explain the research and answer questions. Discuss the role of the independent person. For your convenience you can use the template for informed consent as well as the accompanying checklist. Be clear on your description of the use of consent, permission, assent and dissent. For minors ensure that parental permission and child assent or adolescent consent (where applicable) is obtained for all participants.

| Participants will receive the informed consent forms via courier services. The researcher will also explain to the participants the purpose of the study telephonically. Participants will be given adequate time (one week) to allow them to consider their involvement in the research. After a week, the researcher will contact participants again to enquire whether they are interested in participating. The participants will be provided with airtime vouchers worth R100. The researcher will call the participants to schedule the date to obtain informed

consent. The researcher will contact the participants on the agreed dates to take them through informed consent. The participants will be requested to co-sign the informed consent with their witnesses. The researcher will also co-sign the informed consent with a witness. The whole process will be video recorded via WhatsApp. The participants who do not have the smart phones that can make receive video calls will be audio recorded with the participants' permission. The researcher will then schedule an interview time with the participant. The researcher will then seek verbal re-consent from the research participants who agreed to participate in the telephone interview on the interview date. The researcher will cover the cost of the telephone calls and airtime vouchers. The signed original informed consent will be collected after the lockdown has completely lifted. |

[[Addendum C \(Informed consent\) FINAL .docx](#) [HREC ICF Checklist June2018 \(5\).docm](#)

5.11 Incentives and/or remuneration of participants

Is any form of incentive and/or reimbursement offered to the participants?

If “Yes”, describe it in full in terms of *what, how, where, when, how much, terms and conditions*, etc. Remember to work according to the TIE principle (time, inconvenience, expenses e.g. transport and meals).

If no remuneration is offered, *justify why this is not the case* (Please mark with X in the relevant block and provide details).

Yes	No	Description
☐	☒	There will not be any direct compensation for participants in the research. The participants will be provided with the airtime vouchers worth R100 to contact the researcher and the counselor and facilitate the video call for signing the informed consent form. The participants will be given money worth R50 as a token of appreciation for participating in the study. The researcher will send the money via money market vouchers services to the participant's mobile phones after the interviews.

5.12 Announcement of study results to participants

Indicate *what, how, when, and to whom* you will communicate the results of the study to the participants.

What?	Findings/Brief report
How?	The researcher will schedule a meeting within three months after having received a final positive outcome for the study in which feedback will be

	given verbally to all four villages, simultaneously to ensure that anonymity and confidentiality remain protected. The researcher will also use the psychodrama technique to provide feedback to participants. The participants will roleplay by switching the role and share their experiences of what they have felt in the role and what came up for them. This will help the participants to express themselves fully and let go of the feelings they do not want. It will also assist the participants in getting perspectives of what is going in their lives and others' lives. The researcher will seek training before conducting the technique. The findings will be presented to the King and Tribal Authority committee. The student researcher will telephonically contact the participants and invite them to a feedback session where results will be shared
When?	After the completion of the study
To whom?	Participants

5.13 Privacy and Confidentiality

Explain how you will ensure both privacy and confidentiality throughout the research.

Privacy

Privacy is concerned with who has access to *personal information and records* about the participant as well as *privacy during physical measurements* e.g. anthropometric measures or *psychological procedures* e.g. interviews/focus groups. Explain how privacy will be ensured in your study.

The privacy of research participants will be protected. To protect the participant's identity, pseudonyms will be used. Privacy will be ensured by managing any external interference in the interviews. To ensure privacy at the participant's home, arrangements will be made before the commencement of the interviews with the participants about the nature of the interviews and what is expected from them, including the environment where the interviews should take place, for example, we need a quiet place where there won't be any interruptions, a place which is warm and well ventilated and comfortable. The dates and times will also be agreed on beforehand for participants to prepare themselves and make necessary arrangements if they have family responsibilities to take care of.

The researcher will conduct the interviews in the venue, which will give her some privacy and prevent disturbances. The researcher will ensure that the interviews are conducted behind the closed door and will further put up the meeting notices in progress, and "a do not disturb" sign will be placed on the door to protect from instruction. |

Confidentiality

Confidentiality ensures that *appropriate measures* will be implemented to *prevent disclosure of information* that might identify the participant either during the course of the research or afterwards e.g. anonymising data or pooling results. Explain how confidentiality will be ensured in your study.

The transcriber will have access to the interview content and recordings to do the transcriptions. They will be shared through One drive through the link with restricted access. The password will be created to protect other people from accessing the data. The system allows the people who are having access to view who worked on the documents and the researcher will be able to monitor the access and delete the data once the co-coding is finalised. The transcriber and the co-coder will be requested to sign a confidentiality contract to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. The findings will be used for the intended purpose as stated in the proposal, per ethical principles and no manipulation of or changes to the data will be made. The data will be kept for future use and this will be adequately communicated to participants. The ethics approval will be sought by future researchers before the data will be used and the rights of participants will not be compromised. The findings will not be accessible to anyone who is not part of or directly involved in the study. Findings will be kept safe by locking the biographical data, signed informed consent form, transcribed data, and electronic file in a locked cupboard in the student- researcher's office as well as the study supervisor's office in NWU. The recordings will be removed from the audio recorders directly after the interview and will be stored on a password-protected computer. All recorded interview discussions will be removed from the recording device as soon as it has been transferred to the student researcher's password-protected computer. The data will be deleted from the recorder and mobile phones after they are safely saved on the computer. Data will also be stored for seven years after the completion of the study at the NWU, after which it will be destroyed by a member of the research team, but the student-researcher will ultimately be responsible to ensure this is done |

5.14 Management, storage, and destruction of data/biological samples

Describe how you will manage the collected data/biological samples as well as the storage thereof.

Data/biological samples management

For management of data/biological samples, indicate:

- what data/biological samples will be stored
- how it will be stored
- how data in its various forms will be managed e.g. questionnaires, recorded interviews or biological samples
- who will manage the data/biological samples storage
- who will have access to the stored data/biological samples

- how will data be regained from other research team members
- and if data sharing is to occur, how will this be managed?

Ensure that you refer to both *electronic* and *hard copy versions* of data as well as *biological samples*.

During the process of data gathering and data analysis, hard copies of transcribed data, biographical data, and signed consent forms will be stored in a lockable cabinet at the student's office. The electronic data will also be kept on a password-protected, virus-free computer by the student-researcher and the study supervisors. The audio-recording will be transferred to a password-protected computer directly after the interviews and the student will immediately delete all the recordings from the recording devices. The student researcher's laptop will be locked away for security reasons when the researcher is not working on the research. Collected data will be stored in this manner for the entire research process. The student researcher will be handling the information and will ensure that all biographical data, signed informed consent form, transcribed data and electronic data are kept safe |

Storage and destruction of data/biological samples

Describe:

- where and how data/biological samples will be stored
- for how long it will be stored
- who will be responsible for storage
- how it will be destroyed?

Ensure that you refer to both *electronic* and *hard copy versions* of data as well as *biological samples*

The raw data will be stored in the NWU storage in a locked office. The electronic data will be kept on a password-protected, virus-free computer in a locked office at the NWU. Since the requirement is to keep the data safe for seven years, all the collected data will be destroyed by a member of the research team after receiving formal authorisation from records management at the NWU to destroy the data. The student researcher will ultimately be responsible to ensure that the electronic data will be deleted. The student-researcher's cloud facility (one drive) at the Human Sciences Research Council will be used to store the data. |

5.15 Monitoring of research

Describe how you as the researcher will monitor:

- both the *implementation and progress* of the research
- compliance with the approved protocol
- the management of ethics throughout the research process
- the management of amendments during the execution of the research study, should they be needed
- how *incidents and adverse events/serious adverse events* (if applicable) will be reported.

To comply with the requirements of HREC, the supervisor will submit a monitoring report annually. The study leaders will supervise and ensure that the research is done as described in the approved protocol. If needed, amendments will be done only after consulting with the supervisors, and a letter of approval from the HREC. The student researcher has received some prior training in conducting qualitative interviews. To ensure the quality of the research, participants will review the results before transcription and the co coder will work independently to minimize the biases of the researcher.

5.16 Misleading of participants (if applicable)

Is use made of any form of misleading in the research, where the participants are not told the complete truth (e.g. placebo or psychotherapeutic interventions)?

More information

*In the case of using a placebo (e.g. drug or psychotherapeutic intervention), justification has to be provided that there is no alternative treatment with proven efficacy. When such an alternative treatment exists, the **standard of care** should be provided to both the experimental and control group.*

If “Yes”, in either case of using a placebo or during a psychotherapeutic intervention:

- justify in full why it is necessary
- describe how the participants will be protected against potential negative consequences of the placebo or misleading information/action.
- when you will disclose and debrief
- describe how you will disclose to them that they were misled.

Yes	No	Justification	Precautionary measures
☐	☒	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Disclosure			
		When?	How?
		Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

5.17 Use of previously collected data/biological samples (if applicable)

When your research study is making use of previously collected data or biological samples, provide a comprehensive description of the following.

What was the purpose of the original collection?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

What will your purpose be?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Give a description of how research integrity was ensured in the original study by referring to:

- how informed consent was obtained from participants
- what they consented for
- the circumstances under which the data/biological samples were gathered
- how the ethics of data/biological sample collection was ensured?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Give a detailed description of:

- how data/biological sample storage was managed
- where and how data/biological samples were stored
- for how long it was stored
- who was responsible for storage
- how it was ensured that no tampering occurred?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Foreseeable risks for participants or researchers involved in using the previously collected data/biological samples?

Risks

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Participants:

Researchers:

Precautions

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Will re-consent be necessary?

If “Yes” motivate:

- why
- for what
- how this re-consent will be obtained.

Yes	No	Why?	Click here to enter text.
☐	☐	For what?	Click here to enter text.
		How?	Click here to enter text.

[ATTACH A LETTER FROM THE STUDY LEADER/PI GIVING PERMISSION FOR THE USE OF THE DATA/BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES]

[ATTACH THE ETHICAL APPROVAL OF THE ORIGINAL STUDY]

[ATTACH THE INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR RE-CONSENT (IF APPLICABLE)]

5.18 Use of filed privileged information (if applicable)

Filed privileged information may be used for research purposes with the research ethics committee *waiving informed consent*. Give a detailed description of the process under the following headings.

The nature of the information to be used:

[Click here to enter text.]

Process of obtaining permission/ethical approval for access:

[Click here to enter text.]

Process of data collection:

[Click here to enter text.]

Process of anonymization of the data:

[Click here to enter text.]

Foreseeable risks for participants whose filed privileged information is being accessed:

Risks

[Click here to enter text.]

Precautions

[Click here to enter text.]

5.19 Justifiability of statistical procedures

5.19.1 Statistical consultation

Indicate how you ensured the suitability of the statistical procedures to be used in this study e.g. consultation or proof of expertise.

[Click here to enter text.]

5.19.2 Justification of sample size

Indicate how the sample size was determined e.g. power calculation or previously reported study designs.

Click here to enter text.

5.19.3 Method of randomisation (if applicable)

If randomisation is to be used in this study, please indicate the manner by which randomisation will be assured.

Click here to enter text.

5.19.4 Statistical methodology

Describe the means by which the statistical analyses will be conducted i.e. descriptive statistics, comparisons to be made, specific statistical tests to be used and the manner in which co-variance will be corrected for.

Click here to enter text.

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6. SECTION 6: MATTERS THAT NECESSITATE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

6.1 Sec 6a: Vulnerable participants

Please complete this section if your study includes *minors, adults with incapacities, persons in dependent relationships e.g. prisoners, students, persons with physical disabilities, collectivities and research-naïve communities*. (Mark ALL options as “Yes” or “No” with X in the appropriate box – more than one option may be “Yes”).

Description	Yes	No
Minors	☐	☒
Adults with incapacities	☐	☒
Persons in dependent relationships e.g. prisoners	☐	☒
Students	☐	☒
Persons with physical disabilities	☐	☒
Collectivities	☐	☒
Research-naïve communities	☐	☒
Other	☐	☒
Specify: Click here to enter text.		

6.1.1 Description

Give a detailed description of the vulnerable group by referring to:

- who they are
- where they come from
- what makes them vulnerable.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

6.1.2 Justification for inclusion

Explain the necessity for including this specific group of vulnerable people as human participants (subjects) indicating the *direct benefit to the participants themselves* or the *indirect benefit of an improved scientific understanding*.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

6.1.3 Additional precautionary measures to reduce the risk of harm

Explain any additional precautionary measures you will take to reduce the possibility of harm.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6.2 Sec 6b: Infection, genetic modification and commercialisation of cell and tissue lines

6.2.1 What will you be doing with the cell or tissue line?

Infection of the cell or tissue line	☐
Genetic modification of the cell or tissue line	☐
Commercialisation of the cell or tissue line	☐

6.2.2 Number

How many cell and/or tissue lines will be used in the study?

Description	Number
Cell lines	0
Tissue lines	0

[OPEN UP THE APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF SPACES IN SECTION 6.2.3 ACCORDING TO 6.2.2]

6.2.3 Product information

Provide detailed product information, so that the reviewers can evaluate the ethically justifiable use of the cell and tissue lines. Give the necessary details below.

More information

Human origin and consent:

For standard cell and/or tissue cultures from banks such as the ATCC consent already exists for general, ethically justifiable and medically related research.

Potential dangers and risks:

*Tissue banks such as the ATCC classify cell and/or tissue cultures as “bio safety level 1, 2 or 3”, depending on potential for infection with pathogens which may be harmful to man, or cancerous characteristics that would make growth in a person possible after undesirable, accidental inoculation. **NB!** These cell cultures may never be used in people.*

Cell Line or Tissue Line			
[Click here to enter text.]			
Approved Name & Code		Description	
[Click here to enter text.]		[Click here to enter text.]	
Source / Origin / Supplier		Catalogue No.	Biosafety level?
[Click here to enter text.]		[Click here to enter text.]	Level 1 ☐
			Level 2 ☐
			Level 3 ☐
Method of Storage and Maintenance			
[Click here to enter text.]			
Potential Dangers		Precautionary measures	
[Click here to enter text.]		[Click here to enter text.]	
Other Relevant Information			
[Click here to enter text.]			

To add additional tables, copy the whole table above (select, then press Ctrl + C), click here, press enter and then paste (Ctrl + V).

6.2.4 What is the infectious agent to be used (if applicable)?

[Click here to enter text.]

6.2.5 Has the participant given informed consent for commercialisation of their cell line?

Yes	No	If “Yes” attach a copy of the completed informed consent form
☐	☐	If “No”, justify why not:
		[Click here to enter text.]

6.2.6 Has a benefit sharing agreement been undertaken with the participant if commercialisation of their cell line is being undertaken?

If “Yes” attach the agreement. If “No” justify why this is the case.

Yes	No	If “Yes” attach a copy of the completed benefit sharing document
☐	☐	If “No”, justify why not:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

6.2.7 Expertise and facilities

Do you have the necessary expertise to work with the cell and/or tissue cultures? Provide full details. Mark “Yes” or “No” with X in the appropriate box. Provide additional details as requested.

Yes	Details	
☐	Principal investigator	Researchers/Students/Fieldworkers
	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
No	How do you plan to get the expertise required?	
☐	Principal investigator	Researchers/Students/Fieldworkers
	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

6.2.8 Facilities

Describe the facilities that are in place to work with the cell and/or tissue line.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

6.2.9 Biosafety

Explain the measures you have in place to protect the safety of researchers/workers/the environment against the potential detrimental effects of the infection, genetic modification or commercialisation of the cell and/or tissue and waste. Also specify methods and safety measures for the disposal of cell and/or tissue cultures. If available, attach the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of these processes.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6.3 Sec 6c: Use of Drugs/Medicines

Please complete this section if any drugs or medicines are used or administered in this study.

6.3.1 Number

How many types of drugs / medicines will be used in the study? If more than one dosage form or brand name of the same drug (active ingredient) is used, it must be counted and mentioned separately. Where applicable, placebos must also be mentioned and calculated.

Description of Drugs / medication	Dosage
-----------------------------------	--------

Click here to enter text.

Click here to enter text.

[OPEN UP THE APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF SPACES IN SECTION 6.3.2 ACCORDING TO 6.3.1]

6.3.2 Product information

Provide detailed product information as requested

Drug 1			
Approved Pharmacological (Generic) Name		Brand Name(s) (if applicable)	
Click here to enter text.		Click here to enter text.	
Registered at the MCC-SA? ¹		If "Yes", MCC-SA Registration Number ²	If registered at the MCC-SA, is this for the indications, dosages and administrations as used in this study? Provide details where necessary.
Yes	No	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
☐	☐		
Accepted Dosage(s)		Accepted Administration Route(s)	
Click here to enter text.		Click here to enter text.	
Pharmacological Action, Therapeutic Effects & Indications		Side-effects, Precautions & Contra-indications	
Click here to enter text.		Click here to enter text.	
Other Relevant Information			
Click here to enter text.			
Proof of preclinical approval of the product			
Click here to enter text.			

To add additional tables, copy the whole table above (select, then press Ctrl + C), click here, press enter and then paste (Ctrl + V).

¹ MCC-SA = Medicine Control Council of South Africa.

² The MCC-SA registration number can be found on medicine product leaflets.

6.3.3 Special authorisation for use in humans:

If any of the medication is not registered with the Medicine Control Council or, if it is registered but the study deals with indications for which it is not specifically registered, or if other doses, dosages, dosage forms or administration routes are used than what is registered, special approval must be obtained for the clinical test from the Medicine Control Council.

Has such special authorisation been obtained? Please mark with X in the appropriate box and complete further as applicable.

Yes	No	Authorisation Number	Date of Authorisation
☐	☐	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter a date.

If “Yes” please upload a copy of the approval letter. If “No” please explain the manner in which you plan to go about obtaining approval before the study begins.

NB! Final approval of the application by the HREC is dependent on the approval of the study by the Medicine Control Council. No study may continue before written approval is obtained.

[PLEASE UPLOAD MCC APPROVAL LETTER]

6.3.4 Explain the measures that will be in place to protect the workers, participants and the environment against the potential side-effects of the medicinal substances and waste (disposal).

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6.4 Sec 6d: Use of drug delivery systems

Please complete this section if any drug delivery systems are used or administered in this study.

6.4.1 Number

How many types of drug delivery systems will be used in the study? If more than one dosage form of a drug delivery system is used, it must be counted and mentioned separately.

Description of drug delivery system	Dosage
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

[OPEN UP THE APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF SPACES IN SECTION 6.4.2 ACCORDING TO 6.4.1]

6.4.2 Drug delivery system information

Provide detailed drug delivery system information as requested. ? If more than one drug delivery system is used, it must be counted and mentioned separately.

Drug delivery system 1

Approved Name

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Registered at the MCC-SA?		If “Yes”, MCC-SA Registration Number	If registered at the MCC-SA, is this for the indications, dosages and administrations as used in this study? Provide details where necessary.
Yes	☐	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
No	☐		

Accepted Dosage(s)	Proof of Accepted Administration Route(s)
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Side-effects	Contra-indications	Precautions
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Other Relevant Information

[Click here to enter text.](#)

[To add additional tables, copy the whole table above (select, then press Ctrl + C), click here, press enter and then paste (Ctrl + V).]

6.4.3 Special authorisation for use in humans

If any of the drug delivery systems are not registered with the Medicine Control Council or, if it is registered but the study deals with indications for which it is not specifically registered, or if other doses, dosages, dosage forms or administration routes are used than what is registered, special approval must be obtained for the clinical test from the Medicine Control Council. Has such special

authorisation been obtained? Please mark with X in the appropriate box and complete further as applicable.

Yes	No	Authorisation Number	Date of Authorisation
☐	☐	Type no. here, or type "Not Applicable".	Click here to enter a date.

If "Yes" please upload a copy of the approval letter.

If "No" please explain the manner in which you plan to go about obtaining approval before the study begins.

NB! Final approval of the application by the HREC is dependent on the approval of the study by the Medicine Control Council. No study may continue before written approval is obtained.

[If "No" type explanation here, or type "Not Applicable".]

[PLEASE UPLOAD MCC APPROVAL LETTER]

- 6.4.4 Explain the measures that will be in place to protect the workers, participants and the environment against the potential side-effects of the drug delivery system and waste (disposal).

[Click here to enter text.]

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6.5 Sec 6e: Use of Food, Fluids or Nutrients

Please complete this section if any food, fluids or nutrients (alone or in combination) are used or administered in this study. This also applies to dangers with abuse, whether or not it holds any potential danger for people, animals or the environment.

Note: This does not include the provision of a regular plate of food for maintenance during residence.

6.5.1 Number

How many kinds of food, fluids or nutrients will be used in the study?

More information

If more than one dosage form or brand name of the food, fluids or nutrient is used, it must be counted and mentioned separately. Placebos are also included, except if the placebo treatment includes no administration.

Description	Number
Food	0
Fluids	0
Nutrients / nutrient combinations	0

[OPEN UP THE APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF SPACES IN SECTION 6.5.2 ACCORDING TO 6.5.1]

6.5.2 Product information:

Provide detailed product information, so that the reviewers can evaluate the ethically justifiable use of the food, fluids and nutrients.

Food, Fluid or Nutrient

Approved Name	Normal Quantities and Uses
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Potential Dangers with Abuse	Contra-indications	Precautions
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Other Relevant Information & Literature References

Click here to enter text.

[To add additional tables, copy the whole table above (select, then press Ctrl + C), click here, press enter and then paste (Ctrl + V).]

6.5.3 Explain the measures that will be in place to protect the workers, participants and the environment against the potential detrimental effects of the food, fluids or nutrients and waste.

Click here to enter text.

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6.6 Sec 6f: Use of Radio-Active Substances

6.6.1 Description:

Where any radio-active substances are used in experiments or administered to participants, give full details thereof, including the isotopes and possible risks it may hold for the participants/researchers/workers/environment.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

6.6.2 Competence and licensing:

Do you have the necessary competence and licensing from the Department of Health at your disposal to work with radio-active substances? Mark “Yes” or “No” with X in the appropriate box. Provide the authorisation number if “Yes”.

Yes	Details	
☐	Study leader	Researchers/Students/ /Fieldworkers
	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
	Authorisation number	Click here to enter text.
No	How do you plan to get the expertise required?	
☐	Study leader	Students/Researchers/Fieldworkers
	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

Attach a copy of the approval certificate from the Radiation Control Officer.

[PLEASE UPLOAD THE APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE RADIATION CONTROL OFFICER]

6.6.3 Facilities

Describe the facilities and procedures to ensure safe use and disposal of the radio-active substances? Explain the measures you have in place to protect the safety of participants/researchers/workers/environment against the potential detrimental effects of the radio-active substances and waste. If applicable, also specify methods and safety measures for the disposal of radio-active contaminated body fluids and tissue.

[Type here](#)

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6.7 Sec 6g: Use of Toxic Substances or Dangerous Substances

Please complete this section if any toxic or dangerous substances are used or administered in this study. This also applies to dangers with abuse, whether or not it holds any potential danger for people, animals or the environment.

6.7.1 Number

How many toxic substances/dangerous substances will be used in the study?

Description	Number
Toxic substances	0
Other dangerous substances	0

6.7.2 Product information

Provide detailed product information, so that the reviewers can evaluate the ethically justifiable use of the toxic and dangerous substances.

NB! If more than one such substance is used, select and copy the whole table and paste as many tables underneath as is necessary.

Substance 1		
Approved Name	Normal Uses & Dosages	
Type here	Type here	
Action & Toxic Effects/Dangers	Contra-indications	Precautions
Type here	Type here	Type here
Other Relevant Information		
Type here		

To add additional tables, copy the whole table above (select, then press Ctrl + C), click here, press enter and then paste (Ctrl + V).

6.7.3 Explain the measures that will be in place to protect the workers, participants and the environment against the potential detrimental effects of the toxic or dangerous substances and waste

Possible detrimental effects	Precautions
------------------------------	-------------

Type here

Type here

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6.8 Sec 6h: Measuring instruments and questionnaires that need psychometric interpretation

Please complete this section if any measuring instruments or validated questionnaires are used in this study that needs psychometric interpretation.

NB! Do not complete this section for any other types of questionnaires.

6.8.1 Name

Which psychometric measuring instruments and validated questionnaires will be used in the study?

Description

Click here to enter text.

6.8.2 Information about the measuring instrument/questionnaire

Provide detailed information on the psychometric measuring instrument/questionnaire, so that the reviewers can evaluate the ethically justifiable use thereof.

NB! If more than one psychometric measuring instrument/questionnaire is used, select and copy the whole table and paste as many tables underneath as is necessary.

Psychometric measuring instrument/questionnaire

Approved Name

Click here to enter text.

Normal Application

Click here to enter text.

Reliability

Click here to enter text.

Validity

Click here to enter text.

Other Relevant Information

Click here to enter text.

To add additional tables, copy the whole table above (select, then press Ctrl + C), click here, press enter and then paste (Ctrl + V).

6.8.3 Validation for target group:

Is the measuring instrument validated for the target group (e.g. for South African circumstances)?
Provide full details. Please mark with X in the appropriate box and provide details.

Yes	No	Details
☐	☐	Click here to enter text.

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

6.9 Sec 6i: Possible impact on the environment

Please complete this section if the study to be undertaken will have any impact on the environment as determined by evaluation of the study using the risk level descriptor for environmental impact. If this section is to be completed, please ensure that a completed copy of the risk level descriptor for environmental impact is attached to the application that is submitted.

6.9.1 Please indicate the risk level of the current study in terms of environmental impact.

Category	Description	Select
0	None Effect on the environment: Potential for incidental and/or transient changes to valued flora and fauna, ecosystem processes and structure, including ecosystem services; or Legal implications: No legal implications. No need to apply for any environmental authorisations; or Potential impact on reputation of the NWU: No discernible impact on reputation.	☐
1	Mild Effect on the environment: Potential for acceptable, short term changes to valued flora and fauna, ecosystem processes and structure, including ecosystem services; or Legal implications: Complaints for the public and/or regulator. No need to apply for any environmental authorisations; or Potential impact on reputation of the NWU: Potential impact on reputation.	☐
2	Medium Effect on the environment: Potential for acceptable, longer term changes to valued flora and fauna, ecosystem processes and structure, including ecosystem services; or Legal implications: Departmental enquiry and correspondence. Environmental authorisation may be required; or Potential impact on reputation of the NWU: Limited, reputation impacted with small number of people.	☐
3	Severe Effect on the environment: Potential for <u>un</u>acceptable, short term changes to valued flora and fauna, ecosystem processes and structure, including ecosystem services; or Legal implications: Notification of intent to issue a directive. Environmental authorisation required; or Potential impact on reputation of the NWU: Reputation impacted with some stakeholders.	☐
4	Very severe Effect on the environment: Potential for <u>un</u>acceptable, longer term changes to valued flora and fauna, ecosystem processes and structure, including ecosystem services; or Legal implications: Withdrawal of permit. Environmental authorisation required; or Potential impact on reputation of the NWU: Reputation impacted with significant number of key stakeholders.	☐

5	Intolerable Effect on the environment: Potential for <u>irreversible</u> changes to valued flora and fauna, ecosystem processes and structure, including ecosystem services; or Legal implications: Referral to the National Prosecuting Authority. Potential investigation by authority with prosecution and fines. Environmental authorisation required; or Potential impact on reputation of the NWU: Reputation impacted with majority of key stakeholders.	☐
---	--	--------------------------

6.9.2 Explain the type of environmental impact that the study will have.

Type here

6.9.3 Name and explain *all the possible risks* for the environment that may occur during the research. Use the template included in the approved risk level descriptor document for studies with environmental impact to guide you into identifying all the possible types of risk as well as the probability and magnitude of harm. Please also include *all the precautions* that will be taken in order to mitigate the risks to the environment.

Risks (e.g. effect on environment, legal implications, potential impact on the reputation of the NWU, etc.).	Precautions (When describing these precautions be clear on how they will mitigate all the identified risks)
Type here	Type here

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

7. SECTION 7: OTHER ETHICS EVALUATIONS AND RISK INSURANCE

7.1 Sec 7a: Evaluation by other Research Ethics Committees

Please complete this section if this study has been or will be evaluated by any other research ethics committees, for example with multi-institutional studies. Provide information about all research ethics committees involved in the review and approval of this study.

Name of the Research Ethics Committee	Date of Approval/In Process	Contact Number or E-mail address of the research ethics committee	Approval no.
---------------------------------------	-----------------------------	---	--------------

Type name here, or type “None”	Type details here	Type details here, or type “Not applicable”	Type details here, or type “Not applicable”
--------------------------------	-------------------	---	---

Remember to save your document regularly as you complete it!

7.2 Sec 7b: Risk Insurance

The North-West University has insurance at its disposal to cover the risk of claims against the University in case of damage to participants due to professional negligence – the maximum cover is currently R100 million per annum (all studies included). However, this is only available if studies are ethically approved and researchers have kept to the proposal.

7.2.1 Describe the potential risks to which the participants/researchers/assistants/field workers are going to be subject to in so far as complications may lead to summonses.

Type	Risks
Participants	Fatigue, boredom and possible emotional distress
Researchers	Potential attacks
Assistants and/or field workers	None
Others	None

7.2.2 These potential risks are covered by:

North-West University	☒
Sponsor/s	☐
Other: Specify: The researcher employer	☒

7.2.3 Is this insurance adequate (measured against the potential risks)?

Please mark with X in the appropriate box.

Yes	No	If “No”, indicate what will be done to ensure that there is sufficient coverage?
☒	☐	Click here to enter text.

8. SECTION 8: DECLARATIONS

Applications and declaration are filled in and signed by:

Sec 8a: Study Leader

Sec 8b: Statistical Consultant

Sec 8c: Research Director

The pages with declarations and signatures must be **scanned** with this form.

[SCAN ALL SIGNED DECLARATIONS]

Health Research Ethics Application

Study Leader (Title, Initials and Surname)	Study Title (see § 1.1)
Dr A W Fadiji	Exploring the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context

NWU Ethics Number
NWU-005 02-19-A1

8.1 Sec 8a: Study Leader

Application and Declarations by Study Leader

I, the undersigned, hereby apply for approval of the research study as described in the preceding proposal and declare that:

- 8.1.1 The information in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that no ethical codes will be violated with the study;
- 8.1.2 I will make sure that the study is managed ethically justifiably from start to finish;
- 8.1.3 In the case of human participants;
 - 8.1.3.1 I will put it clearly to all participants that participation (including assent) in any research study is absolutely voluntary and that no pressure, of whatever nature, will be placed on any potential participant to take part;
 - 8.1.3.2 I will put it clearly to all participants that any participant may withdraw from the study at any time and may ask that his/her data no longer be used in the study, without stating reasons and without fear of any form of prejudice;
 - 8.1.3.3 every participant who takes part in the study will receive the accompanying form for informed consent and it will be ensured that every participant understands the information (including the process and risks) fully;
 - 8.1.3.4 every participant will sign the informed consent in writing before the study commences, or a witness will stand in on behalf of the participant when the participant is illiterate;
 - 8.1.3.5 the written permission of the parent or legal guardians of all minor subjects will be obtained before the research commences;
 - 8.1.3.6 any foreseeable risk is restricted to the minimum, any permanent damage is avoided as far as possible and that appropriate precautions and safety measures are in place;
 - 8.1.3.7 confidentiality of all the information of all participants will be respected and ensured;

- 8.1.4 I and all co-workers/assistants/field workers are appropriately qualified, capable and legally competent to implement the proposed studies/procedures/interventions;
- 8.1.5 I will not deviate from the approved proposal and that I understand approval for the study will be cancelled if I deviate from the proposal without the approval of the Health Research Ethics Committee;
- 8.1.6 the study is scientifically justifiable;
- 8.1.7 where necessary, all contracts, permits and the applicable documents of relevance will be obtained before the research commences;
- 8.1.8 I will ensure that all data/biological samples are stored safely and remain in the possession of the North-West University;
- 8.1.9 I will report in writing any incidents or adverse events/serious adverse events that occur during the study without delay to the Health Research Ethics Committee;
- 8.1.10 I undertake to respect intellectual property rights throughout and to avoid any form of plagiarism;
- 8.1.11 I will obtain permission for amendments to the protocol and report annually (or more often for medium and high risk studies) to the Health Research Ethics Committee on the prescribed monitoring report concerning progress of the study;
- 8.1.12 I will notify the Health Research Ethics Committee should the study be terminated.

Name (Title, Full Names & Surname)	Qualifications
Dr Angelina Wilson Fadiji	PhD Psychology

	Click here to enter a date.
Signature	Date

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Health Research Ethics Application

Study Leader (Title, Initials and Surname)	Study Title (see § 1.1)
Dr A Wilson Fadiji	Exploring the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context

NWU Ethics Number
NWU00502-19-A1

8.2 Sec 8b: Statistical Consultant (If applicable)

The statistician of the Statistical Consultation Service of the North-West University completes this section (where applicable).

8.2.1 Have you ascertained that the statistical analyses to be used in this study is justifiable according to your judgement?

Please mark with X in the appropriate box and provide details.

Yes	No	Remarks
☐	☐	[Click here to enter text.]

Name (Title, Full Names & Surname)	Qualifications
[Click here to enter text.]	[Click here to enter text.]

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Health Research Ethics Application

Study Leader (Title, Initials and Surname)	Study Title (see § 1.1)
Dr A Wilson Fadiji	Exploring the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context

NWU Ethics Number
NWU00502-19-A1

8.3 Sec 8c: Research Director (School director if Education request)

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the above study has been reviewed by a Scientific/Proposal Committee and may proceed to the Health Research Ethics Committee and that the Study Leader/Researcher has enough physical facilities, equipment and money at his/her disposal to implement and complete the study.

8.3.1 Research Director:

The director of the research entity signs here.

Name (Title, Full Names & Surname)	Capacity
Prof Petra Bester	Director: AUTHeR

	2019/08/01
Signature	Date

Credits

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Section 2

Manuscript in Article Format

This mini-dissertation is submitted in the article format as indicated in the 2021 General Academic Rules (A4.10.5 and A4.10.8) of the North-West University. The manuscript in article style adheres to the specific journal requirements, namely the South African Journal of Psychology, to which it will be submitted. However, some exceptions are made, including the length of the manuscript. The manuscript will be shortened before submission for publication. The referencing and formatting of the manuscript have been done according to the guidelines provided in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition*, for the sake of uniformity.

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Manuscript

Exploring the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context

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Abstract

Meaning is considered as one of the central facets of psychological well-being. Although there is a preponderance of literature on meaning in Western countries, there is minimal evidence from specific cultural groups such as tribal leaders in the Sepedi-speaking/Bapedi cultural context in the Limpopo province, South Africa. The present study explored the experiences and cultural sources of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context. Data were collected in August 2020 from Sepedi tribal leaders ($N = 10$) who were purposively sampled from four villages in Limpopo, South Africa. The participants were asked how they experience meaning in life, about their unique cultural sources of meaning in life, and about their experiences of meaning in life in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The results showed that the participants experienced meaning through familial interactions and support, commitment to and appreciation of spiritual beliefs, community reciprocal support, and leisure activities. Traditional celebrations (culture preservation, cultural rituals, and social interaction), proverbs, and reciprocal caring were revealed as unique cultural sources of meaning in life. With regard to COVID-19, the results showed that the appreciation of life and alternatives ways of supporting the community brought experiences of meaning to the lives of participants. Implications of these findings for theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords: meaning in life, culture, tribal leaders, COVID-19

Exploring the Experiences of Meaning in Life Among Tribal Leaders in a Sepedi Context

Meaning in life is both a cognitive and emotional assessment of whether one's life has purpose and value (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013) and is a fundamental mechanism for handling hardship (Kalayjian & Eugene, 2010). Meaning on a personal level can be understood as how a person recognises others' existence and lives with respect to others while focusing on goals and attainment of purposes, all of which occur without harming others (Mason, 2013). Steger (2009) defined meaning as the degree to which human beings realise, experience, or see the importance of their lives and the degree to which they understand themselves to have a purpose. Steger (2009) also indicated that meaning refers to a web of networks, understandings, and explanations that help us comprehend our experiences, frame our plans, and direct our energies towards the achievement of our anticipated future.

Martela and Steger (2016) suggested that meaning incorporates three elements, namely: the cognitive aspect, which refers to making sense of one's experiences in life; the motivational aspect, which involves a pursuit and attainment of worthy goals; and the affective element, which is about feelings of satisfaction, fulfilment, and happiness related to goal attainment. In their study, Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006) identified two critical dimensions or components of meaning in life, namely the presence of meaning and the search for meaning. The presence of meaning refers to how significant an individual regards his or her life to be, whereas the search for meaning is the drive to seek out meaning in one's life. These two dimensions play a crucial role in the understanding of meaning in life, such that when a person perceives that their lives lack purpose, they will be preoccupied with a search for it. Once they experience their lives to have a sense of purpose, their lives will be regarded as significant.

Individual sources of meaning tend to differ based on shared values and cultural tendencies, both of which are crucial to how individuals make sense of their world (Delle Fave, Brdar, Wissing, & Vella-Brodrick, 2013). Concerning the need to understand experiences and sources of meaning in life in different contexts, research in South Africa has often been conducted using student samples (Mason, 2013; Nell, 2014; Wissing, Khumalo, & Chigeza, 2014). Initial evidence has shown the importance of family, education, work, and spirituality for meaning in life (Delle Fave et al., 2013; Mason, 2013; Nell, 2014; Wissing et al., 2014). What is unknown is how uncommonly represented groups such as tribal leaders in a Sepedi context experience meaning in life. This group is particularly important because they are constantly navigating the cultural contours of their context while dealing with urbanisation and living in an unprecedented time brought about by the coronavirus pandemic that threatens both their physical and psychological well-being and that of people in their communities. Besides, it will be interesting to explore whether their experience of meaning is similar to what has been typically reported from previous research or whether their deep engagement with the Sepedi culture and also the hardship faced due to the pandemic yield new findings with implications for interventions in similar cultural settings. The sample included in this study is Sepedi-speaking tribal leaders living in rural communities under the Moletjie Tribal Authority. Therefore, the present study explored experiences and cultural sources of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi-speaking cultural setting, taking cognisance of the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Note that the terms Sepedi, Bapedi, and Pedi will be used interchangeably throughout the manuscript referring to the language and cultural context of participants.

Meaning and Psychological Well-being

When discussing associations between meaning and well-being, it is first necessary to consider the two facets of well-being, namely hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being (Huta & Waterman, 2014). *Hedonic well-being* refers to the pleasure-pain or happy-sad individual experiences (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011; Huta & Waterman, 2014; Wissing et al., 2014) and is often associated with constructs such as positive and negative affect and life satisfaction. *Eudaimonic well-being* has been associated with flourishing, human actualization, and personal growth (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Wissing et al., 2014). Constructs related to eudaimonic well-being include meaning in life, positive relations, self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relations, and environmental mastery (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Numerous studies have shown that the experience of a meaning in life can shield against trauma and improve physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being (Reker & Woo, 2011; Ryff, 2013; Wong, 2012). Steger, Mann, Michels, and Cooper (2009) to this end indicated that individuals who have less meaning might experience psychological distress and seek assistance from psychologists or health professionals to alleviate their problems in the later stages of their lives. Wissing et al. (2014) supported these findings and indicated that when people experience meaning in life, they tend to experience more happiness and less distress. Moreover, meaning in life can be viewed as a protective feature of psychological well-being, which is associated with an increased sense of fulfilment and emotional well-being (Psarra & Kleftras, 2013).

Research has revealed that a sense of meaning in one's life relates to many facets of psychological well-being, whereas a meaningless life consistently correlates with psychological ill-being (Reker & Woo, 2011; Ryff, 2013; Kiang & Buchanan, 2014). When individuals are going through terribly tough times, for instance, the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning, instead of

positive emotions, becomes more imperative in maintaining some level of well-being (Wong, 2010, 2011). Park (2016) highlighted that people who have effectively created meaning in stressful life experiences had been found to adjust better to stressful events than people who did not manage to find meaning in stressful events.

Sources of Meaning

One way of understanding the concept of meaning in life is by looking at the sources of meaning. Sources of meaning constitute a commitment to specific parts of life from which meaning is derived (Schnell, 2009). There is extant evidence on specific sources of meaning across different contexts. For instance, Schnell (2009) identified 26 sources of meaning, which were grouped into four dimensions, namely: self-transcendence, which involves a commitment to intentions beyond one's immediate needs; self-actualisation, which has to do with engaging, inspiring, and nurturing one's capabilities; order, which is about embracing philosophies, practicality, kindness, and wellbeing; and relatedness, which is about nurturing and enjoying life's pleasures in privacy and with others.

Mason (2013) conducted a study among university students in South Africa, revealing significant sources of meaning to be relationships, education, and religion. Lambert et al. (2010), in their study done in the United States of America (USA), found that family relationships were the primary source of meaning for their sample. Family relationships are associated with higher meaning because they provide people with support and protection during difficult times (Goodman, Gibson, Keiser, Gitari, & Raimor-Goodman, 2019). Delle Fave et al. (2013) also found that family was one of the most important sources of meaning in a multicultural sample of seven countries, including South Africa. Selman et al. (2011), in their study with HIV patients, found similar results: the participants identified family relationships and a sense of peace as

essential sources of meaning in life. Comparable findings were reported in a South African study where the vital sources of meaning for Setswana-speaking students were found to include family, education, and spirituality/religion (Wissing et al., 2014). In a study conducted by Nell (2014), the sources of life meaning among South African university students comprise relationships (especially with family), hope, education, achievement, religion, service, creative self-expression, material possessions, hobbies, health, and pets.

Van der Merwe, van Eeden, and van Deventer (2010), in their study about psychological perspectives on god-belief as a source of well-being and meaning, stated that religious beliefs and experiences might provide a crucial source of individual strength that promotes psychosocial well-being, mental and physical health, and positive emotions like joy, gratitude, forgiveness, hope, and optimism. They also found that religion offers a great source of meaning to human existence and purpose. It serves as a robust enabling strength when facing life-threatening experiences or disease.

Regarding religion as a source of meaning, Krause and Hayward (2012) suggested that church attendance, having a close relationship with God, and helping others played an essential role in meaning-making among adults in late adulthood. By engaging in group prayers and singing songs, those who attend church services jointly reaffirm the religious beliefs that provide a sense of meaning in life (Krause & Hayward, 2012). In Mason's (2018) study about the relationship between purpose and sources of meaning among university students in South Africa, participants identified self-transcendence as a source of meaning. Jung (2015) confirmed the same results where self-transcendence, spirituality, and religion were associated with a sense of meaning in life among Americans.

Coronavirus Pandemic in South Africa and Meaning in Life

South Africa was not exempted from the physical, psychological, and economic challenges of COVID-19. The South African president made the call in March 2020 that the whole country would go into lockdown to slow down the spread of infections of COVID-19. The coronavirus pandemic and necessitated lockdown brought some unprecedented challenges to South Africa and the rest of the world. Limited movements accompanied by social distancing measures led to the interruption of, for example, all religious gatherings, schooling, and social-cultural gatherings (Ataguba, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020; Sekyere, Bohler-Muller, Hongoro, & Makoe, 2020).

This was particularly critical in the setting where this study was conducted, namely the Moletjie villages in the Limpopo province of South Africa, where there is a collectivistic cultural orientation and the communities are very closely knit in the sense that people support each other in close interpersonal interactions and during social gatherings. In the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, people were not able to gather to share, mourn, and celebrate together since mass gatherings were prohibited and social distancing promoted. When there was a bereavement in the family, the whole community would usually support the family; however, with the COVID-19 guidelines, only close relatives were allowed to attend the funerals. In cases of loss, many people were not able to pay farewell to their friends due to these regulations. More so, weddings and other cultural celebrations had been placed on hold for a period of time. The current context of the pandemic might have had implications for experiences and cultural sources of meaning-making among tribal leaders.

In the Limpopo province, communities live in poverty, and some people rely on running small businesses to generate income (Polokwane Municipality, 2014; Statistics South Africa,

2012). With the health risk associated with social contact, many people were left without any form of income as the initial hard lockdown had crippled their businesses. Nicola et al. (2020) indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had grave socioeconomic implications. The already high level of impoverishment in South Africa was aggravated by the stay-at-home orders for older individuals as well as those with comorbidities, implying no economic activity and, therefore, no income-earning opportunities, particularly for the self-employed and those in the informal sector (Ataguba, 2020; Sekyere et al., 2020).

The agriculture sector was tested by the COVID-19 outbreak, especially for products without a long shelf-life, such as meat and vegetables (Ataguba, 2020; Sekyere et al., 2020). Specifically, some communities in Moletjie depend on farming to support their families and, since the lockdown prevented them from working on their farms, their livelihoods were negatively impacted. Further compounding the economic challenges, most Limpopo villages do not have access to clean water; community members buy from individuals with boreholes. Given the financial strain brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been difficult for community members to adhere to the World Health Organisation's guidelines to wash their hands regularly to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Also significant was the risk posed by age to be severely impacted by COVID-19, where many community members in the Moletjie villages are of older age. This study explored how the tribal leaders experienced meaning during the pandemic despite this socio-economic landscape and health challenges.

Culture, Socio-cultural Context, and Meaning

Culture serves as a critical lens through which individuals make sense of their world (Baumeister et al., 2013). How humans view themselves, their neighbourhood, what provides meaning to their lives, and what initiatives and desires they pursue are all influenced by culture

(Delle Fave et al., 2013; Wong, 2011). Thus, an individual's life purpose, morals, and other meanings are all embedded in the culture. Studies to understand meaning in life are increasingly conducted worldwide in many different cultural settings (Alea & Bluck, 2013; Church et al., 2013). It is crucial to consider culture when attempting to grasp people's stories and behaviours since culture shapes an individual's existence and their meaning-making system (Delle Fave & Bassi, 2009). While individualism and a self-sufficiency focus which considers the individual as a separate being characterise Western cultural contexts, the African cultural context tends to be defined by respecting community concord above personal preferences (Wissing et al., 2020).

Uwah (2012) states that self-construal in an African context focuses on a sense of belonging shaped by social and cultural aspects. The African worldview is characterised by shared responsibility, religiosity, and living in agreement with nature (Arndt & Naude, 2016). Nkolie (2020), on an African ethical perspective on meaning in life, stated that individuals experience meaning in life when they perceive their lives to possess worth, value, and adherence to moral principles espoused by the community. Matalino (2015) argues that a person is a person in the community of others. Communities provide the norms and material conditions for people to live a purposeful life and contribute to the community's harmony (Ikuenobe, 2018).

The Moletjie villages in the Limpopo province of South Africa are characterised by a collectivist cultural orientation where relationships are as important as the self. In collectivistic cultures, individuals are shaped through interaction with family members and other individuals in the community (Wissing et al., 2014).

The Sepedi Cultural Context

The present study was carried out among tribal leaders living in the Moletjie district in the Limpopo province of South Africa. The people in this region stem from the Moloto royal

family, who originated in Botswana. They were cattle farmers who relocated to South Africa in search of grazing for their herds. The people of Moletjie believe in the worship of the ancestors and God (Mphela & Mogoboya, 2019). They recognise two types of weddings, namely Western and traditional marriage. The traditional marriage involves paying a bride price followed by an animal slaughtering to introduce the newly married couple to the family's ancestors. Children are considered to be an important achievement among African people (Zwane, Venter, Temane, & Chigeza, 2012). This is the same with the Pedi people; they value children and consider them as wealth. If a woman does not have a child, she is called barren, and the elders encourage the husband to marry a second wife so that the family's name will live forth.

Ewuso and Hall (2019) pointed out that community participation and fellow community compassion are two critical characteristics of the relationship in the Ubuntu philosophy. This is the same with Moletjie Tribal Authority communities; people assist each other in completing tasks that might take an individual more days to complete. For example, during the planting and harvesting period, the women will gather to assist their neighbours with the work to finish quickly. Funerals are respected, and the deceased are treated with the utmost respect. When there is a funeral in the community, the family sends a representative to the tribal leader (*ntona*) to inform him about the death and get permission to enter the graveyard. The young men are expected to dig the grave (*diphiri*). Stock and subsistence farming are still essential means of sustenance in most of the villages of Moletjie (Siyabona Africa, 2020). However, young generations are changing this pattern as they attend universities and work across South Africa. The aged people mostly rely on government grants for their upkeep.

Qualitative studies on meaning in life have been conducted amongst adults and students in South Africa in Sotho, Afrikaans, and English contexts (Wissing et al., 2014; Mason, 2013,

2017). There is no literature on meaning in life among Sepedi tribal leaders in Limpopo; a gap that this study aims to address. Moletjie Tribal Authority was chosen because it represents a group of villages with rich Sepedi customs that will contribute to a nuanced understanding of meaning in life in this context. Furthermore, Moletjie was chosen because of the variation in the socio-economic status of its residents (some are of high socio-economic status and others low). This is important since the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people's meaning in life may vary depending on socio-economic status. Tribal leaders have also been chosen because the study's additional aim was to tap into the cultural sources of meaning in life. The proposed sample was more likely to be knowledgeable on Sepedi cultural practices than the general population.

The Present Study

In view of the gaps highlighted above, this study aimed to explore how tribal leaders in a Sepedi context experience meaning in life. The following objectives facilitated the achievement of this aim: 1) to explore Sepedi tribal leaders' experiences of meaning in life; 2) to explore the cultural sources of meaning in life among Sepedi tribal leaders; and 3) to explore Sepedi tribal leaders' experiences of meaning in life in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used. A qualitative approach aims to describe and understand a unique context from a participant's perspective rather than from a generalised perspective (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2016). This approach was suitable to dive deeply into participants' experiences of meaning in life. Due to the limited research in traditional African cultures, adopting an explorative research design was best suitable to investigate the

target population without prior expectations (Bowen, 2005). This design considers participants' personal experiences to be the primary source of knowledge and provides the best description of how they make sense of their social worlds (Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006).

Participants

Population. The study population included tribal leaders who speak Sepedi, practice Sepedi customs, and have been born and raised in one of the following villages: Ga Komape, Sengatane, Chebeng, or Mabokelele. All the villages are under the leadership of King Moloto of Moletjie Tribal Authority.

Participant selection and recruitment. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The participants were recruited from Moletji Tribal Authority. Motivated by the challenges that often arise when conducting research in communities, the district of Moletjie was chosen to recruit participants as the researcher has an existing relationship with the communities' gatekeepers. This relationship only allowed the researcher access to the community but did not confound the study's findings. A list of the villages was obtained, and four (Komape, Mabokelele, Sengatane, and Chebeng) were selected based on their geographical locations across Moletjie to get the maximum variation in participants' responses. Furthermore, they represented a group with rich Sepedi customs which were expected to provide valuable data on the topic of this study.

The participants were recruited using the following inclusion criteria: 1) they had to be residents of the Ga Komape, Sengatane, Chebeng, or the Mabokelele villages; 2) they had to be fluent in Sepedi or English; 3) they had to be a tribal leader with at least three years' experience in the position; 4) they had to have mobile phones since the interviews were conducted telephonically; and 5) they had to freely agree to be voice-recorded during the interviews. Ten

participants participated in the study. The numbers of participants per village were as follows: two from *Ga Komape*, three from *Chebeng*, two from *Mabokelele* and three from *Sengatane*. The demographic profile of the participants is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary Profile of the Participants (N = 10)

Gender		Marital status		Employment status		Age		Educational level		Religion	
Male	7	Married	7	Self employed	2	30-40 yrs	2	Gr 1-6	4	Christian	9
Female	3	Widowed	2	Retired	4	41-50 yrs	1	Gr 7-12	4	Traditional	1
		Single	1	Full-time	2	51-60 yrs	1	College	1		
				Unemployed	1	61-70 yrs	3	University	1		
				Part-time	1	71-80 yrs	1				

Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the North-West University's Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HREC). Goodwill permission for the research was granted by Chief Moloto of the Moletjie Tribal Authority before the start of the study. The first author arranged a meeting with the Tribal Authority Committee to inform them about the study's purpose and requested permission to meet with the tribal leaders for recruitment. An independent person who would obtain informed consent from participants was suggested by the Tribal Authority Committee. The independent person is a respected community member and knew all the tribal leaders since he attended the weekly meetings. The first author and the independent person met with the tribal leaders at the four villages' respective halls to explain the study's

purpose and to invite them to participate in the study. Note that this was done before the COVID-19 outbreak, in February 2020. The tribal leaders were given pamphlets with full details about the study to read further at their homes. Interested parties responded to the invitation for participation by calling the independent person and registering their names for possible participation in the study. The participants were recruited without forcing them to participate. A total of 14 tribal leaders were initially listed to ensure that data collection could continue until data saturation. Twelve participants agreed to continue with the telephone interviews, and the other two participants were not available due to personal reasons. Data saturation was reached after 10 participants were interviewed, and the two remaining participants were informed, and therefore the final sample comprised 10 participants.

In the time between participant recruitment and data collection, the COVID-19 pandemic struck South Africa. While the data gathering would have originally involved face-to-face interviews, this had to change to telephonic interviews in light of restrictions posed by the pandemic. After this amendment in procedure and adding an additional aim and question entailing meaning experiences in the context of Covid-19 were approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University, the first author contacted all the potential participants telephonically to inform them of the change and to enquire about their interest to participate in the study. In this call, the first author again explained all the information concerning the intended research, namely the purpose, informed consent, questions that would be asked during data gathering, and how the results would be used. The potential participants were given one week to decide if they still wanted to participate in the study. Participants who agreed to participate co-signed the informed consent document in the presence of a witness, while the first author also signed the form in the presence of a witness. The first author then arranged a

time with each participant for the interview to take place. Data was gathered in August 2020 after receiving the amendment approval for HREC.

Data gathering

Data for the current study was collected utilising semi-structured interviews, which grant participants the opportunity to respond to questions in a relatively open way (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A socio-demographic questionnaire was also compiled to collect information about the participants' demographic profile.

Three main interview questions with some probing questions to elicit further information were asked. The main interview questions were as follows: 1) What are your experiences of a meaningful life? 2) What aspects of the Sepedi culture provide meaning to your life as a tribal leader? 3) What are your experiences of meaning in life during the COVID-19 pandemic? Some of the probing questions asked were: What are the most important things in your life and how do they make you experience meaning? Do you know any Sepedi proverbs and celebrations that symbolise a meaningful life? If yes, can you share these as well as other aspects of the Sepedi culture that relate to the experience of a meaningful life? How do you experience meaning during the pandemic?

Interviews were conducted in Sepedi since most participants were comfortable using their mother tongue, which is Sepedi. Out of the 10 participants, three participants preferred using English for the interviews.

Interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed. Although the co-coder was a Sepedi-speaking person, the data was translated from Sepedi to English after transcription so that the data will be available in English for people who do not understand Sepedi. The translation was done by a postgraduate student in psychology who is

fluent in English and Sepedi. The first author cross-checked the translated data using the transcribed and audio data to ensure that vocabularies and concepts in the translated text represented the participants' expressions and corresponded with the context of the study.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the semi-structured interview transcripts.

Thematic analysis is a theoretically flexible method for analysing, identifying, and interpreting meaning patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Specifically, the six steps of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2013) were applied, namely familiarisation with data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up the report.

Thematic analysis was carried out manually by the first author with a co-coder's assistance without using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. The field notes further informed the process of data analysis and writing up the findings of the study. The second author audited the data analysis process and made inputs where she deemed it appropriate.

Trustworthiness. In order to ensure trustworthiness, the following aspects were taken into consideration: credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. Credibility was ensured by member-checking, where the first author checked the results and interpretations with participants and made adaptations where indicated. Credibility was further ensured by involving a trained co-coder who was fluent in Sepedi and English. The first author and the co-coder examined the transcripts and generated the codes and themes separately. They convened to discuss differences in codes and themes and then worked towards consensus to reconcile the themes. Credibility was also enhanced by considering the field notes in the data analysis process.

In this study, confirmability was ensured by involving a co-coder in the process of data analysis, which created a detailed audit trail. Furthermore, the first author kept notes when conducting the cross-checking of the transcribed data. Dependability was promoted by ensuring

technical accuracy during the recording and transcribing of the data. For example, interview recordings were transcribed line-by-line, and by engaging with the data a lot, the first author became thoroughly accustomed with the transcripts. The research's transferability was increased by using detailed descriptions of the research process and the sampling process (Bryman, 2016).

Ethical Considerations

The current study adhered to the ethical guidelines of the North-West University's Health Research Ethics Committee. Ethical approval was obtained from the North-West University Health Research Ethics Committee (NWU-005 02-19-A1). Permission to enter the communities was obtained from Chief Moloto of Moletjie Tribal Authority. Prior to giving informed consent to participate in the study, participants got information regarding the study, including information on the study's aims, the participant's role, what the data will be used for, potential risks and benefits of participating, and practical arrangements should they be willing to participate. The participants' responses were audio-recorded once the participants granted permission. Since participating in the study was voluntary, participants were told that they may withdraw from the study before data analysis without consequences. The study was deemed a minimal risk study, and a route of referral was set in place prior to the study should any participant need it (which showed not to be the case).

In the present study, research participants' information was treated with strict confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used to refer to research participants throughout the study. Since the interviews were done telephonically, participants were requested to find a quiet, private, and comfortable place where they could sit during the interview, where they would not

be interrupted. The dates and times were agreed upon beforehand for participants to prepare themselves and make necessary arrangements if they had children or grandchildren in their care.

The research data were only utilised for the study as specified in the proposal. No changes or manipulation of data were made. Password-protected computers were used to store the research data where only authorised researchers have access to the information.

Results and Discussion

The results are presented as themes organised around the study objectives and then discussed in light of relevant literature. The main themes and subthemes that emerged are presented with excerpts from the data (translated to English) to enhance credibility. Each excerpt is accompanied by an assigned participant number (with P1 denoting Participant 1), age, and gender. In Table 2 below a summary of the themes is presented.

Table 2

Summary of Themes

Questions	Themes	Subthemes
<i>Experiences of meaning</i>	Theme 1: Familial interaction and support	
	Theme 2: Commitment to and appreciation of spiritual beliefs	
	Theme 3: Community reciprocal support and leisure activities	

<i>Unique cultural sources of meaning in life</i>	Theme1: Traditional	Culture preservation
	celebrations	Cultural rituals
		Social bonding in the community
<i>Experiences of meaning during COVID-19 pandemic</i>	Theme 1: Alternative ways of supporting the community	
	Theme 2: Appreciation	

Experiences of Meaning in Life

Three themes emerged when the tribal leaders in the Sepedi community described their experiences of meaning in life, namely familial interactions and support, commitment to and appreciation of spiritual beliefs, and community reciprocal support and leisure activities.

Familial interactions and support. Participants highlighted that support from and interactions with their families provided an avenue for the experience of positive feelings as well as a sense of belonging during difficult and good times. More so, for these participants, seeing their children growing and achieving their goals presented itself as a meaningful experience. Familial interactions and support were meaningful because of the emotions it engenders, the sense of belongingness it fosters, the assistance it provides, and because it creates an avenue for generative caring.

“My children, I will say they have given my life purpose the way I took care of them, I saw them grow well, they went to schools” (P2, Male, Age 66).

“They support me, and we support each other, yaa, and when I want to something I share with them they support me a lot. Each and everything that I am doing, yaa, they wish me the best in life” (P8, Male, Age 38).

Participants indicated that respect is very crucial for one to live in harmony with the family and society. Interactions within the family are characterised as meaningful because of the cultural value of respect. These values are responsible for holding together the social fabric of the community. The value of respect is an outlook on life that allows individuals to feel that they matter, leading to an experience of meaning in life. The cultural value of recognising and observing hierarchical roles is important to preserve and enjoy social ties in the family.

“My children make me happy because they respect me when their mother tells them that I am their father they should respect me, they listen and respect me” (P7, Male, Age 59).

The participants indicated that their family was a source of strength, but they also appreciated the opportunity to provide for the family and the reciprocal exchanges that take place within the family.

“My children are the main pillar of my strength because we protect each other, and whenever we have problems, we sit down and discuss them so that we can look into the future” (P5, Male, Age 47).

Some participants voiced that family is more than a support structure to them and is linked to how they see themselves, who they are, and who they can be; basically, the essence of self as expressed by a participant who indicated that family was a pillar of their life.

“There are so many many meaningful things my wife brought in my life like we work together when we do things at home, building our home when we're grooming our kids, she was a pillar of my life” (P4, Male, Age 52).

“My wife, I come from far with her. We have endured many obstacles in our lives, when I have problems, it is she that lets me down and say no, we do not do that, we do like that. Yes, sometimes you find that things are not going well; your mind is far; she can let me sit down and encourage me. When I am sick, I know that there is a person who takes care of me. Yes, she will ask do you want porridge, my husband? Do you need anything? You see that my life is full of happiness now” (P10, Male, Age 63).

Some tribal leaders expressed that seeing their children succeed constitutes meaning in their lives. This speaks to extending oneself and experiencing vicarious meaning through goal fulfilment in the younger generation. For these participants, their children's achievements were a source of pride and a defining aspect of their life.

“You know when you are raising children you encounter problems there and there, but now they have grown, others have completed school, others are married as I am telling you” (P10, Male, Age 63).

“I suffered with her until now our children are grown up, others are at school, others managed to get jobs” (P7, Male, Age 59).

Furthermore, participants tended to regard community members and neighbours as part of their family. As a result, they mentioned that support within such circles is related to their experiences of meaning. Neighbours were important since they were the first to provide support when participants faced challenges or in case of emergencies before loved ones arrived. Neighbours and community members also shared resources with the less privileged.

“It’s people from the community which I live with, we show each other there and there. When the children have done something wrong in the community, we always assist each other to solve the problem” (P3, Female, Age 62).

From the interviews, it emerged that family played a significant role in the experiences of meaning of participants. This corresponds with the results of Nell (2014), who found that South African students often derive meaning from close relationships such as family. Similar results were also reported by Delle Fave et al. (2013) in a study conducted in seven countries, including South Africa, where they found that family emerged as the main source of life meaning for participants.

Wissing et al. (2020), in their recent study done in Ghana and South Africa about motivations for relationships as sources of meaning, found that many participants from both countries reported that family, interpersonal relations, spirituality/religion, and community/society provided meaning in their lives. Similar results were reported by Wilson, Wissing, Ndimba, and Somhlaba (2018) in their study on representations of hope, goals, and meaning from a lay person's perspective in South African and Ghanaian contexts. In that study, South African participants mentioned that close relationships were an important source of meaning and that these close relationships offered them support during difficult times as well as pleasurable social interactions. Moreover, Makiwane and Kaunda (2018) stated that African cultural perspectives influence how individuals make sense of society's social organisation. Specifically, families expose their members to the social and personal values necessary for maintaining cohesion. In this study, the value of respect in the family emerged as instrumental in maintaining social harmony.

Commitment to and appreciation of spiritual beliefs. Participants indicated that through prayers, they draw strength, wisdom, and guidance from God when faced with difficult situations. They expressed gratitude to God for the past, present, and future. Some participants

acknowledged that their ancestors were responsible for the blessings in their lives. Below is a verbatim example from the participants that illustrate this theme.

“What gives me meaning in life is God because He is the creator, and He gives me strength, especially when I have challenges. I pray so that my problems might be solved, so only through God everything is possible” (P5, Male, Age 47).

“I thank God because since I was born until where I am, it is because of what? It is because God has lent me life, so I thank Him, He has given me strength and lent me life” (P6, Female, Age 75).

“That is the reason I am able to thank God; I thank Him because He has given me a wife who is able to stay at home” (P7, Male, Age 59).

“When I go through a difficult time, I go down on my knees and pray because God can give that wisdom and fight with me that nothing will stand in my way” (P8, Male, Age 38).

Tribal leaders in the study acknowledged that when they encounter challenges, they pray and believe that God will answer their prayer and guide them to make the right decisions. Mason (2018) reported similar results from the South African university student sample, where the participants indicated that religion was core in their experiences of meaning in life. Similar results were found by Wissing et al. (2014) when many participants from South Africa cited religion as one of the sources of meaning in their lives. In their study, meaningful experiences emerged from having communion with other believers, having a relationship with God, and the experience of spiritual growth in their lives. Moreover, Ohajunwa and Mji (2018) found that spiritual connections are sustained by spiritual rituals that are believed to facilitate relationships with ancestors, the self, others, the earth, plants, and animal life. Spirituality enables a person to make sense of their existence and build resilience to survive challenges.

Community reciprocal support and leisure activities. Participants highlighted that working with people in the community allowed for meaningful experiences. They indicated that community members support each other to ensure that the lives of neighbours and others in the community are improved. They further mentioned that, as tribal leaders, their work involves solving the community's problems and ensuring unity. For them, helping others contributed to an experience of meaning and a sense of fulfilment in life. Below are some responses from the participants as examples:

“This is what I tell you when you start to talk about a meaningful life; you must be happy to work with people. Any challenge that comes your way, you must accept it” (P10, Male, Age 63).

“We cook because others do not have food or there is a lack of food when they reach their homes. For others, their parents will still be at their work. They just pass here at my home and eat so that when they reach their homes, they can do their schoolwork” (P2, Male, Age 66).

“We meet, I have people who support me, the committee for the village. If we cannot solve it, we discuss it; then we refer it to the Tribal Authority. If it is not hard to solve; we make a judgement and finish with it here at home. If you see us taking it to the Tribal Authority, you must know that we fail to solve it” (P10, Male, Age 63).

“We are people who love farming; we go as a group to take out the harvest together as women in the community. We cultivate as a group, and when we are done with one farm, we go to the other until we finished all the farms in the group” (P3, Female, Age 62).

Klein (2017) stated that helping another person is one of the foremost basic ways to determine and reinforce social connection, which can, in turn, increase meaningfulness. Similarly, research by van Tongeren, Davis, Hook, and Johnson (2016) indicated that providing

tangible support to others (e.g., volunteering or informally helping others with household chores) is related to a stronger sense of meaning in life. Worth noting is that experiencing meaning from providing and receiving community support is grounded in cultural values learned from older generations to enhance the community's quality of life. Tribal leaders are not only supporting each other, but they also preserve their cultural practices and pass the knowledge to younger generations.

Tribal leaders noted that participating in leisure activities and interacting with peers in the community provides them with meaning. They further indicated that spending time with their peers to discuss daily life issues helps them to handle the challenges they experience in their lives as they advise each other to find solutions to their problems. Moreover, leisure time seems to promote social cohesion.

“It’s the people that I live with in the community because when the weekend starts, we sometimes go out as men, there is this thing they call it dinaka, we dance, then it becomes nice, we dance, when the sun sets we go back to our homes, therefore, my life is full of joy/happiness” (P1, Male, Age 51).

One participant mentioned that he experiences meaning through hobbies and exercising. For him, playing soccer and exercising assists him to become fit and reduce his stress levels.

“The other one I remember my child, let me say on Wednesdays, we go out, we have a soccer team for older people, we go there to exercise, play there. The soccer team gives my life meaning because I cannot miss going to the ground because it is another way to exercise so that when I come home, my body is feeling right” (P1, Male, Age 51).

Similar results were reported by Nell (2014) in his study with South African students. The participants mentioned that they derive meaning from creative self-expression, hobbies,

recreation and leisure, and sport. Research by Hurley (2019) has shown that for a small group of Christian refugee women from Africa, meaning derived from leisure activities was deeply intertwined with church and faith activities, as well as the natural environment. These leisure activities afforded them support, restoration, and connectedness, thereby enriching their understanding of the world.

Interestingly, during the interviews with the participants, native Bapedi songs were used by some participants to express the happiness they experience during leisure activities. The same results were reported by Lebaka (2019b), where the participants in the Sekhukhune district in the Limpopo province indicated that they perform songs to express joy and for entertainment. Moreover, Bapedi people sing marriage songs to reinforce the importance of family and community unity, indicating the value of marriage as a sacred union, each spouse's role in married life, and for entertainment purposes (Lebaka, 2019b).

Cultural Sources of Meaning in the Sepedi Context

In terms of cultural sources of meaning in the Sepedi context, three themes emerged: Traditional celebrations, proverbs, and reciprocal caring.

Traditional celebrations. When participants were asked about the aspects of Sepedi culture which provide them with meaning, traditional celebrations emerged as a source of meaning. These include rites of passage such as circumcision, weddings, and other rituals. Each celebration is accompanied by drinking African beer, singing, and dancing. It is believed that one cannot celebrate alone; as a result, family and community form an integral part of the celebrations. Participants indicated that the celebration keeps the community united. They further mentioned that one does not need an invitation to attend the celebration; everyone is welcome. Through these celebrations, the community is able to preserve and transfer important cultural

values, moral principles, and beliefs to the younger generation. These celebrations are sources of meaning because of opportunities to strengthen existing community relationships, to promote harmony, and to ensure cultural generativity (transfer or preservation of cultural ideals).

Traditional celebration is discussed under the following subthemes: culture preservation, cultural rituals, and social bonding in the community.

Culture preservation. Participants noted that they derive meaning from engaging in activities that allow for preserving their culture. Continuous engagement with cultural practices and beliefs received from the older generation allows for the experience of meaning because it provides an avenue for connection with both the living and the dead as well as a conduit for extending oneself to younger generations. Underlying the preservation of cultural values is a sense of interconnectedness of things and the reinforcement of a personal and communal identity. Tribal leaders further indicated that it is crucial to pass what they have learnt on to young generations to help them learn good morals and live in harmony with other people. Cultural generativity helps to hold the community together and ensure that it withstands time and new ways of doing things.

“The cultural things which give my life meaning is this one of going to the circumcision, going to the mountain. Yes... We know that when we raise our kids, we take them to circumcision/initiation school. When they go there, we know that they are taught to be responsible men and women in the future” (P2, Male, Age 66).

“I know some of the celebrations which we do in our culture. Like when you come from the mountain/circumcision, we buy you new clothes, we purchase drinks and come together and welcome you, yes. It can bring meaning to our culture, and we do it each and every year for a

period of three months, the children go to the mountain, when they come back to the community or friends, they know that you are now a man” (P8, Male, Age 38).

“Yes, they know that their grandfather and grandmother are buried there, even if you stay somewhere else, when you passed away, you will be buried close to them. We believe that it is not good to separate families even in death; they remain at the same place even when they are deceased. That is our culture and it gives us meaning because we show respect for the families even in death” (P7, Male, Age 59).

Cultural preservation enacted through traditional celebrations allows tribal leaders to guide their children, but they also have the responsibility to guide all the children in the community so that they can become better citizens. The communal responsibility of child care and training is brought to the fore when these celebrations take place.

“It is because they were told that you do not beat up a woman. She is the family's vessel. She is glass; if you throw it down, it breaks; you cannot put it together. It is the most important thing about initiation. Even when he has his family, you know that you will never hear that they are divorcing or something. No, he knows what they have taught him, even if he can get angry, when he starts to remember those teachings, he will start to go down and say they have said that a woman is treated like this. A man is the head of the family, and he takes care of his children” (P10, Male, Age 63).

“As you know, we Bapedi or Sepedi speaking, we believe that it takes a village to raise a child. You must know and acknowledge that your child is my child. If I correct your child when he or she has done something wrong, it is not like I am correcting my child only. He or she is my child” (P5, Male, Age 47).

Cultural rituals. Rituals are cultural performances and rites of passage which mark people's life transitions. Rituals can be considered to be a manifestation of people's thoughts, emotions, social structure, and cultural identities (Baloyi & Makobe-Rabothata, 2014). Different practices exist for various ethnic groups, and they all have symbolic significance. The performance of rituals is considered important to maintain balance and harmony between the living and the living dead. It is often the premise that the connection between physical and spiritual ontologies should be maintained and enhanced (Baloyi & Makobe-Rabothata, 2014).

For instance, individuals in the Sepedi community follow a specific protocol when they propose marriage. The new bride is given a new name and introduced to the ancestors of the new family. The young woman and young man should agree that they want to get married, then the marriage proposal will be sent to the bride-to-be's family, and if they accept, they start with the lobola negotiations. The process ends with the exchange of gifts and the signing of an agreement following the traditional wedding. The young bride is given a new name when she arrives at her in-laws; usually, the name will start with the affix "mother" even if she does not have children. This signifies that the lady has crossed over to womanhood and to welcome her into the new family.

"When we have arrived like that, we asked for a cup of water, a cup of water it is a bride/hand in marriage. Since she said she knows us, we said that we are now thinking of making her ours. How many cows do you want (lobola)? Cows mean we need to take cows and send them to the bride's family. To show that you love this woman, you take the cows/bride price" (P10, Male, Age 63).

Lebaka (2019a) suggested that cultural and spiritual rituals play a significant role in promoting cohesion and mutual relationship between the living and the living-dead (ancestors).

Through rituals, Bapedi people are able to preserve their cultural heritage and identity. This view is supported by Mulaudzi (2014), who argued that the African worldview comprises structured beliefs, rituals, and values that provide meaning and truth about the world African people live in.

In addition to marriage, the participants indicated that naming ceremonies were significant in the Sepedi culture. Young women and men are given new names when they come back from the mountain/circumcision to indicate that they are now grown-up men and women. Participants noted that the new names signify that the young person has crossed over to adulthood. The young person is ready to participate in societal celebrations or rituals. The Sepedi culture holds that if a man is circumcised, he is grown up, and he can associate with men in the community. If a man does not participate in circumcision, he cannot sit with other men to discuss societal issues even if he is married. This implies that young men are ready to take on the responsibilities of their homes and families after circumcision, and they receive respect from the community as they are now considered to be adults. Name-giving is considered important to ensure the continuation of the family lines of both the living and dead.

“Yes, he greets me, we also greet him and welcome him. Everyone who enters the house will greet, and when he returns from the mountain, he comes with a name. I can give you an example: If my child is called Frans before he goes to the mountain when he comes back from the mountain, he comes back called Malose. It is the name for manhood” (P10, Male, Age 63).

“We inform the groom’s ancestors because when she arrives at the groom’s home, they will want to know who this one is. Yes, it is the same with the new-born child; you introduce him to the ancestors when he enters the home” (P10, Male, Age 63).

“Yes, when the child is born, he can be born at home or hospital, but we take the snuff and pour it down, or we take mielie meal and pour water and kneel. There is something called

ditetekwane (designated area), we kneel and invite the ancestors and inform them that they must not be surprised, we have a new baby, give him peace, and take care of him. By doing so, we introduce an addition to the family, a new person” (P10, Male, Age 63).

Mphela and Mogoboya (2019) stated that name-giving links social identity with the features that the name that was given represents. African names have a variety of meanings that can refer to, for example, gender, status, religion, personality, desires, and heritage (Mphela & Mogoboya, 2019). In this study, it appears that cultural rituals are often linked to experiences of meaning because they create the opportunity for a community to define the identities of its members.

Similar to birth, death is associated with cultural rituals and rites of passage during the mourning period because the living dead are remembered and continue to influence the actions of the living. For traditional Africans, the living dead are an inseparable and influential part of their being (Baloyi & Makobe-Rabothata, 2014). For this reason, when Africans perform rituals by the graveside, as an example, they are connecting with the dead person’s spirit. They communicate with the living dead as “I am calling my father or mother or grandfather, not the spirit or body of my dead father or dead mother” (Baloyi & Makobe-Rabothata, 2014, p. 6).

In the current study, the participants indicated that they show respect to the deceased and the family by participating in certain rituals, like the mourning process. They further indicated that they inform the ancestors about the events in their families during times of mourning since they believe that their ancestors can bless and protect them from harm. If things do not go well in the family, they consult the ancestors to observe the problem and ask for direction on how to solve it.

“If you are mourning, you wear black clothes all the time; if you take them off, you do not wear them anymore. Some, when the person is done with mourning period, they take him or her to the traditional healers to be cleansed and do this and that since people’s beliefs are not the same” (P9, Female, Age 37).

“There is something like umphahlo; this is something which families do together so that the ancestors can bring blessings on you; ancestors are angels for gods; they are people who died a long time ago. We believe that” (P4, Male, Age 52).

“After a few months, we hold a celebration to give away the clothes of the deceased. The rules of mourning are reduced. We take the clothes of the deceased and give them to the relatives to wear; this is to remember him or her with those clothes. We do a small celebration” (P9, Female, Age 37).

From these excerpts, it is clear that, by performing rituals, Bapedi people show respect to their ancestors and inform them about what is happening in their lives. The living dead are thought to be genuinely and authentically living with and among the living and influencing them (Baloyi & Makobe-Rabothata, 2014).

Social bonding in the community. Participants expressed that through traditional celebrations, they have an opportunity to interact with other members of the community, share ideas, and have fun together. So, beyond the cultural significance of these activities, the opportunity to interact emerged as meaningful. This is in addition to other leisure activities and community meeting forums.

“We are happy together, apart from the women group, we have the group for girls – they dance with drums (mmapadi), the boys dance with flutes (dinaka) when we have wedding/celebrations, they dance and change groups” (P9, Female, Age 37).

“At our own area where we stay, some women dance the step. When there are weddings, celebrations, or parties, they go and dance the step; they do not get paid. It is something which we know they do. This is what makes us happy/entertain us. They wear the uniform that is famous among Pedi women called dihele, white hand gloves, and white tekkies. We know that when there are celebrations, they come” (P9, Female, Age 37).

Traditional celebrations provide a space for pleasurable interactions and ensuing positive emotional experiences. Boer and Abubakar (2014), in a study involving six countries from three continents, observed cross-cultural differences in social functions. Specifically, participants from Kenya and the Philippines appeared to place the strongest emphasis on the social and socio-cultural functions of music in celebratory contexts compared to individuals from Germany, Mexico, New Zealand, and Turkey. The tribal leaders in the current study noted that they experienced meaning through participating in cultural dances because it brings an opportunity for social bonding within the community. The same was reported by Lebaka (2020), whose participants revealed that music and religion positively influence the moral life of Bapedi people through the associated social interactions.

Proverbs. Participants indicated that proverbs are cultural sources of meaning because embedded in them are the rules of engagement, principles for living morally, and esteemed values in the community. Proverbs guide individuals on how to relate with each other. For example, some of the proverbs that participants mentioned emphasise unity and the sharing of resources in the community. The proverbs provide a guide (that is implicitly prescriptive) for different aspects of an individual’s life.

“Yes, the proverb which is important to me is the one which says motho ke motho ka batho which means a person is a person through others. You cannot do things on your own” (P1, Male, Age 51).

“I remember once the former president Rolihlahla Mandela used to say “Umuntu nge muntu nge bantu” so it means if you are alone here there is nothing that you can do, you need to be united with each other, support each other during the funerals and during this challenging time of COVID-19” (P8, Male, Age 38).

“I love the proverb which says the children from one family share the locust’s head. The little you have, you can share with your sibling” (P3, Female, Age 62).

“In Sepedi or Bapedi speaking people, we have proverbs which say people help one another, which says one hand washes the other, meaning you cannot work alone” (P5, Male, Age 57).

Rong (2013) states that culture has many layers of meanings. In that sense, proverbs offer a window to understanding a community or society. In this way, proverbs may provide insight into the values and moral principles of communities and cultures.

Reciprocal caring. In the interviews, participants revealed that they support each other in the community through traditional social clubs/societies. Some participants identified themselves as a resource to the community, and the ability to take care of others around them and ensure the community's proper running served as a source of meaning. Here, meaning in life was not limited to receiving material and relational support but rather ensuring that others were well cared for. Participants appeared to experience meaning from their culturally-defined roles as tribal leaders.

“We are people who assist one another. At the end of the month, we meet and contribute money, we call it the money for thusano (assistance), save it and when one of us has a death case, we take it out and assist” (P1, Male, Age 51).

“We have social events, especially funerals. We also have social clubs and a burial society where we contribute money as a group of community members and put it in a savings account or something like that. Should it happen that one member of a community has a problem, we withdraw the money to assist the person” (P5, Male, Age 51).

“Myself in the community, I have a great purpose in the community. I work for the community, and I assist many people because they know so and so because I can take them anywhere to get assistance, we make sure that they get land to build their homes. I also see myself as helpful in the community because I am involved in society issues. I can take the money to the post office on behalf of the community” (P7, Male, Age 59).

Participants indicated that they are united as a community and stand with each other through difficult times. The sense of connectedness with close family and the larger community is part of a cultural bond that provides a sense that life is meaningful.

“According to our culture, we stand together as one people, and because you also know there is a saying that together we stand and divided we fall. Eh, we stand together, and we support each other during funerals. If my neighbour passes away, we go there to support our neighbour because your neighbour must be the first person to know about such things and protect each other” (P5, Male, Age 51).

“We don’t meet only when one passes away; we also meet through thick and thin” (P5, Male, Age 51).

In the current study, the participants indicated that they value the support they receive from each other, as well as being able to offer support to those who are in need. They further indicated that social interactions were not limited to challenging situations, but they made time to interact and celebrate together. In a study that was done by Ebersöhn, Loots, Mampane, Omidire, and Malan-van Rooyen (2017) across the regions of Gauteng, Limpopo, Namibia, the Eastern Cape, Lesotho, North West, and Swaziland, the participants, irrespective of sex, age, or area (metropolitan or provincial), indicated that reciprocal donations, communal savings in societies, and partnerships, borrowing, and lending were indigenous care and support interventions that could facilitate meaning-making. It seems that these practices function strongly as “sophisticated social technology interventions” (p. 741) in Southern Africa, and they all reflect rich social and cultural capital in the socio-economically challenged context of Southern Africa.

Marais (2016) noted that caring and connectedness emerged as the main theme that characterised positive relationships in work settings among black South African domestic workers. Although the context is different from the current study, the results are similar as participants indicated that they derive meaning from reciprocal caring and unity. In the current study, the participants mentioned that they belong to social clubs where they save money to assist each other during bereavements and celebrations such as weddings. The participants in this study indicated that they experience meaning when supporting and receiving support from others. For them, community connectedness is important as they believe that one person cannot do things in isolation; they all need each other for the community's benefit.

Experiences of Meaning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In terms of experiences of meaning during the COVID-19 pandemic, two themes emerged: alternative ways of supporting the community and appreciation.

Alternative ways of supporting the community. Despite the difficulties the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the world, the participants shared that they found other ways to continue to support the community to reduce individual burdens. For them, meaning in life was derived from communal responsibility to reach the less privileged who were affected by the pandemic. Coming up with ideas to meet others' needs and ensuring that others are able to survive facilitated a sense of meaning and fulfilment. Below are examples of their responses.

“We are visiting families who are poor and register them to get food from the government. The food arrives at my home because I am a leader; we call people and give them the food parcels so that they can eat” (P1, Male, Age 51).

“When it comes to the issue of people starving in the community, we organised that we collect food parcels to be distributed among the community. Remember I once mentioned that we are united and live as a family, we cannot leave our neighbours to sleep without eating anything. We contribute some money to make sure that we buy food and distribute it among us” (P5, Male, Age 47).

“Even when we go to the death cases, most of the time we go during the week to visit the family so that during the weekend the family can go to those funerals because if we go in a group, the family will break the law and you will find that we have made a problem for the family” (P7, Male, Age 59).

The alternative ways of support are planned so that the needs of different community members are met. For instance, learners are supported to catch up with schoolwork while masks are made for community members who cannot buy masks.

“As a tribal leader, I assist the children in the community with the schoolwork by using my computer to teach them to catch up the time they lost” (P8, Male, Age 38).

“Now what we are doing, some people sew the masks, we give them to the people who do not have them so that we can protect each other. We have realised that some people do not have money to buy masks” (P9, Female, Age 37).

In a study by Wilson, Wissing, and Schutte (2019), one of the facets of relational well-being identified by older individuals in a Batswana context was the importance of offering others support in terms of care, emotional support, and affection. They further noted that having the chance to provide assistance to others and express affection to family members were important motivations for enacting and sustaining social networks. These acts of support resulted in experiencing meaning in life. A study by Stavrova and Luhmann (2016) showed that meaning in life was associated not only with the subjective feeling of belonging to one's community but also a desire to contribute to one's community by actively participating in voluntary associations such as neighbourhood watch, volunteer services groups, or any other civil union. This corresponds to the findings from the current study, where providing food and masks to others, and offering assistance with schoolwork, contributed to participants' experiences of meaning in life.

Appreciation. Adler and Fagley (2005) defined appreciation as “acknowledging the value and meaning of something—an event, a person, a behavior, an object—and feeling a positive emotional connection to it” (p. 81). Appreciation enhances perceptions of connection to the appreciated stimulus or the nature of existence. Throughout the interviews, the participants noted that the pandemic made them value life and their families and made them grateful towards God for protecting them. During the lockdown, they had the opportunity to spend quality time with their families, resulting in deeper experiences of meaning in life. Below are some responses of the participants.

“Life is something precious; we need to take care of it and respect it” (P2, male, age 66).

“My family, my family comes first with this COVID-19” (P4, Male, Age 52).

“We have learned a lot of things. People can stay with their families. When they say lockdown, they say stay at home, and you can have good relationships” (P10, Male, Age 63).

“I thank God that my family, my neighbours and I are protected. I am grateful for life” (P7, Male, Age 59).

Fagley (2012) states that appreciation towards others may improve relationship quality, which is an important source of meaning in life. Related to the findings in this study, the experience of gratitude has been related to greater feelings of being cared for and understood by spouses (Kubacka, Finkenauer, Rusbult, & Keijsers, 2011). The participants in this study indicated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, they valued their relationships with the family and learned to spend quality time with them. Family members reminded each other of the importance of staying safe and protecting each other. Having the support from their families during the pandemic has taught tribal leaders to appreciate the family more as they have realised that life is precious, which has, in turn, brought meaning to lives.

Limitations and Recommendations

There are some limitations to the study. Firstly, the study was conducted using 10 participants from only four villages in Moletjie Tribal Authority; hence, it is possible that different findings could be obtained if a similar study is conducted in other Sepedi communities. Despite the specific and small sample size, the in-depth exploration of the experience of meaning in life provided detailed descriptions to offset the sample size limitations. It is also important to note that the study's aim was not to generalise the findings to other populations but rather to gain an in-depth and nuanced understanding of participants' experiences of meaning in life in this

specific cultural context. Nonetheless, future research that applies a mixed-methods research approach to a larger sample may be valuable.

Another limitation may be that the first author, who conducted the interviews and did the data analyses, was familiar with the villages and is also a member of the Bapedi cultural group. While this could have biased her interaction with participants and her interpretations, it could also be a strength because she knew not only the language in which the interviews took place but also the culture and context of the participants. Particularly, the fact that the interviews were conducted in Sepedi, which is the participants' primary communication language, with only three participants choosing to be interviewed in English, can be a strength of this study. In order to limit the possibility of bias, the first author kept a reflective journal to note personal experiences, beliefs, judgements, and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced the research. Moreover, personal dispositions were recorded before each interview in an attempt to counteract the potentially negative impact thereof on the interview process. This has helped the first author to focus on the topic and what the participants were sharing. The first author also ensured that when unexpected responses emerged, individual expectations and assumptions were not imposed. These strategies helped to limit the impact of personal biases.

Another limitation is that data was gathered telephonically due to the restrictions posed by COVID-19 regulations. This could have influenced participants' comfort to share personal content and took away the opportunity for the researcher to also take note of body language when trying to understand participants' experiences. In order to reduce the potentially negative impact telephonic interviews could have on rapport between the participants and the interviewer, the interviewer made all attempts possible to set participants at ease and create a welcoming space in the interviews. The telephonic interviews were recorded, and a potential limitation may

be that recordings may not always be clear. This was managed by thoroughly cross-checking the transcribed and translated data before data analysis. For instance, a particular recording was not clear, preventing the researcher from documenting the participant's impressions. The threat was managed by calling the participant to cross-check the information.

A final limitation that we wish to highlight is that the present study used only in-depth individual interviews to gather data. Focus group interviews could have been helpful as well, especially for the questions relating to unique cultural sources of meaning in life.

Conclusions

This study explored how tribal leaders in a Sepedi context experience meaning in life. Data were collected from 10 tribal leaders in four villages in South Africa. The findings of the study revealed that the tribal leaders in the Sepedi community described their experiences of meaning in life, including with reference to familial interactions and support, commitment to and appreciation of spiritual beliefs, and community reciprocal support and leisure activities. When participants were asked about the aspects of the Sepedi culture which provide them with meaning, traditional celebrations, proverbs, and reciprocal caring emerged as unique cultural sources of meaning. Amidst the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning in life emerged by appreciating life and family and showing concern for others' well-being. As tribal leaders, the participants had the communal responsibility to find alternative means of supporting different groups of individuals in the community in this challenging time.

Key contributions of the study include additional evidence on the role of culture in people's experiences of meaning in life. For example, as much as the importance of relationships for the experience of meaning have been highlighted in previous research (e.g., Wissing et al., 2020), experiencing meaning from children realising their goals is noteworthy. This is a form of

generativity that goes beyond providing for family members' needs to prioritising their goal fulfilment. Within familial interaction, the value of respect in holding together the family has been highlighted in other family studies in the African context but not necessarily in exploring meaning in life (Bray & Dawes, 2016; Mason, 2018; Nguyen, Chatters, Taylor, & Mouzen, 2016).

This study's findings further reinforced the importance of cultural elements such as celebrations and proverbs for meaning in life and stressed the sense of collective responsibility for well-being that emerges in an African context. Cultural generativity, individual and communal identity in attaining personhood, and enhancing community quality of life are facets that were shown to be important to participants in this study. This points to the centrality of interconnectedness in African contexts and highlights the importance of preserving community values and principles for the well-being of community members. This links with previous work that has shown that moral principles and values underlie the process of meaning-making (Metz, 2011).

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, participants' work as tribal leaders where they work voluntarily to better the community brought deep meaning and a sense of fulfilment in life. This corresponds with Mlungwana (2020), who found that work that contributes to and promotes a greater good, that extends beyond the individual and impacts others, is often regarded as meaningful. This implies that encouraging people to help and support others and the broader community may increase their levels of meaning in life, which may buffer against the development of psychosocial illnesses and despair in hard times.

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Section 3

Summary, Reflection, and Conclusions

Summary

The present study aimed to explore the experiences of meaning in life among tribal leaders in a Sepedi context. A qualitative approach involving telephonic semi-structured interviews with 10 Sepedi tribal leaders that were purposively selected from four villages in the Moletjie Tribal Authority of the Limpopo province of South Africa was used. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

The present study's findings show that Sepedi tribal leaders experience meaning in life through their family support system. To the participants, family refers not only to blood relations such as children and spouses but also neighbours and the wider community. Neighbours were highlighted to play a significant role in supporting each other during emergencies before the family could render support. Support received helped tribal leaders to overcome challenges and assured them that their families, neighbours, and the community would always assist when they need them. However, it was not only receiving support from family and others that was mentioned in participants' experiences of meaning. Providing support to others also emerged as a strong source of meaning. Even though the findings are similar to findings from previous studies, the emphasis on reciprocal support in this study was significant. Leisure also emerged as an opportunity to develop social connectedness and an avenue for enhancing social cohesion for tribal leaders, which contributed to their experience of meaning in life.

Also emerging in the study as central to participants' experiences of meaning was their relationship with God and ancestors. Through prayers, tribal leaders drew strength, wisdom, and guidance from God when faced with difficult situations. Spiritual entities were credited for

participants' achievements, and communion with other individuals with similar faith facilitated growth in their spiritual journey. Ancestors were appeased through celebrations in order to show gratitude and respect.

Traditional celebrations emerged as a source of meaning. Through these celebrations, the community gets the opportunity to strengthen existing social relationships, promote harmony, and ensure cultural generativity. It emerged that observing certain rituals, including circumcision, marriages, and naming, provides an opportunity to take on a community-recognised sense of personhood. Other cultural sources of meaning, such as proverbs, embody principles and moral values that guide an individual's outlook on life and provide non-prescriptive rules of the community. Similar results were reported in previous studies (Metz, 2011; Rong, 2013; Syzdykov, 2014); however, a unique contribution is grounded in the notion that celebrations and rituals have the added benefit of ensuring cultural generativity. Moreover, the naming and introduction ceremonies emerged as formative events in individuals' identity development. The links of such ceremonies to meaning in life are novel within well-being research.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected tribal leaders and the community severely. They could not execute certain social activities such as weddings, attending funerals for people in the community was restricted to only close family members, and holding mass meetings to discuss community-related issues was prohibited. Despite these difficulties, tribal leaders managed to find alternative ways to support each other while encouraging the community to join hands in ensuring that everyone is protected, which contributed to their experience of meaning in life. Alternative support methods were planned to ensure that different community members' mental, physical, and emotional needs were met. For example, tribal leaders reached out to the less

privileged by providing masks to those who could not afford them and distributing food parcels. Students were also supported in catching up with school work. These alternative ways to support the community resulted in experiencing meaning as the tribal leaders felt fulfilled because they contributed to the community's well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, the pandemic made tribal leaders value life and their families more and urged them to express gratitude to God for protecting them. During the national lockdown, they had the opportunity to spend quality time with their families, resulting in deeper experiences of meaning in life.

Personal Reflection

The reason why I pursued this study was based on a personal desire to understand how tribal leaders in the Sepedi context understand and experience meaning in life. When I read the literature, I found extensive research done in Western countries on meaning in life, but few studies were conducted in South Africa on meaning in life and the potential role of culture in its meanings and manifestations. When we were asked to develop a topic for our master's degree mini-dissertation, I remembered the province where I grew up and thought that I would be interested in exploring how people in those villages experienced meaning. Fortunately, the Moletjie Tribal Authority supported this research.

The road of developing a study proposal and obtaining ethics approval was challenging. For example, I struggled initially with paraphrasing and APA referencing when I was busy with my literature review. With inputs from my study leaders and friends, I developed this skill. It was also hard to get approval for the study from the university's various committees, and quite a challenge when I had to submit an amendment request to change my method of data gathering from face-to-face interviews to telephonic interviews. I felt very disappointed when I realised that I could not conduct face-to-face interviews, but I understood that the safety of the

participants and myself was of the utmost importance. I worked through these challenges and felt proud of each successful next step. The amendment also gave me the opportunity to add a question on meaning in life amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which I found to be very relevant and interesting.

My experience when meeting the tribal leaders was very positive. In our initial contact, where I told them about the study and invited them to participate, the hospitality I received from them was astonishing. They treated me like their own daughter and were eager to participate in the research. Also, the support and help that I received from the independent person who helped me with the recruitment of the participants were wonderful.

When conducting the interviews, I found it easy to communicate with the participants since I felt that our previous interactions as part of the recruitment process helped me to establish rapport with them, and when I had to inform them about the change in data gathering approach. We managed to sign the informed consent telephonically. The participants and their families were very helpful in sending the originally signed informed consent forms via post. The interviews were not tricky since most of the participants chose to be interviewed in Sepedi. In some cases, I had to explain further when participants did not understand the question. I am grateful for the participants' preparedness, enthusiasm, and keenness to share their views. I have learned a lot from the participants and their experiences.

The participants were provided with money for airtime; if we were disconnected, they could call me back and inform me to call them back to continue the interviews. During the period of data gathering, I struggled to get hold of some of the participants due to network issues, and some were busy with clients as they serve the community. I finally managed to interview 10 participants, which also yielded data saturation.

The transcribing and checking of the translations of the data was a time-consuming and intensive process, but it helped me to familiarise myself with the data. The coding process was a learning curve, but I enjoyed it. Coming up with themes was easier, but sometimes I was short of the right words to summarise the codes. Discussing the possible themes with my co-coder and study leader helped me to focus on the important results and revise the themes and subthemes where necessary. During the whole research process, I kept a journal to record my experiences, challenges, and views to minimise the impact of my assumptions on the study's findings.

It was not easy to complete my mini-dissertation as I had to juggle between my work, which is very demanding, and my studies. I have learned never to give up, even if there are challenges. I am so grateful for the support and understanding of my supervisor. I know sometimes it was frustrating for her that my study was going at a slow pace, but she was always there to cheer me up. I will not trade the experience I acquired for anything. I will treasure it forever. It was worth my time and energy. I am happy that I did not give up as the study results will contribute to existing studies on meaning, and the participants have reflected on how meaning is crucial for their wellbeing. I wish they would share what they have learned with their families, the young generation, and other leaders.

Conclusion

This study showed the value of and need for applying bottom-up qualitative approaches to explore meaning in life in different cultural contexts. Although some findings echo previous studies, important findings were unique and speak to the specific cultural context of this study. Theories on meaning in life need to consider cultural values, for example, in determining the sources of meaning in life.

Key contributions of the study include additional evidence on the role of culture in people's experiences of meaning in life. As much as relationships emerged as central to meaning in life in previous research, the finding from this study that participants experienced meaning from children realising their goals is noteworthy. This is a form of generativity that goes beyond providing for family members' needs to prioritising their goal fulfilment. The value of respect in holding together the family has been highlighted in other family studies in the African context but not necessarily in exploring meaning in life.

Eliciting the views of tribal leaders on meaning in life has provided insight into the topic from the viewpoint of the handlers or custodians of cultural beliefs, values, moral and principles in the Sepedi community. This highlighted the importance of acknowledging culture in understanding and promoting meaning in life. Specifically, this study demonstrated that deeply ingrained in the Sepedi culture is the need for generativity, cohesion, and a collective sense of well-being, which can all contribute to meaning in life of community members. Whether it is social bonding, the use of proverbs, or traditional celebrations, all of these point to relational values that hold together the community's social fabric while promoting individuals' sense of well-being and quality of life. It is possible that collective well-being was a strong theme because the participants were tribal leaders. The overall well-being of the community, which is promoted through different rituals and activities, in the end, has implications for individual well-being. It is possible that the tribal leaders experienced meaning in life by appreciating the importance of their existence and working selflessly to ensure that everyone in the community is cared of during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such appreciation and provision of support to others possibly reinforced their identity and role as tribal leaders, likely fostering transcendental experiences and a sense of purpose, which are linked to meaning in life.

These findings help emphasise the importance of considering a particular socio-cultural context's characteristics when aspects such as psychosocial well-being are to be understood and promoted.

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