

# 'Living Rugged, Dying Brutal': Understanding Gang Lifeworlds Through Death

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## Abstract

This study examined death rituals as a frame to understanding the meaning of life and the after-life from the perspective of gang members, and how these meanings frame the violent sub-culture of gangs. Utilizing a case study analysis of the Iceland and Deebam gangs, the two leading gangs in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, we identified a collection of material and non-material death rituals which are separately embedded in the ideological orientations as well as practical activities of both gangs. Our findings showed that the meaning of life and death is drawn from a belief system that holds a promise of *'life after death'* or of *'dead gang members having lasting feasts with their gods'*. Such post-death privileges are believed to be a reward for gang loyalty often manifested through the *'ruggedity'* or *'brutality'* of the deceased gang members while alive. This implies that upon demise, membership and social status of gang members transcend to the afterlife. We argued that it is these belief systems amongst gang members that frame the forms of death rituals that are usually characterized by swearing by the gods, promise of revenge and other forms of rugged or brutal show of violence that incentivizes/sustains the violent sub-culture and precarity of the gang life.

**Keywords:** Gang Life, Death Rituals, Iceland, Deebam, Niger Delta

## Introduction

Death, an inevitable end of all human beings is often accompanied by periods of mourning and other culturally prescribed rituals by living members of the society or group the deceased belongs to. Death rituals, although a global phenomenon differ according to cultural specifications of societies, as well as within societies depending on the nature of the group or the type of ritual performed which is oftentimes commensurate with the social status of the deceased (Cohen, 1981; Klass & Steffen, 2018). Conventionally, funerals depict an image of grieving, people gathering at a funeral home to console each other, say prayers, make donations, have refreshments, and extol the virtues of the deceased (Hemer, 2010; Riley, 1983). However, for social groups such as gangs who have notoriously earned themselves the identity of a deviant sub-culture, death rites usually have a different outlook. Gangs have a global footprint and are generally known for their inherent violent norms and values. Despite their global presence, there is yet to be a consensus amongst scholars on what should constitute a gang, due to its multifaceted and varied nature (Decker, Pyrooz, & Densley, 2022; Tostlebe & Pyrooz, 2022).

This notwithstanding, Klein and Maxson (1989) posit that the basic elements that define a gang from other social groups are its own self-recognition as a unique and separate group of predominantly adolescents or young males who associate frequently for the aim of mutual protection and profit;

residing in the neighbourhood and trying to control turf; and its regular involvement in delinquent and criminal activities that are enough to draw the attention of law enforcement agencies. While Klein and Maxson's description of gangs in relation to their nature, motives and criminal association may have some universal applicability, their demographic categorization of gangs is worrisome on two fronts. Firstly, gangs are not necessarily composed of adolescents and young adults, as in most cases gang membership or affiliation happens to be a lifelong affair. Secondly, the gendered dimension to gang membership or affiliation was overlooked in their conception of gangs. While it may be true that gangs are male dominated organizations, females do actively participate in gang activities. For instance, within the Niger Delta context, there are female wings of mainstream gangs, while in some cases, female gangs exist independently in their own right. Despite this attempt in providing conceptual meaning to what gangs are, the varied nature and manifestations of gangs makes it challenging to conceive of a unified and generally accepted definition of gangs. Nonetheless, within the context of this study, by gangs, we refer to street gangs largely domiciled and operational in major cities and communities in Nigeria, that are uniquely distinct from university-based campus confraternities.

Furthermore, the deviant sub-culture of gangs manifests not only in the everyday life of gang members, it transcends to death and the conceived afterlife. This is more evident in many countries across North America, Asia, and Latin-America where gangs are known to remember the dead through graffiti (Philips, 2021), tattoos, erection of statues, and dedication of poems/song lyrics to them etc. Gangs may also use a funeral of a deceased member as an occasion for violence, revenge, and even armed robbery. In other words, gangs may express violent norms through funeral rites of deceased members as well as be shaped by the same process of violence. While several anthropological studies have captured the social fact of endings i.e., death and funeral rites amongst societies (Abramovitch, 2015; Cohen, 1981; Eisma & Nguyen, 2022; Kears, 1989), scarce literature exists on gang death rituals and its significance, especially in the Global South. This article relying on a case study analysis of street gangs in Niger Delta region of Nigeria, hence provides insights into the precarious violent gang life through the lens of death. While street gangs are known to be prominent actors in armed conflicts in the Niger Delta (Asuni, 2009; Nyiayaana, 2011), political competition (Jack & Tokpo, 2021) and access to clientelist networks (Iwilade, 2014) especially within the context of benefit capture of crude oil rents have been identified as key drivers of gang violence in the region. Beyond these political and economic factors, little is known about the underlying cultural and psycho-social forces that incentivizes and sustains violent sub-culture of gangs. Therefore, in this article we interrogate these overlooked, yet significant forces i.e., collective belief systems around death amongst street gangs. Based on analysis of data collected through extensive field research conducted in the cities of Port Harcourt and Yenagoa, we examined rituals associated with the death and funeral of deceased gang members; the significance of such death rituals to members; and how funeral performances reinforce gang violence through the show of "ruggedity" and "brutality". The use of the term ruggedity and brutality represents the violent precarity associated with the Niger Delta gangscapes which Pratten (2007) describes as the 'rugged life' embedded in the show of power and force, as well as susceptibility to an uncertain 'brutal death'.

### Theorizing Death Rituals

Social life and order are shaped by the central force of death which is primarily a biological feature that marks the end of life of an individual. Although the study of endings has been around since the late 19th Century, it was not until the 1980s that its social relevance began to draw attention from sociologists and psychologists. Riley (1983) notes that death is a social process with a biological origin, and its meaning are in a constant state of social transformation. Life and death have been the enduring themes of religion, science, mythology, and fear throughout human history. As a central dynamism underlying life, vitality and the arrangement of the social order, death serves as

a barometer for measuring the meaning and quality of life from various social angles (Cohen, 1981; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008; Kearsley, 1989).

Death and bereavement are often attended by rituals or certain attitudes and emotions culturally prescribed and/or expected by the social group an individual belongs to. A ritual is a prescribed and sequential activity of a community or social group involving gestures, objects and words, and done within a sacred context. It is attended by sentiments and sacred symbols designed to regulate human interactions (Bird, 1980; Cohen, 1981; Durkheim, 1915; Okodudu, 2007; Turner, 1971). Thus, death rituals occur within a social context as they serve as a “continuing bond” (Eisma & Nguyen, 2022; Klass & Steffen, 2018), between the living and dead, expressed through proximity-seeking behaviours by the bereaved. This may involve reminiscing, having an elaborate procession, observing a wake, keeping of personal possessions, looking of photographs, visitation of gravesite, graffiti display and gun salutes (especially by military institutions and non-state armed groups such as gangs), and adoption of the deceased as a role model by the bereaved. The length of bereavement and amount of honour accorded to the corpse often reflects the social standing of the deceased in the community or social group (Hemer, 2010; Hughes, Schaible, & Kephart, 2021; Ogbuagu, 1989; Silverman, Baroiller, & Hemer, 2020; Wilkinson, & Chavez, 1992).

More so, on the significance and importance of death rituals, sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists have demonstrated that death rituals play significant roles within a community such as acting as a counterforce to the feelings of fear, dismay and demoralization associated with death (Palgi & Abramovitch, 1984), thereby providing answers to the meaning of life for the community (Abramovitch, 2015). Thus, death rituals serve as mechanisms to resolve what the anthropologist, Hertz (1960), refers to as social disruptions of life within a community occasioned by death of a member. These rituals remind group members of a common commitment, thereby strengthening group solidarity (Howells, 1962), while at the same time providing psychological and emotional relief between group members (Radcliffe-Brown, 1968).

### **Gangs of the Niger Delta: Deebam and Iceland in Perspective**

The origin of cult gangs in Nigeria began with the formation of the first known campus confraternity in Nigeria - the Pyrates Confraternity (National Association of Seadogs), in 1953, by Wole Soyinka and six other undergraduate students at the premier University of Ibadan. As a non-violent pressure group, the Pyrates confraternity was a social movement aimed at eradicating injustice, tribalism, elitism and imperialism in the Nigerian society (Jack & Tokpo, 2021). However, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the transition of campus confraternities from social movements to criminal organizations as many confraternities as well as splinter gangs began to emerge across the country (Nyiayaana, 2011). The intensification of competitive rivalry between campus confraternities in the 1980s and early 1990s culminated in the establishment of street gangs (Jack & Tokpo, 2021). These street gangs including the Deebam and Iceland gangs investigated in this study serve as the junior wing of the campus-based parent confraternities. The Deebam gang (alias Bobos), meaning “be strong” in vernacular, was established in 1991 as a street wing of the Klansmen Konfraternity (alias KK) - a campus confraternity established in the early 1980s at the University of Calabar, Nigeria (Wellington, 2007). Deebam’s formal gang colour is ‘white and black’ with the ‘Chelsea Dry’ gin as their (sacred) alcoholic drink which members also use in performing gang rituals to their deity named ‘Ogor’, believed to be a goddess. The Deebam gang gained prominence in the Niger Delta region following its expansion to Rivers State, particularly in the Capital city of Port Harcourt under the leadership of one Onengiyeofori Terika alias “Occasion Boy” who was killed in 2003 (Nyiayaana, 2011). The Deewell gang on the other hand, was formed by some members of the Vikings Confraternity in the early 1990s in Rivers State to counter the dominance of the Deebam. The Deewell, meaning “stay well”

in vernacular, has its formal gang colour as 'red and black' with the 'Squadron rum' as its (sacred) alcoholic drink. Members of the Deewell also revere or acknowledge 'Odin' as their spiritual god - a Scandinavian god associated with their parent cult group the Vikings. The Deewell gang splitted into the Iceland and Greenland gangs in the late 2000s due to schisms within the gang, having roots in Port Harcourt. Thus, in addition to the Deebam, the Iceland and Greenland gangs have been strong rivals in places like Yenagoa, although both gangs still share similar norms, symbols, and traditions in common (Shepler, 2012). The Deebam and Iceland gangs have since their formation been great rivals, and have continued to spread rapidly mainly across the Niger Delta region and beyond (Asuni, 2009; Wellington, 2007).

## Materials and Methods

In conducting this study, we adopted a qualitative participatory research design, relying on primary data generated through oral interviews with members of Iceland and Deebam, the two leading gangs in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. In addition to documenting the lived experiences of our interlocutors, we relied on the observation technique in rare cases to experience the performance of death rituals on a deceased gang member. This involved us in two major different occasions, observing from a close distance how gang members sang, chanted, and consumed alcohol and narcotics during and after the funeral of their deceased members. We also in a particular case had participate directly as sympathizers at a funeral where we built rapport with the gang members, without giving them the obvious impression that they were being studied. These observations were randomly made and are separate from the interviews we conducted with gang members. A total of fifteen (15) gang members participated in the study who were purposively selected through a snowballing (referral) procedure from some gang-dominated zones in Yenagoa and Port Harcourt, the two leading cities where gang activities are disproportionately present in the Niger Delta. The study sample includes eight (8) Iceland members and seven (7) Deebam members respectively. Our interlocutors were all males aged between 19 and 30 years of age, as both gangs are historically male dominated and the demographics of participants was well-suited for the study as adults old enough to give and/or withdraw consent at any given point. Many of the gang members were interviewed in Pidgin English which they were more familiar and fluent with, and their statements were later transcribed in English. The thematic analysis technique was utilized for data analysis as categories of themes were developed to provide meanings and to enable us draw inferences from the lived experiences of the gang members. The themes that emerged from the data as presented in the next section are grouped into two main categories, the first addressing forms of gang death rituals, and the second, the significance of death rituals. Ethical consideration was prioritized in the study as our interlocutors were duly informed about the purpose of the study, with their anonymity and confidentiality protected. None of them was coerced or induced to participate in the study, and interviews were all conducted only with their consent and approved locations.

## Death Rituals and Funeral rites in Niger Delta Gangscape

Death and dying is common place in the Niger Delta's gangscape primarily due to unending conflicts and rivalries between gangs in the region (Ebiede, Bassey, & Asuni, 2021). The demise of a gang member is accompanied by corresponding death rituals and practices that befit the status of the deceased. Examining these rituals, our interlocutors were asked to identify and narrate the various death rituals or rites performed for their deceased gang members. While it is important to note that corpses of deceased gang members are formally buried by members of the deceased family, gang members play significant roles in the funeral ceremonies of their dead. The following themes surfaced from the interviews as the death rituals associated with the death and burial of a deceased gang member.

## Mourning

Mourning is an integral part of the rituals that follows the death of a gang member. Our interlocutors noted that they often call for meetings almost immediately to mourn their dead member following the news of his demise. The length of the mourning period largely depends on the cause of death and the status of the gang member. An Iceland member stated:

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“We will gather ourselves at the home of the deceased or on our ‘island’ (i.e., gang meeting venue), to console ourselves and mourn the death of a member, especially if he was very important figure in the gang... We will think of a way to honour him and/or support his funeral” (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Borikiri, Port Harcourt/26 years).

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Similarly, a member of the Deebam shared similar sentiments when he argued thus:

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“We will gather ourselves to mourn our deceased member... If he was killed by a rival gang, we will plan on how to retaliate as soon as possible...” (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/Amarata, Yenagoa/23 years).

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## Funeral Procession and Gang Music

The most common ritual associated with death is the observance of a funeral procession and playing of gang music locally called “*salley*” or “*oghele*” which are usually encoded with gang slurs. Music is usually improvised by gang members with the use of metallic objects, bottles, sticks, and local drums in honour of the fallen member. The use of hard drugs is also common during such funeral processions and musical frenzy. A funeral procession can be elaborate especially for a very important and “rugged” (Iceland) or “brutal” (Deebam) deceased gang member; that is, a member who was mostly reputed for violence and/or who held a high-ranking position in the gang. A member of the Deebam gang described this phenomenon:

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“Anytime we lose a member and want to bury him, we will observe a procession in the neighbourhood, singing, smoking, drinking, and chanting gang slurs... But this is done according to the rank and status of the deceased in the gang. If he was very ‘rugged’ or ‘brutal,’ then he is likely to gain a more elaborate procession” (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/Mile 1 Diobu, Port Harcourt/ 31 years).

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However, some of our interlocutors noted that the level of gang procession also depends on the approval or willingness of the family of the deceased to allow them participate directly in the funeral.

## Display of Gang Symbols/Insignia

Displaying of gang symbols and other insignia is also common amongst gangs at funerals of their deceased member. This involves dressing in formal gang regalia, displaying gang banners, having gang handshakes locally called ‘*claw*’ or signs to the notice of spectators, drinking the (sacred) gang-associated alcohol such as the Squadron rum (Iceland) or Chelsea Dry gin (Deebam) etc. According to an Iceland gang member:

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“On the funeral day, most of us are expected to dress in our gang regalia such as in ‘red-and-black’ clothing, drink the Squadron rum and pour libations to the dead in the name of Odin - our patron god. We will ‘claw’ (i.e., gang handshake) each other and chant in a rugged way...” (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Amarata, Yenagoa/25 years).

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In the same vein, a Deebam gang member stated thus:

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“Sometimes we drop or pin one or more empty bottles of the Chelsea Dry gin on top/around the grave of our member to show that he was part of us...” (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/Mile 1 Diobu, Port Harcourt/36 years).

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### Gun Salutes and Threat of Violence

Gang members perceive themselves to be street soldiers hence the demise and funeral of a deceased gang member is often accompanied by gun salutes and other show of violent tendencies, especially if they were very important and high-ranking members of the gang. According to a member of the Deebam gang:

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“It is almost compulsory that we give a gun salute to our fallen soldier... It does not matter whether the Police is present or absent at the funeral, we usually find a way to use fire arms either openly or secretly in honour of our fallen ‘soldier’ (i.e., gang member) during or after the funeral” (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/Amarata, Yenagoa/26 years).

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Buttressing the threat of violence during gang funerals, a member of the Iceland gang noted thus:

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“We look around the funeral to see if a rival gang member is present, and if we find any, he is likely to be an unlucky soul as we will violently attack him... Other members also use the funeral to go about looting or ‘raiding’ (i.e., a slang for robbing) unsuspecting members of the public” (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Ekeki, Yenagoa/30 years).

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Some of our interlocutors however noted that despite the risks of violence during funeral processions, a rival gang member(s) who is not notorious in the neighbourhood may sometimes attend the funeral of their own deceased member if both of them were friends or family members, although such rival gang member does that at his own risk.

### Significance of Gang Death Rituals and Funeral Rites

Understanding the significance or importance of death rituals to gang members, would provide nuanced insights into the motivations and implications of such gang rituals. Drawing from the lived experiences of our interlocutors, the following themes emerged as the significance of death rituals and funeral rites amongst gang members:

#### Show of Honour

Majority of our interlocutors held the view that death rituals and funeral rites for deceased gang member(s) is a symbol of honour to the deceased. The more elaborate the funeral rites, the more the proof of great honour to the fallen gang member. When asked why gang members observe death rituals and funeral rites, a member of the Deebam gang had this to say:

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“Why won’t we observe funeral processions in honour of our fallen soldiers? For me, it is a show of respect to our deceased soldiers...” (IDI/Male/Deebam gang/Diobu, Port Harcourt/28 years).

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Another member of the Iceland gang submitted thus:

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“Although I usually observe funeral rituals and processions for our fallen soldiers, but my level of participation also depends on how close the gang member was to me personally” (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Amarata, Yenagoa/29 years).

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### Reciprocity

Reciprocity was the second most cited reason for observing death rituals, according to our interlocutor. Observance of death rituals and funeral rites was important to them because it also provides them a chance of being remembered or honoured in similar manner when they die. Observing the death ritual of a fallen member is usually a reciprocal act within the gang and by extension even the family members of the deceased. Butressing this point, a member of the Iceland gang noted thus:

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“If you don't participate in the funeral of other gang members, nobody would like to participate in yours or that of your loved one if they die... I want to also be honoured by my gang when I die at a ripe age, that is why I usually observe the funerals of deceased gang members” (IDI/Male/Iceland/Amarata, Yenagoa/33 years).

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### Appeasement Or Charging of the Spirit of the Deceased

Some of our interlocutors stated that death rituals enable the deceased gang member to find rest in the afterlife. For instance, the Icelanders have a belief system that “he who the gods love, they take (death) to ‘Valhalla’ (i.e., heavenly abode)”. Yet, others stated that in situations when the gang member was murdered, death rituals can serve as a means to charge or invoke the spirit of the deceased to take vengeance against anyone who might have killed him. An Iceland gang member described this phenomenon:

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“We usually pour libations with the Squadron rum or any other alcoholic drink to pray for the spirit of the deceased to rest in ‘Vahalla’, with the god Odin and other chosen fallen soldiers or rugged ‘sailors’ (i.e., gang members) ... The spirit may also be charged to take vengeance on those who might have killed him. To ensure this, we or the family members of the deceased usually put dangerous objects such as cutlass, knife, razor blade or other fetish items in the coffin so he can use them in the spirit world to seek revenge” (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Aggrey road, Port Harcourt/26 years).

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### Death Rituals: An Insight into Gang's Violent Sub-Culture

In this section of the article, we explored the implications of gang death rituals and how funeral rites are lenses through which we can provide nuanced understanding of gang's violent sub culture. Our interlocutors were asked how the thought of a deceased member makes them feel, what kind of sensation they experience during and after the death rituals. We also examined the reactions gang members give towards rival gangs alleged to be responsible for the death of their own, and to narrate any incidence of violence they might have witnessed or heard about in the recent past during the observance of death rituals for a deceased gang member. From the interviews, the following themes were identified:

### Desire For Retribution or Vengeance

The observance of a deceased gang member's funeral (especially in cases when the deceased was murdered) evokes anger and a feeling of vengeance against those who are known or perceived to be responsible for his death especially when they are rival gang members. This is even more likely if the deceased was a high-ranking or very important member to the gang. A member of the Iceland gang argued thus:

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"If the gang member was killed by a rival and we are observing his funeral, it usually makes us to seek revenge... We go about searching for opponents to strike back" (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Amarata, Yenagoa/29 years).

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The above submissions notwithstanding, a few interlocutors noted that it is not always the case that the gang itself avenge the death of a member, but a clique or small group of members within the gang who might be close associates to the deceased could execute such acts.

### Readiness to Kill or Be Killed

The killing of a gang member by rival gangs and its attendant funeral rites reminds surviving members the need to always stay alert and be ready to kill rival gangs who might be after their lives. Some other interlocutors also expressed their readiness to face death at any moment, firmly believing that if they were to meet a rugged or brutal end, their spirits would be welcomed by one of their respective patron gods (i.e., Odin or Ogor) in the afterlife. According to an Iceland gang member:

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"Anytime I hear about the violent death of a fellow member by a rival gang, I prepare my mind for the worse... If I die today, Odin will receive me in Valhalla with a feast with the gods" (IDI/Male/Iceland gang/Borikiri, Port Harcourt/26 years).

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This belief system explains the proneness to violence among gangsters and the precarity associated with the gang life. This notwithstanding, some of our interlocutors admitted that they do not actually believe there was an afterlife with Odin or Ogor in the literal sense apart from the popular Christian conception of heaven and hell.

### Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that although death rituals by gang members takes on very similar social process like many other conventional funeral rites, there are rituals that are specific with gangs. Despite the peculiarities and dissimilarities in the belief systems of the two gangs, the Deebam and Iceland gangs share similar death rituals and practices. These gangs honour dead members through forms of material culture such as dressing in gang regalia, display of gang symbols, gun salutes, and use of hard drugs and alcoholic drinks (squadron rum for Iceland and Chelsea dry gin for Deebam). Their non-material death rituals include procession, music, libations or prayers, and dancing. These rituals usually reflect the social standing and status of the deceased gang member. These forms of gang-related death rituals support earlier studies by Ogbuagu (1989) and Hemer (2010) who also found most of these forms of bereavement and funeral rites to be present amongst other non-gang groups and culture. In contrast to gangs in the global North especially in North America where death and memorialization rituals of gang members include bodily inscriptions such as tattoos and use of graffiti (Philips, 2021), gangs in Nigeria's Niger Delta scarcely practice such rituals.



Furthermore, by bringing members together to honour the deceased, death rituals significantly reinforce social solidarity, individual commitment, and easing or diversion of pain amongst the Iceland and Deebam gangs respectively. The collective grieving by the gang sometimes generates a feeling of carrying out violent assaults on rival gangs as retribution either as a whole or a clique. Thus, violent masculinity is being shaped through death rituals. These findings also support previous death studies by Durkheim (1915) and Klass and Steffen (2018) who note that funeral rites create social bonds and immortalize the dead in the minds of the living. The implications of the death rituals hence, do not only provide the psychological relief for the living members of the gangs, it provides meaning to the precarious gang life and as Malinowski (1958) noted, participation in death rituals prepares the individual (in this context the gang member) for his own ultimate demise.

## Conclusion

Culture, has generally been seen as comprising of the complex whole of a people manifested in material and non-material forms such as beliefs, custom/rituals, art, norms, and values, transmitted across time through socialization process to enable new members, inculcating skills and expectations needed for them to function in society (Okodudu, 2007). Thus, the Deebam and Iceland gangs also have certain unique rituals and customs (i.e., culture) they observe in the process of honouring a deceased member which are often expressed materially and non-materially. Death and bereavement are being policed by gang norms expressed in rituals, hence grief or reaction to a gang member's death is an intersubjective or social rather than an individual process (Hemer, 2010; Klass & Steffen, 2018). Although, depending on the social ranking (Wilkinson & Chavez, 1992) or importance of the member expressed by their "ruggedity or brutality" reflected in their reputation of violence within the gang, death rituals become another rites-of-passage which the corpse of a deceased gang member undergoes, like when they were first "jumped-in" (i.e., initiated) during their lifetime. Death rituals serve as a shock-absorber, which creates continuous bonds (Eisma & Nguyen, 2022) between gang members by easing the pain from the demise of a fellow member, reinforcing social solidarity either for peaceful and violent purposes, and offering of explanations and hope of immortality in an afterlife. In this regard, gang death rituals also incorporate elements of myths, religion and eschatology. These findings are important in understanding not only death rituals but the collective conscience they reinforce amongst gang members as reflections of levels of 'ruggedity' or 'brutality'. It provides insights into the psycho-social forces that triggers and sustains the violent sub culture amongst gangs. This implies that external factors such as political or economic competitions do not in itself provides explanations for the unending cycle of gang violence in places like the Niger Delta, rather these collective belief systems do sustain the violence. Based on the forgoing, we recommend that policy makers and conflict managers in addition to focusing on political and economic triggers, should mainstream cultural and psycho-social factors when designing conflict management interventions and post conflict policies.

## Competing Interest Declaration

The authors declare none.

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