GBOBALƆI AND THE LANGUAGE OF NAMING: A STUDY OF REVENANT CHILDREN IN *GA* COMMUNITIES IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT: *This ethnographic study examines the naming practices of revenant children otherwise known as gbobalɔi, in the Ga communities of Ghana. It delves into the cultural beliefs associated with these children, the rituals performed during their naming ceremonies, and the implications of their unique names. Focusing on the Osu traditional area within the Greater Accra Region, the research utilised an explorative and descriptive approach. The sample comprised five elderly individuals, three men and two women chosen for their deep knowledge of local cultural practices related to gbobalɔi naming. Data was collected through interviews with strict adherence to ethical considerations like informed consent and confidentiality. The study finds that gbobalɔi are perceived as reincarnated spirits necessitating specific rituals and names for community integration. The names given often carry negative connotations or reflect the circumstances of their birth, intended to dissuade spiritual forces from claiming them. The research also addresses the challenges of preserving these traditions amidst modern influences. Overall, the study enhances understanding of naming practices in African societies and emphasises the role of names as crucial markers of identity and social roles.*

KEYWORDS: *Gbobalɔ*, Revenant children, *Ga* people, *Ga* naming practices, Osu.

INTRODUCTION

Names and the act of naming hold significant importance in every Ghanaian community. A name is typically defined as a word or combination of words used to distinctly identify, recognize, call, or refer to a person, object, animal, category, concept, or place (Tetteh, 2016). A name can reflect the dialectal structures and phonological features of the language, the social standing of the individual, and the collective history and experiences of the surrounding community. In many Ghanaian cultures, a name conveys extensive information about the individual it represents, the language it originates from, and the society that bestows it (Mphande, 2019). Therefore, names occupy a vital role in the socio-cultural framework of most Ghanaian communities.

The process of naming, like the names themselves, is equally crucial in the context of social identity. Within Ghanaian societies, various rituals mark a naming ceremony. In some cases, the event is celebrated with great enthusiasm, characterised by joy, thanksgiving, and cheers. In other situations, however, these ceremonies evoke memories of sadness and loss. A mother who has endured repeated child mortality may only hope that such a ceremony could bring better fortune for both herself and the child.

The rituals performed during naming ceremonies often vary depending on the circumstances surrounding the child's birth. In addition to these circumstances, each society has its own indigenous practices that guide the naming ceremony. For instance, in the Edo tradition, the naming ceremony is conducted on the seventh day after the child's birth, where attendees place gifts or money in a bowl and suggest names for the child. Meanwhile, in some Kenyan clans, the naming ceremony occurs on the third day after birth, while in others, it is held on the eighth day (Wieschhoff, 2019: 213).

In the *Ga* communities of the Greater Accra region in Ghana, naming ceremonies for a newborn are typically held on the eighth day after birth. On this day, the child is publicly introduced to both maternal and paternal families, as well as friends, during a ceremony at the father's family home. The families of both parents gather at the paternal grandfather's or the father's house in the morning (Tetteh, 2016).

However, this tradition differs for a child considered to be a revenant. A revenant child, referred to as *gbobalɔ* among the *Ga* people, is a child who dies shortly after birth, is believed to be reborn, and then dies again soon after. This study focuses on conducting an ethnographic investigation into the naming ritual for *gbobalɔ* in the *Ga* community in Ghana.

Certain names reflect the circumstances surrounding a child's birth, and *gbobalɔ* names are examples of this. The traditional practices related to child naming among the *Ga* people are largely similar to those of other ethnic groups, though some variations exist depending on the specific community. In the case of a *gbobalɔ*, the naming ceremony is distinct from that of a child considered "normal." The cultural nuances of this practice have significant implications for the child, society, and the nation. Specific rituals are performed during the naming ceremonies for a *gbobalɔ*, some of which have evolved over time due to religious, social, and external influences.

The concept of *gbobalɔ* and the associated naming processes remain an integral part of *Ga* culture, even as many cultural practices in Ghana face gradual erosion. Despite its evolution

over the years, the *gbobalɔ* phenomenon has received little scholarly attention. There is a pressing need for academic exploration of this practice, and this study seeks to contribute to that effort. While Ernest H.C. Tetteh's work, *The Outdooring, Dedication, and Naming of an African Child,* has touched on the concept of *gbobalɔ* within Ga communities, it provides a broad overview, with more generalised conclusions. This study, therefore, aims to delve deeper into the specific practices and rituals associated with naming *gbobalɔ*.

Various perspectives exist regarding the cause of frequent child mortality experienced by some mothers. While some attribute the issue to the mother herself, others believe it has spiritual implications. Among the *Ga* people, it is believed that recurring child deaths in a family necessitate intervention. For the *Ga*, this often involves performing rituals for a *gbobalɔ*. One distinctive aspect of a *gbobalɔ* is the unique names they receive, which differ markedly from those given within the community and family. This cultural practice has been interpreted in various ways and warrants a more focused study for better understanding.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the beliefs associated with the *gbobalɔ* concept within *Ga* communities. It also aims to investigate the causes of recurring child mortality and the traditional rituals performed for revenant children, assessing their impact and relevance within the broader context of naming ceremonies among the *Ga* people. This research is intended to provide a comprehensive perspective that will contribute to academic knowledge on the subject. Additionally, the study seeks to document the rituals performed and their significance, particularly those aimed at addressing the issue of recurrent child mortality. Information on this subject is scarce and often regarded as sacred, leading to its avoidance in public discourse. Therefore, this study aims to thoroughly document its findings to serve as a reference and expand the limited literature on the topic.

In Africa, the practice of naming and naming ceremonies is a vital part of the cultural fabric. Names not only distinguish individuals but also mark significant events in the lives of both those who give and those who bear them. However, in Ghana today, various factors are contributing to the gradual disappearance of traditional practices like naming ceremonies.

Despite any misconceptions surrounding them, these practices are significant in the historical context of the people and should be documented for future generations. The topic of *gbobalɔ* and the associated rites in *Ga* communities has received little academic attention. The primary importance of this study is to determine whether the *Ga* people continue to believe in performing the rites for a child thought to have died and returned.

This study's significance lies in its effort to comprehensively document the phenomenon and the various rites connected to it. The documentation will also consider the various factors that may have influenced changes in the practice. Such insights could inform community leaders in considering necessary interventions.

As the study compares the practice within *Ga* communities with that of other communities in Ghana and Africa more broadly, it brings relevant information to the forefront of academic discussion. Situated within the broader context of naming culture in Ghana and Africa, this research enriches the anthropology of names and naming ceremonies in Ghana. Specifically, this study will note the distinctions in practice among different *Ga* communities.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study is anchored in two key theoretical frameworks: Anthroponomy and the Descriptivist Theory of Names. Anthroponomy is the study of names and their cultural significance to the bearers. This theory falls under the broader discipline of onomastics and has sparked academic discourse among linguists, anthropologists, philosophers of language, sociologists, and experts in religious studies (Knoepfler, 2019). Initially, linguists and anthropologists focused on the classificatory function of naming and the relationship between names and social structure. Later, researchers expanded their focus to include the syntactic functions of names, as linguists took greater interest in African personal names (cf. Ekundayo, 1977). Linguists have shown that the variety of personal name structures in Africa can be understood through the grammar of the language in question. Later works ventured into linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, emphasising cultural values and their impact on names (Agyekum, 2006).

The second theory guiding this study is the Descriptivist Theory of Names, propounded by Frege Gottlob. The Descriptivist Theory posits that the meaning of a [proper] name is synonymous with the metaphors embedded in it and understood by the people who give such a name. Chalmers (2005) argues that the "descriptivist theory postulates that the referents of names are determined to be the objects that satisfy these descriptions" (84). The ability to form thoughts about a person is based on our ability to collect identifying information (Popescu, 2013: 1). This theory suggests that certain unifying traits about individuals who are given specific names are preconceived due to the circumstances and associations surrounding the person. The discourse on *gbobalɔ*, their names, and the implications of these names can be linked to the views expressed by Popescu (2013) on the Descriptivist Theory. According to Popescu (2013), "when we learn the name of an individual, we learn how to associate tokens of the name with identifying information concerning the name's referent and Descriptivism claims that this information may be verbalised by uses of definite descriptions" (2).

For the descriptivist, there are certain attributes about a person that are preconceived due to the circumstances and associations of the person. In the *Ga* community, *gbobalɔ* are given names that carry specific general attributions due to the circumstances surrounding their birth, their associations, and behavioural resemblances.

Anthroponomy and Descriptivist theories have received significant scholarly attention (Scott, 2005). However, most studies have focused on applying these theories to fields other than the study of names and their implications in the Ghanaian context. The application of these theories in this study is essential as they help identify the various circumstances, associations, and behavioural patterns that influence the names given to *gbobalɔ* in the *Ga* community of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Framing the study within this theoretical context also helps highlight the nuances of the theory as it relates to the literature reviewed.

The concept of naming is universal, despite the cross-cultural variations among human societies (Olatunji & Issah, 2019). Although naming practices are unique to each society, they are universally recognized. The particularistic nature of naming is usually evident in the style and pattern of the ceremony (Popescu, 2019). Agyekum (2000) concisely asserts that naming can be considered a universal cultural practice; every human society in the world gives names to its newborns primarily as a means of identification. However, the practices, rituals, and interpretations attached to the names differ from society to society and from one culture to another.

Two factors clearly underpin all the descriptions provided by various scholars: the relevance of names in every society and the variations in naming practices across societies. Names bear the stamp of traditions and the hopes of a child's future. The infant's characteristics influence the choice of name to some degree, and to a degree, a name affects the person who bears it. In African societies, great importance is attached to names because the belief system of African people is often anchored in a name given to an individual, which determines their personhood and character (Suzman, 1994). Aceto (2002) adds that personal names serve as a means of communication, as different naming systems and forms of address emphasise different aspects of the self (578). People are able to express their understanding of themselves through personal names. Names in African societies are emphasised because addressing people by their names reminds them and others of the events surrounding the construction of the name, as well as the social hierarchies and characteristics associated with these names (Abdul, 2019). Although a universal phenomenon, Agyekum (2006) asserts that in African societies, name culture is an essential component of the cultural system. It is conceived among African people that a good name should be given to a child because the name assigned will significantly impact the child's present and future. African cultural practices are steeped in spiritualism, where names are sacred to the people and their very being. Names and naming among African peoples on the continent bear spiritual, psychological, and physical significance (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

Again, in Africa, names are not taken lightly, as a great socio-cultural importance is attached to them. Among the Akan of Ghana, for example, a name is not just given to a person; certain important factors are considered first. For instance, it is common to hear among them the phrase "ne din ne ne honam se" (his or her name befits his or her body) (Olatunji & Issah, 2019: 74).

The naming patterns in many African societies reflect the social realities of everyday life. Names of a particular person provide insight into their culture, philosophy, environment, religion, language, and more. There are several axioms of implications associated with names in the African context, which vary across communities. These implications may include religious reinforcements, socio-cultural orientations, gender considerations, lineage continuity, and ancestral beliefs. People expect the inherent power of words in names to reflect the lives of people either positively or negatively. Agyekum (2006) affirms that:

The Akans expect a child named after a dignitary or a chief to behave properly so that nobody makes derogatory remarks about the name in an attempt to denigrate it. It is for these same reasons that children named after grandparents, parents, and chiefs are addressed accordingly, such as Nana Opoku, Nana Agyeman, Papa Agyekum, Maame Boakyewaa, and so on. Such children are also advised to behave well to avoid tarnishing their names. The names are meant to shape the children's upbringing, behaviour, and socialisation (209).

As indicated by Agyekum, names are significant indicators of behavioural patterns. Therefore, people who understand the culture of a particular group may be able to interpret the names of its people. Additionally, among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, many proverbs reflect the importance given to a name. Some sayings include "Oruko rere san ju Wura ati Fadaka" – meaning "a good name is more precious than gold and silver" (Olatunji & Issah, 2019: 74). The Yoruba believe that given names have profound and powerful effects, influencing behaviour, integrity, professions, success, and more (Sola, 2009).

Names carry meanings that may be eventful or circumstantial. The Akan of Ghana, for example, believe that some names associated with wealth confer wealth upon the bearer

(Sarpong, 1988). Mphande (2006) notes that, to some extent, the people of the Kasena community in the Upper East Region of Ghana believe that the names given to a child influence their behaviour, such as being aggressive or patient (112). Olatunji and Issah (2019) emphasise that:

Naming, however, goes beyond identification and cultural representation. In other words, names function beyond a means of identity. Indeed, they are linked to people's religious beliefs and practices. For instance, among the Akans of Ghana, it is widely believed that when a child is born on a specific day, he/she is named after the day in accordance with tradition and the behaviour of the child follows the dictates of the day he/she was born. It is believed that children born on Monday, for instance, are quiet, calm, and of peaceful character. Those born on Friday are socially interactive and well-behaved (74).

Thus, names are given with the belief that the social characteristics of the child will reflect the meanings ascribed to the name. This can be linked to the earlier discussion on the Descriptivist Theory, which posits that the meaning of a name is the same as the metaphors embedded in it, understood by the people who give the name.

In many African societies, naming ceremonies occur either at birth or within a short period after birth. Most of these ceremonies carry spiritual significance. For example, among the Akans of Ghana, the naming ceremony is called 'dinto' and is performed on the eighth day after the child is born (Agyekum, 2006). It is believed that the soul of the child joins the family after the eighth day, and before that day, the child is not recognized as a member of the family. The naming ceremony is thus the beginning of the person's integration into the community and may have lifelong implications.

In some cases, names are used to confer desired attributes or blessings on the bearer. Agyekum (2006) notes that a person may be named after a deity to solicit its protection and blessings, or a person may be given a name that signifies wealth and success, such as "Afriyie" among the Akans, meaning "he/she has come at the right time" (211).

In contrast, names may also carry negative connotations or reminders of unfortunate events. In some African societies, names given to children may reflect the pain or sorrow experienced by the parents, such as the name "Nyamkomɔ," which means "God knows best," given to a child born after the death of an elder sibling (Abdul, 2019).

Gbobalɔ and Their Names in the *Ga* Community

The term *gbobalɔ* refers to children who are believed to be reincarnations of deceased relatives, ancestors, or spirits. In the *Ga* community, the concept of *gbobalɔ* is deeply rooted in spiritual and cultural beliefs. These children are often given names that reflect their unique status, the circumstances of their birth, and the expectations of the community.

Names given to *gbobalɔ* may carry specific meanings that are believed to influence the child's behaviour, personality, or fate. These names may also serve as a reminder of the child's spiritual origins and the responsibilities that come with it. For example, a *gbobalɔ* might be named "Ataa" (meaning "twin") if the child is believed to be the reincarnation of a deceased twin. The name may carry the expectation that the child will exhibit the characteristics associated with twins in *Ga* culture, such as being protective, caring, or having a strong bond with their sibling.

Similarly, a *gbobalɔ* might be given a name that reflects the circumstances of their birth, such as 'Nii' (meaning king or prince) if the child is believed to be the reincarnation of a royal ancestor. This name may come with the expectation that the child will exhibit leadership qualities, wisdom, and a sense of responsibility towards the community.

The implications of these names are significant, as they can shape the child's identity, behaviour, and social interactions. The names serve as a constant reminder of the child's spiritual origins and the expectations placed upon them by the community. This can have both positive and negative effects on the child's development, depending on how the name and its associated meanings are perceived and reinforced by the family and community.

In essence, the names given to *gbobalɔ* in the *Ga* community are not just labels for identification; they are deeply symbolic and carry profound implications for the child's identity, behaviour, and role in the community. The study of these names provides valuable insights into the cultural beliefs and practices of the *Ga* people and highlights the importance of names as markers of identity and social significance in African societies.

METHOD

The study used an explorative and descriptive approach within a qualitative paradigm due to the lack of existing research on the topic. The explorative approach allowed the researcher to document findings for future reference, while the descriptive approach enabled a detailed presentation of participants' insights. The study focused on the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, with a specific sample drawn from Osu, a *Ga* community known for its rich cultural heritage. The sample included three elderly men and two elderly women, chosen for their deep knowledge of the community's cultural practices, especially regarding the naming ceremony for *gbobalɔ*i. Data was collected through interviews, using a guide to ensure consistency in questioning. The interviews were conducted in the *Ga* language to facilitate clear communication, with the data being recorded, transcribed, and analysed for recurring themes. Ethical considerations were prioritised, including gaining consent, ensuring confidentiality, and allowing participants to withdraw from the study if desired. The data collection took place over one month, and the analysis involved careful examination of recurring patterns and themes, supplemented by related documents and journals. The study aimed to understand the determinants for a child to be referred to as a *gbobalɔ*, the rites performed, and the names given to *gbobalɔ*i in the *Ga* communities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Concept of Naming among the *Gas*

Every child born to the *Ga* people goes through the normal naming rite and ceremony. According to Amarh (2019), in the *Ga* community, there are six (6) different types of names available to be given to a child at its naming ceremony. The types are *Gbi gbɛi*, *Haajii agbɛi*, *Awusãi agbɛi*, *Fɔmɔnaatoo gbɛi, Weku gbɛi* and *Gbobalɔi agbɛi*. These types of names confirm some of the categorizations given by Tetteh (2016). For instance, the *Gbi gbɛi* is same as the second categorization given by Tetteh (2016) as Day-of-birth names. *Haajii agbɛi* is same as the names of twins and other multiple-birth children.

Awusãi agbɛi are names given to children orphaned during maternal childbirth labour, or posthumous birth after the death of the father. *Weku gbɛi* is what Tetteh christens as specific paternal, homestead or family names.

Then there is the *Gbobalɔi agbɛi* which Tetteh placed under a subset of 'circumstantial or 'fancy' names that cannot, strictly, be classified as originating from any particular quarter or homestead. Interesting to note after the analysis is the realisation that the descriptions for the *Gbobalɔi agbɛi* also fit Tetteh's appropriation of circumstantial or "sentence names", names of revenant or supposedly reincarnated children. However, the seventh categorization by Tetteh which is the category of names borrowed from other homesteads and bestowed did not find and fit any of the descriptions given by the respondent.

Gbobalɔ* among the *Gas

Every child born to the *Ga* people goes through the normal naming rite and ceremony except the *gbobalɔ*. Participants confirmed Tetteh's definition of a revenant child among the *Gas*. A *gbobalɔ* as a child who dies shortly after birth, is reborn and then dies again shortly after birth. According to the participants this phenomenon is abnormal. They believe that such a child is sent by another spirit to come for the good things in the physical realm to take back to the spiritual.

Determinants of a *Gbobalɔ* among the *Ga* Communities

Participants outlined some factors determinant to the description of a *gbobalɔ*. Foremost amongst these reasons is a particular mother losing a child soon after it is born. To a family or couple that has been a victim of two consecutive deaths of unnamed babies, the next baby, if any, born after the death of the previous two appears, by features to resemble those former babies, the new child is considered a *gbobalɔ*.

Participants avowed that often when a woman is pregnant there are things considered as taboos for them and one of the consequences of defying such taboos is the frequent child loss. For instance, it is forbidden for a pregnant woman to throw stones at animals and also not to go to the river side without covering her hair.

Going against these will result in frequent child deaths by the woman. The notion, as given by participants, is that such a woman has gone against the norms of the society, therefore rites must be performed immediately in order for the child to stay.

Rites Performed for a *Gbobalɔ*

Participants gave various insightful rites that are performed for a child considered as a *gbobalɔ*. These rites are elaborate and key amongst these varying views are categorised into pre-naming rites, naming ceremony and the choice of names given to the *gbobalɔi*. These views are concerted and presented as follows.

Pre-naming rite for *gbobalɔ*

There are special rites they perform in order to ensure the survival of the child. This is not to say that the child will become immortal and never taste death in its lifetime but the rituals are performed so as to keep the spirits from coming back for the child. This is to allow the child to live a normal full life like an ordinary person. Participants painfully reveal how such ceremonies form an indelible spot in the family history of any family that may have gone through the rites.

Participants' account affirms the descriptions assumed by Tetteh (2016) as they narrate that on the eve of the naming ceremony, the child is dressed in rags and taken to a rubbish dump. Preferably, the thrash dump must be located at a crossroad in the community. Like an abandoned parcel, the child is placed on a heaped thrash at the crossroad within the community.

After some time, someone must find the desolate child. The finder, customarily must be a woman who has not been able to give birth and a member of the affected family and this is prearranged or stage managed. In a semblance of a drama, the barren discoverer of the child on the heaped thrash will ask… "whose is this unpleasant thing I have found?". The mother of the revenant child will then retort… "this piece of tatter is mine". The mother will then hand over a penny to the finder. After the dialogue, libation is poured and a concoction of sacred leaves in a pot of dew collected from the eaves for the eight days of the baby's age, is then sprinkled over the baby and around the thrash dump site to ward off any spirit beings lingering or accompanying it on its journey into the world of the living. This narrative is comprehensively corroborated by Tetteh (2016).

Another rite performed for a *gbobalɔ* that participants narrated that falls under the category of pre-naming performance is the ritual scarification of the face. Most participants recount that, after the episode at the thrash dump, the baby is taken home. Here, certain peculiar identifying scarification facial marks are given to the child. The marks are placed on the eye and the mouth areas of the face. The marks are referred to as *dɔnkɔ* in the *Ga* parlance.

Naming Ceremony for a *Gbobalɔ*

Usually, after a dreadful period of pregnancy and the accompanying complications and a safe delivery, it would be ideal that any ceremony that commemorates such a providence will be a moment of joy and the expression of momentum and exhilaration. Sadly however, the naming process for a child considered as *gbobalɔ* is marked with glumness and dejection.

During the naming ceremony, there is no jubilation, no gift for the child and the mother and other pleasantries that are exchanged during 'proper' naming ceremonies. The child is shabbily dressed and the mother and father do not appear in a jubilant mood. The whole naming exercise for a *gbobalɔ*, according to the participants, is often shorn in discussions, as it brings nothing but grief to the family.

Choice of Names Given to *Gbobalɔi*

Revenant children known as *gbobalɔi* in the Ga communities are given peculiar names. Such names, according to participants, often are strange, weird and funny. Such names may have no lineage with the immediate and/or the extended family. Tetteh (2016) adds that "there are various derisive sentence-names or names that do not reflect endearment" (123).

Participants gives the following as some of the names given to *gbobalɔi*: *Abotsi, Akatoi, Aleenɔ, Booba, Gbooya, Gbɔjio, Jokoo, Kaaya, Kpayaafo, Kukuɛi, Fɛɛhi,Etɔŋsɔɔ Namɔale, Obaamra, Kpai enyɔ, Obaaya, Adeka bɛ, Obɛgbɛi, Owuade, Sueta, Tsui anaa, Yaka yoo.* As stated, most participants were unfamiliar with the latent meaning of the names. Tetteh (2016) once again becomes handy as he provides some of the names and their concealed meanings as given to *gbobalɔi*. The following are some of the names as presented by Tetteh (2016: 126):

Table 1: List of Revenant Names for *gbobalɔi*

SOME NAMES OF *GBOBALƆ*I	MEANING
Aba ni aya	We are here just to go back
Ajumajaŋ	Wasted effort
Akatoi	Everybody is in a state of expectancy
Aleenɔ	Perhaps. Who knows?
Atsɛafɔ	A thing worthy of being rejected
Anyankɔ	The day of your return will never dawn
Booba	You came in uninvited and unwanted
Finifi	It was out of sheer necessity
Gbo oya	We dare you to hurry up and die quickly again

Source: *Tetteh, 2016*

Essence and Impact of the Various Rites for *Gbobalɔi*

Participants gave several essences and the implications of the various rites performed for *gbobalɔi*. Just as was presented for the various rituals, elicited response on the above theme will be presented in the three categories thus the pre-naming ritual, naming ceremonies and the choice of names.

Essence and Impact of Pre-naming Ritual

The pre-naming ritual as noted earlier included placing the revenant child shadily dressed on a heaped thrash at a dumping site preferably a crossroad within the community. The essence of this practice is to ward off any spirit beings lingering or accompanying it on its journey into the world. Participants believe that no one likes dirty and rogued things therefore if the child is presented as such, whatever being that may be calling for the child back to the after-world.

There were also the tribal marks placed on the faces of the revenant children, such marks were "generally believed that with such a facial disfigurement, the netherworld spiritual parents would not be so proud to welcome the returning spirit of that baby back into their fold" (Tetteh, 2016: 126).

Essence and Impact of the Naming Ritual for *Gbobalɔi*

During the naming ritual, no elaborate joyous ceremony is organised. Rather, the ceremony is marked by pessimism and glumness. Parents are not supposed to be in a state of ecstasy despite going through various traumatic experiences during the previous loss of children and even the complications the mother may have gone through during the current pregnancy. Yet the lactating mother as well as the father cannot jubilate because such euphoria will rather attract the 'netherworld spiritual parents' to come for the child.

Factor(s) Affecting Beliefs on *Gbobalɔ* and the Various Rites

Participants enumerated some factors that are affecting the concept *gbobalɔ* and the various rites associated with it. Participants mentioned different religious and social reasons affecting the practice. These included the proliferation of diverse religious practices that do not accept such traditional beliefs. The practice is however, replaced with other religious practices such as praying for God's interventions and protections. Christians would rather fast and pray and seek God to intervene.

Socially also, there were two key findings. The first one is that people just do not believe in such traditional beliefs and practices. This set of people, it does appear, are of a younger generation and not interested because they did and have not witnessed the practices and the benefits it presents. There is the section of the participants who are aware of the practice. However, they would not want to practise it because of the psychological trauma as well as the social ridicule and stigma people who go through the practice suffer.

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals several key findings regarding the treatment of children considered to be revenant, or *gbobalɔ*, in the Ga communities of Greater Accra. Families who experience the death of two unnamed babies find that the next baby, if born, may resemble the deceased children. This new child is labelled a *gbobalɔ*. Special ceremonies are performed for these children, including dressing them in rags and placing them on a heap of trash at a community crossroad, to discourage the netherworld spirits from claiming them. These children also receive names with negative connotations, intended to dissuade spiritual entities from welcoming them back.

The study concludes that the rituals are meant to make the child unappealing to spiritual forces, though the practice is declining due to social stigma and psychological trauma. It also notes that modern developments, such as changes in waste management, make traditional practices like leaving a child at a dump site increasingly difficult. Additionally, the study finds that naming practices are evolving, with some names now being circumstantial rather than specifically for *gbobalɔi*.

Recommendations include further research on these practices in other Ga communities, updating rites to fit modern contexts, documenting *gbobalɔi* names, evaluating the effectiveness of current rituals, and integrating such cultural elements into educational curricula to preserve and understand these traditions better.

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