



A Survey of Teacher-counsellors' Competence in Using Selected Grief Counselling Approaches in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Grief is an occurrence which is emotive both to the client and the therapist. If it is not given a suitable approach, the client may be hurt instead of getting psychologically healed. This study was therefore carried out to survey teacher-counsellors' competence in using selected grief counselling approaches in public secondary schools in Kisii County. Kübler-Ross Elisabeth (1969) Stage Theory and mixed methods design, specifically a convergent parallel blueprint were utilized. Data was obtained through a questionnaire and interview guide. A sample of 196 respondents composed of 181 who provided quantitative data and selected through simple random sampling and 15 who provided qualitative data and purposively selected was utilized. Quantitative and qualitative data that was obtained was analyzed through univariate statistics and thematic method respectively. The study found that most of the respondents had competence in encouraging grieving students share their experience with those who had been bereaved. It was established that teacher-counsellors' high level of competence on sharing their personal experience was a therapy on their part as they could pour out their concealed pain as they identified with the grieving. The study recommended that teacher-counsellors be acquainted with various grief counselling approaches as there are diverse students who present with grief in different ways and therefore may need to be approached differently.*

Keywords: *Approaches, Competence, Counselling, Death, Grief, Teacher-counsellor*

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1. Introduction

Although grief generally affects the mental, behavioral and emotional state of most bereaved individuals, it varies from person to person (Stroebe, Hansson, Schut, & Stroebe, 2008a). This is as a result of factors like the conditions under which the death occurred, the gender of the bereaved, connection style and association with the departed. On this basis, different approaches are used for different people either singly or collectively (Wood, 2016). For counsellors to maneuver between one approach to another, competence in knowledge and application of

each approach is necessary. Each counsellor approaches grief counselling with individual liking and prejudice based on his or her experiences (Gamino & Ritter, 2012). Imhof (2015) observed that competence is one of most significant attributes to successful grief counselling as it reduces a counsellor's anxiety. Swank (2010) defined competence as the capability of a counsellor to provide successful counselling services in a just and expert way in order to achieve desirable results. In the context of this study, it is the teacher-counsellor's ability to support the upset emotional comfort of grieving students until they achieve psychosomatic health. The worth of a counsellor's competence in grief counselling is made strong by the fact

that where grief is not been given attention by a competent counsellor bipolar confusion or schizophrenia may be experienced by clients (Clark, Tanskanen, Huttunen & Cannon, 2013). Additionally, if counsellors do not have the needed competence in grief counselling, they may wound the clients instead of assisting them emotionally (Breen, 2010). Competence cushions a counsellor from the anxiety linked with managing a client in grief (ACA, 2014). Given the central role competence plays in facilitating successful grief counselling, the current study inclined itself on this significance to form a basis on which teacher-counsellors' competence in using selected grief counselling approaches in public secondary schools in Kisii County was surveyed.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It has been noted that grief has not only impacted on the psychological and social dimensions of students in public secondary schools in Kisii County but also led to their decline in academic performance (Nyongesa & Kiplagat, 2017). This has raised concern among stakeholders as grief associated with the death of significant others is among the top ten reasons why students miss or drop out of school in public secondary schools in Kisii County (Nyongesa & Kiplagat, 2017). This situation needs urgent attention so that students don't continue missing or dropping out of school as a result of death related grief. Students return to school after internment and may need to be attended to by their teacher-counsellors who support and monitor their healing until the grief gradually diminishes. However, the negative side effects of grief continue to be witnessed among some students in public secondary schools in Kisii County. This has raised concern from parents, principals and the ministry of education officials from the County and National government about the competence of teacher-counsellors to utilize suitable grief approaches when supporting grieving students. Studies on grief counselling competence have been carried out in USA, Australia, Europe and New Zealand among university trainees, hospice, marriage and family therapists, social workers and rehabilitation counsellors. Grief counselling is an under-researched area in African countries (Owaa, Raburu and Aloka, (2015). This study filled this gap by investigating the competence of teacher-counsellors to use selected grief counselling approaches in public secondary schools in Kisii County.

1.2 Research Objective

The study sought to assess the competence of teacher-counsellors in using selected grief counselling approaches in public secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The study utilized Kübler-Ross Elisabeth (1969) Stage Theory. According to this theory, a grieving person goes through stages before attaining psychological wellbeing. The stages include; denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. One may go through these stages singly or through the support of significant others such as teacher-counsellors. While supporting bereaved students, they utilize various approaches. This study found this theory relevant because the competence of teacher-counsellors to utilize various approaches was sought as they assisted grieving students goes through the various stages of grief.

2. Review of Literature

According to Wood (2016), grief counselling should be given an appropriate approach to protect the client from being hurt or distressed. These approaches can be utilized singly or collectively by a counsellor based on the characteristics of the client (Wood, 2016). One of the approaches that counsellors utilize during grief counselling is the spiritual technique. Qualitative studies by Mathew (2016) and Kara (2017) revealed that the spiritual approach was quite effective to non-believers. The researchers established that when people grief, there is a tendency to feel hopeless and abandoned and therefore experience a strong push for being attached to a divine being as the only hope for them. The approach gave them hope of meeting their departed after resurrection. Spilling (2011) found that the use of scripture reading by church members facilitated gradual healing because it gave them hope and reassurance.

Through an interview on nurses who were taking care of patients who eventually died, Akuroma (2016) found that some counsellors approached grief counselling by praying. This connected them to a divine being. Prayers relieve the psych of the grieving because they are made to believe that their sorrows are seen and will be taken care of by God. Choabi (2016) established that prayers brought in the bereaved comfort and a liberating view on death, which was conquered in Christ. Varga (2015) found that other counsellors utilized the approach of talking to grieving clients. This approach assisted the bereaved to reduce loneliness and assist them vent out bottled up emotions and get new figures of attachment. Talking to peers who had been previously bereaved gives them company and a perspective that others have been there (Ray (2013). Talking moderated the pain of grief and loss because it removed a grieving student from a boxed world where life seems to have reached a dead end. Sharing creates attachment to significant others. During this dark period, Johnsen (2016) found that the influence of friends on a young person's adjustment was complimentary to the influence of parental attachments. The friend stood in the place of their previous figure of attachment.

A similar result was established by Lord (2015) through a sample of 700 bereaved undergraduates. Through data gathered from ten clinicians, Tran (2016) found that bereaved individuals got the support of counsellors by being allowed to witness and given space to express and experience their emotions in relation to the grief. Norris (2012) through a web-based study found that expressive therapies were effective in grief counselling. Vist & Bonde (2013) and Rosner, Kruse & Hagl (2010) investigated the effect of music as an approach of counselling grieving clients. They established that music touches every fabric of the human anatomy and softens the feelings of grief. Music relieved the bereaved and invigorated some mental comfort. Another approach utilized is the social approach technique which assumes various forms such as performance of rituals and stories (Barnhill, 2011). This study found that through the stories, the bereaved reframe (restructure) their cognition towards their loss and experience personal growth through releasing their emotions. Vaughan's (2014) study supported participation in grief support groups and revealed a high correlation between perceived level of social support and personal grief-resolution. Facebook as an approach enabled grievers meet and share their experience, photos, and messages of support, comfort and consolation (Libba, 2014) and Levitt, 2012). Through a sample of 229 students who had experienced the loss of a friend or family member within the last three years in Oyo and Oke-Ogun areas of Oyo State, Mojinyinola (2010) found that social support has a significant impact on symptoms of emotional feelings associated with bereavement. Freeze (2015) found out through a qualitative study that traditional approaches to grief counselling are significant in supporting grieving students.

The application of these approaches depends on how peers and family members are incorporated in the process as they will provide new avenues of attachment. Owaa, Raburu and Aloka, (2015) explored on strategies for adjustment to loss and grief among selected Kenyan orphaned secondary school students and the healing process. The study recommended that schools should adapt parenting model among teachers to take care of the orphaned students. Wlasenko's (2009) established that although grief was unique to every individual, bereaved students sought group or workshop counselling, as the approach presented a safe place to grief, openness by the bereaved to discuss about the death. The use of group counselling may encourage opening up of some respondents within a stressful period. A research by Flatt (2015) established that some counsellors used the approach of encouraging grieving clients to cry as a way of supporting them release belted up emotions. Kristensen (2016) focused her study on bereavement as a result of

Tsunami and the support the survivors got from counsellors. The findings revealed that the bereaved needed somebody who could listen to them and give them attention as they sought new figures of attachment. Breen (2010) surveyed the relational stance to processing grief of 25 counsellors who were clinicians. The findings revealed that active listening provided space to process emotions through speaking to the counsellor who listened to them. Speaking out relieved them because they were able to pour out their grief that was burning within them.

3. Methodology

This study was carried out among teacher-counsellors in public secondary schools in Kisii County. A convergent parallel mixed methods design was used because it enabled the researcher to authenticate, cross-validate and be in agreement with data that was gathered through qualitative and quantitative means. By so doing, the researcher improved the likelihood of balancing weaknesses found in one approach with the strength of the other approach (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2014). Kisii County has 356 public secondary schools and each school has a teacher-counsellor heading the guidance and counselling department. The 356 Heads of Department, also referred to as teacher-counsellors constituted the target population. The researcher used the Krejcie and Morgan Table (1970) of determining the sample size to get a sample of 181 from the target population. The 181 respondents who participated in the study and provided quantitative data were obtained through simple random sampling. A sample of 15 purposively sampled respondents provided qualitative data. The respondents provided data through a questionnaire and interview. The reliability and validity of these tools was validated through piloting and analysis was done through simple statistics that utilized frequency tables and percentages. Analysis was also done through categorizing, scrutinizing and construing outlines of meaning within qualitative data.

4. Results and Discussion

Counsellors approach grief counselling with their own experience and biases and therefore, if it is not given an appropriate approach, it may have negative consequences on a client such as making their grief reactions more hurting and devastating (Wood, 2016; Howarth, 2011). The respondents were required to indicate their competence in encouraging grieving students verbalize their grief during counselling. The result of their response is shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Encouraging Grieving Students Verbalize their Grief

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	30	16.6
Enough Competence	56	30.9
Little Competence	47	26.0
Some Competence	26	14.4
No Competence	22	12.2
Total	181	100.0

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

From the responses, 56 (30.9%) of the respondents indicated that they had enough competence, 47 (26.0%) had little competence, 30 (16.6%) had much competence, 26 (14.4%) had some competence and 22 (12.2%) had no competence in encouraging grieving students verbalize their grief. When those who had much competence and the ones who had enough competence are combined (summed percentage), the findings of this study show that more than a half (57.5%) of the teacher-counsellors in public secondary schools in Kisii County had competence in encouraging grieving students verbalize their grief. The study sought this information because it is one of the approaches that may help grieving students vent out their emotions.

But I manage doing so because of the realization that talking out releases emotions. When death occurs, the world becomes silent and nothing matters to them. There is a lot of self-talking going on within the mind of the bereaved. Anxiety sets in, emotions build within the individual. When one is assisted to converse, the bottled up emotions are channeled out and this relieves the bereft. However, it is not an easy issue as spoken (Personal communication, September, 19th, 2019).

Interviews conducted obtained various narratives with respondent TC9 commenting that;

When I encounter a grieving student, we may not stare at each other without talking. Although it is challenging to talk to them, one has to establish a conversation and therefore helps him or her to verbalize what happened. Some grieving students open up and narrate what happened and what they feel by now. This helps them to vent out what was kept within them. In so doing, they pour out concealed feelings which relieves them the bottled up distress (personal communication, September, 24th, 2018).

Another respondent, TC4 remarked that;

Sometimes it is not easy to start a conversation with a grieving student.

The finding of this study is in agreement with that of Tammy (2016) who found that the effects of grief and preceding adjustment are moderated by speaking out to significant others or close family members about the grief. This convergence of findings may be supporting the fact that verbalizing grief is one of the effective approaches of supporting the bereaved to vent out emotions. Verbalizing grief can be an avenue through which emotions are channeled out. Teacher-counsellors are encouraged to utilize it as they support the mental health of grieving students.

The respondents were required to appraise their competence in aiding grieving students express (describe) how they felt in their current state. Table 2 shows the result of the responses.

Table 2: Encouraging Grieving Students Describe their Experience with Grief

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	31	17.1
Enough Competence	79	43.6
Little Competence	35	19.3
Some Competence	18	9.9
No Competence	18	9.9
Total	181	100.0

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

Data analyzed shows that 79 (43.6%) of the respondents indicated that they had enough competence, 35 (19.3%) had little competence, 31 (17.1%) had much competence, 18 (9.9%) had some competence and 18 (9.9%) had no competence. The summed percentage of those who had enough competence and much competence 114 (60.7%) shows that most of the respondents had competence in encouraging grieving students express their experience. The expression of their experience was sought for because through it, the teacher-counsellor could be able to get the hidden irrational thoughts held by bereaved students. This would aid them to devise new counselling approaches that could be suitable depending on how the grieving student expressed himself or herself. This finding agrees with that of Varga (2013) and Tran (2016) who found that

encouraging the grieving to express their experience would help the counsellor to know the feelings of the bereaved. In so doing, the grief counsellor could be able to get some picture of what would be happening in the mind of the affected. The convergence in findings of Varga (2013) and Tran (2016) with those of the current study would be an indication that this approach is valid in varied environments with some degree of effectiveness. The researcher encourages teacher-counsellors handling the issue of grief to utilize it as its effectiveness has been established by various studies.

Data on the respondents' appraisal of their competence to listen to grieving students was sought. The result is displayed on Table 3.

Table 3: Giving Attention and Listening to a Grieving Student

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	93	51.4
Enough Competence	62	34.3
Little Competence	13	7.2
Some Competence	11	6.1
No Competence	2	1.1
Total	181	100.0

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

The analysis indicates that 93 (51.4%) of the respondents had much competence, 62 (34.3%) had enough competence, 13 (7.2%) had little competence, 11 (6.1%) some competence and 2 (1.1%) no competence. The researchers wanted to establish the competence of the respondents to use this approach because sometimes what the grieving needs is an individual who can just be there for them to pour out their feelings and feel cared for. This study found that most teacher-counsellors in public secondary schools in Kisii County had competence in listening or paying attention to grieving students. This finding supports that of Kristensen (2016) and Breen (2010) who found that, bereaved individuals needs somebody who could listen to them and give them attention as they sought new figures of attachment. Breen (2010) also noted that active listening provided space for the grieving individual to process emotions. From the interviews conducted during the study, the respondents indicated that they had competence in listening to grieving students.

Respondent TC8 had this to comment on this issue;

Even if I don't have what to offer, I can offer my ears to a grieving student. Sometimes it is challenging to start talking to them. But one notices that immediately after establishing a rapport, some bereft students will start explaining what happened, how it happened, how it is now and how encouraged they are by my presence. In fact some of the grieving students

just speak for quite sometimes as I listen to them. Initially, they are in a lot of pain and cry a lot. But after a while as I continue giving them attention, I notice some relief in them (Personal communication, September, 19th, 2018).

Respondent TC10 made this statement:

It is essential to avoid timelines when dealing with grieving students. Sorrow is not something that a student comes to you, fix it and the student feels better right away. Listening to them will facilitate the adaptive process- the natural process of grief that occurs after a beloved one dies. Giving them attention and listening to them is quite significant as they find a bearing in life without the deceased. They feel valued and cared for by significant others (personal communication, September, 25th, 2018).

From the mixed data collected, this study found that most teacher-counsellors in public secondary schools in

Kisii County had competence in listening to grieving students as they sought mental health. The competence of most of them to listen to grieving students may have been acquired by virtue of them being teachers and not necessarily because they were counsellors. Because most of them had this competence, the researchers could encourage teacher-counsellors to utilize this approach frequently for the purpose of supporting the psychological needs of grieving students. It is possible that although they

did not have knowledge and skills in grief counselling, the best they could provide was just being there for the bereaved student and sometimes utter no word. But this was significant because the grieving student felt cared for.

Another aspect that was sought for in this study was the competence of teacher-counsellors to encourage a grieving student to be in the company of other students. Table 4 shows the result of the analysis.

Table 4: Encouraging a Grieving Student to be in the Company of Others

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	75	41.4
Enough Competence	59	32.6
Little Competence	24	13.3
Some Competence	12	6.6
No Competence	11	6.1
Total	181	100.0

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

The analysis shows that 75 (41%) had much competence, 59 (32.6%) had enough competence, 24 (13.3%) had little competence, 12 (6.6%) some competence and 11 (6.1%) no competence in encouraging a grieving student be in the company of others. The researchers were cognizant that death detached the bereaved from the deceased. This created a gap which Bowlby (1980) found that in the recovery and re-organization phase, the gap could be filled by starting new relationships. The researchers sought to know this because grieving students may need new figures of attachment in order to fill the gap left by the deceased.

From the interviews, respondent TC8 had the following to comment:

In most cases, the bereaved students are in their own world and feel out of place because of the misfortune that befell them. They isolate themselves from others and may not know or feel free to be with other students. But when their peers feel free and give them company they feel good. But adolescents have other cultural beliefs about being with a bereaved person immediately after burial. It is my responsibility and I have the ability to encourage the grieving

to be in the company of other students so that they can get new figures of attachment (Personal communication, September, 22nd, 2018).

From the analysis, the findings established that most of the respondents had competence in encouraging grieving students to be in the company of others, a finding supported by Jayasinghe (2016) and Mojinyinola's (2010) whose studies found that peers should be taught on how to be compassionate to their friends when in a difficult situation to assist them not to be boxed in a lonely world. The convergence in findings could be an indication that research supports the creation of new figures of attachment as a way of filling the gap that was left by the deceased. This study therefore supported what happens in the reorganization phase as advanced by Bowlby (1980) that as the individual seeks psychological health, new figures of attachment can be of great help.

The competence of teacher-counsellors to encourage a grieving student to pray was inquired in this research. The result of the analysis is shown on Table 5.

Table 5: Encouraging Grieving Students to Pray

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	73	40.3
Enough Competence	54	29.8
Little Competence	26	14.4
Some Competence	8	4.4
No Competence	20	11.0
Total	181	100.0

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

The analysis shows that 73 (40.3%) had much competence, 54 (29.8%) enough competence, 26 (14.4%) little competence, 20 (11.0%) no competence and 8 (4.4%) some competence. The researchers borrowed this

approach from spiritual counselling because prayer comforts and gives hope to the bereaved (Akuroma, 2016). Narratives from interviews are shown in the following transcription. A remark from TC2 revealed that;

Although teacher-counsellors do not play the role of a spiritual leader, I believe that what I can't do as a human being, God can do. The students find comfort in prayer because through it he/she believe that God took the deceased to a better place (personal communication, January, 4th, 2019).

From the analysis, the result indicated that most of the respondents had competence in encouraging grieving students to pray and therefore get divine intervention amidst the pain. This finding supported those of Akuroma (2016) and Ekedahl and Wengström (2010) who established that part of the support grieving people receive from others is prayer which makes the individual see the suffering as being ended as a result of being connected to a Devine Being. They noted that among the various types of religious coping approaches', praying was found to be

the most commonly used. The researchers viewed this competence in encouraging grieving students pray to have been mostly nurtured by church teachings and reading the Bible that through prayers all tears and sorrows may be wiped. This study was not interested in knowing whether the respondents were church goers or not as a way of knowing whether they gained this competence from church teachings. From this finding, it is possible they were church goers and therefore understood the value of prayer during calamities. Teacher-counsellors can take advantage of this competence that most of them have to support the distressed psych of grieving students.

The other approach the study sought to establish was the competence of teacher-counsellors to encourage a grieving student to read death related verses.

Table 6: Encouraging a Grieving Student to Read Death Related Verses from the Bible

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	41	22.7
Enough Competence	40	22.1
Little Competence	46	25.4
Some Competence	20	11.0
No Competence	34	18.8
Total	181	100.0

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

Table 6 shows that 46 (25.4%) of the respondents had little competence, 41 (22.7%) much competence, 40 (22.1%) enough competence, 34 (18.8%) no competence and 20 (11.0%) some competence in encouraging a grieving to read death related verses. The researchers relied on previous studies (Akuroma, 2016; Aichetou, 2016 and Ekedahl & Wengström, 2010) which indicated that the Bible gives hope to people undergoing challenging situations like grief. Although teacher-counsellors are not necessarily spiritual leaders in their respective schools, some believe in religious doctrines.

Respondent TC10 commented that:

Although a counsellor may have a lot of counselling knowledge one may not be well grounded with biblical background. As a counsellor, I know that when everything seems not to be working I resort to divine solutions. It is a different issue when it comes to me encouraging a grieving student to read death related verses from the Bible because I may not be conversant with the relevant verses (Personal communication, September, 20th, 2018).

From the result, most of the teacher-counsellors did not have the competence of encouraging grieving students to read death related verses. Findings of Ivette (2017) and Choabi's (2016) found that the use of the Bible was significantly rated to greater personal growth and less anxiety because it brought in the bereaved comfort while at the same time leading him or her to consolation and a liberating view on death, which was conquered in Christ. However, most teacher-counsellors in public secondary schools in Kisii County did not have competence in encouraging grieving students to read death related verses. It is possible that although some or most of them could be going to church, they were not grounded in various relevant verses that could bring hope in a grieving student. This approach can be very effective when utilized well as it revives the feelings of the bereaved because of the knowledge that the deceased has only slept and there is hope of meeting again because death was conquered by Christ.

The researchers were keen on knowing the competence of teacher-counsellors to encourage grieving students listen to consoling music.

Table 7: Encouraging a Grieving Student to Listen to Music

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	45	24.9
Enough Competence	35	19.3
Little Competence	35	19.3
Some Competence	27	14.9
No Competence	39	21.5
Total	181	100.0

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

The results displayed on Table 7 shows that 45 (24.9%) of the respondents had much competence in encouraging grieving students to listen to music, 39 (21.5%) had no competence, 35 (19.3%) had enough competence, 35 (19.3%) had little competence and 27 (14.9%) had some competence. The researchers relied on the finding of Vist & Bonde (2013) which showed that using music as an approach to helping the grieving achieve psychological happiness was significant because it brought in calming effects.

Respondent TC5 had the following to mention:

Although I am aware that music is significant in calming the distress of grieving students, it may not be practical in a school situation because I cannot play music in a counselling office as it will attract the attention of other students. Therefore, although I may have the competence of encouraging singing or listening to consoling music, it may not reasonably apply in a school situation (Personal communication, September, 26th, 2019).

From this finding, most of the teacher-counsellors had no competence in encouraging grieving students listen to consoling music when in grief. The researchers supported the view that it was not practically possible to play music while in the counselling office as this could attract the attention of others and the counselling sessions are limited in terms of time. However, it is a common practice in the society for music to be played or for choirs to sing before, during and after funerals. This may be emphasizing the consoling significance of music when in grief. Therefore, although listening to music was a significant approach that may aid grieving students enjoy psychological comfort as established by Vist & Bonde (2013), it was not used by the respondents.

Grieving individuals may hold irrational thoughts about the death of their loved one(s). Thus, the researchers sought to establish their competence in helping grieving students reverse irrational thoughts they hold about the death of their loved one(s).

Table 8: Helping Grieving Students Reverse Irrational Thoughts they hold about the Death of a loved one

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	35	19.3
Enough Competence	59	32.6
Little Competence	34	18.8
Some Competence	20	11.0
No Competence	33	18.2
Total	181	100.0

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

The responses on Table 8 revealed that 59 (32.6%) had enough competence to help grieving students reverse irrational thoughts they hold about death, 35 (19.3%) had much competence, 34 (18.8%) had little competence, 33 (18.2%) had no competence and 20 (11.0%) had some competence. This study borrowed this approach from the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) that attributed unresolved grief to irrational thoughts about their current situation and theretofore not able to let it go.

Respondent TC3 made the following statement:

The main problem with grieving students is their thoughts that life will not be possible and have meaning without the deceased. Most of us who

are grounded in the CBT may have the competence of helping a grieving student to reverse irrational thoughts. But those who may not be well grounded in the CBT may have no competence of helping a grieving student to reverse irrational thoughts. It requires one to patiently remain focused in what he or she wants from the counselling session (Personal communication, September, 25th, 2018).

From the analysis, the respondents were average in their competence to encourage grieving students reverse irrational thoughts they held about their current situation. As noted by Vaughans (2014), there is a high correlation between perceived level of competence and personal

grief-resolution. It is possible that some of the respondents had not gone through a course that gave them knowledge on CBT which could aid in facilitating various sessions until psychological comfort was attained. It is necessary that teacher-counsellors go through such training.

The researchers inquired the competence of teacher-counsellors to help grieving students establish new relationships. The result of the analysis of the data collected is shown on Table 9.

Table 9: Helping Grieving Student Establish New Relationships

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	71	39.2
Enough Competence	61	33.7
Little Competence	30	16.6
Some Competence	7	3.9
No Competence	12	6.6
Total	181	100.0

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

The analysis shows that 71 (39.2%) of the sampled respondent indicated that they had much competence in helping grieving students establish new relationships, 61 (33.7%) had enough competence, 30 (16.6%) had little competence, 12 (6.6%) had no competence and 7 (3.9%) had some competence. Respondent TC7 revealed that although some students after internship easily started new relationships with their peers or close relatives so that they could have new figures of attachment, there were some who found it challenging to and therefore needed to be encouraged to do so by significant others such as teacher-counsellors.

Respondent observed that:

Some students feel guilty and uncomfortable to start new relationships with new figures of attachment. They feel life started and ended with the deceased. They can't imagine life with a new figure of attachment. As a teacher-counsellor, I gradually introduce them to new friends and after several interactive sessions, I may learn of their close relative whom I can contact and start creating new bonds with such a sibling. Although

it is challenging because some close relatives may fear new responsibilities, it gradually works and I have competently always done this (Personal communication, September, 26th, 2018).

The finding of this study showed that most of the teacher-counsellors in public secondary schools in Kisii County had competence in encouraging grieving students establishes new relationships. This is healthy for their psychological wellbeing because as Johnsen (2016) observed, after a loss, friendships become more positive and supportive during this period because the influence of friends on a young person's adjustment could be seen as complimentary to the influence of parental attachments. The researchers view this competence to have emanated from the fact that teacher-counsellors were in the forefront to facilitate harmony or co-existence among learners.

Teacher-counsellors were required to indicate their competence in encouraging a grieving student cry. The result of the data analysed is shown on Table 10.

Table 10: Helping a Grieving Student Cry

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	15	8
Enough Competence	30	17
Little Competence	35	19
Some Competence	40	22
No Competence	61	34
Total	181	100

Source: *Study Findings, 2019*

The analysis shows that 61 (34%) of the respondents indicated that they had no competence, 35 (19%) had little competence, 40 (22%) some competence, 30 (17%) enough competence, 15 (8%) much competence. The researchers sought data in the competence of teacher-

counsellors to encourage grieving students to cry because it is one of the approaches through which the bereaved could pour out concealed emotions which would be detrimental to their psychological health. The researchers sought to establish this approach based on Flat's (2015)

finding that it is paramount to encourage bereaved individuals cry as a way of helping them pour out their emotions which were belted up. From the statistics on it is clear that most of the respondents had no competence in encouraging a grieving student to cry. These statistics could be a pointer that there could be grieving students who have bottled up emotions that may have not been released through crying. This is a possible explanation for some students living with unresolved grief.

The comment by respondents TC11 was:

When grieving girls come for counselling in the office, they hug me and remain glued on my shoulder sobbing seriously. They don't mention anything except leaning on my shoulder. After sometimes, they breathe heavily as though a huge log that was on their shoulders has been removed. From then, their mood changes and one can notice some relieve on them. But it is challenging when I am the one initiating the process of encouraging them to cry even though it is an approach that seems to be assisting them vent out (Personal communication, September, 25th, 2018).

Respondent TC6 stated that:

Some grieving students come for counselling but before they speak, they sob very much. I sometimes get scared not knowing what to do next as it is not known when this will end. Unless they initiate the crying process, it is a challenge

for me to start them. I am a human being with feelings and when I see a student crying especially after bereavement; it touches me and may trigger me to cry also. So it is a challenge to provoke a grieving student cry as a way of making them get relieved. In fact in most cases I encourage them not to cry but persevere (Personal communication, January, 4th, 2019).

From these responses, the study found that teacher-counsellors in public secondary schools in Kisii County had no competence in encouraging grieving students cry as an approach of helping them vent out the bottled emotions and therefore have psychological wellbeing. Although Flat (2015) found it paramount to encourage grieving individuals cry, this approach was not popular among teacher-counsellors in public secondary schools in Kisii County. The researchers were convinced that it was an approach that had the potential of aiding grieving students pour out their emotions and therefore attain psychological wellbeing faster. Given that it was an approach they scored low in terms of competence, it may be improved through training them on the same. Not crying during grief conceals emotions which if they erupt later may cause psychological disorders.

The researchers sought to establish the competence of teacher-counsellors to help grieving students share their grief with other students who had been previously bereaved. Table 11 shows the findings

Table 11: Helping Grieving Students Share their Grief with other Students who had been previously bereaved

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Much Competence	93	51
Enough Competence	50	28
Little Competence	21	12
Some Competence	10	5
No Competence	7	4
Total	181	100

Source: Study Findings, 2019

The analysis shows that 50 (28%) of the respondents indicated that they had enough competence in helping grieving students share experience with other students who had been bereaved, 93 (51%) revealed that they had much competence, 21 (12%) had little competence, 7 (4%) had no competence and 10 (5%) had some competence. Grieving students feel lonely and boxed in a world where they feel that they may be the only ones who have ever experienced bereavement (APA, 2013). This explains why the researchers were interested in establishing the competence of teacher-counsellors to encourage grieving students share their experience with those who had been bereaved. This is with the hope that they may feel that it

happened to others and they have adjusted and therefore it is an event that is bound to happen to anyone. The finding reveal that most teacher-counsellors (71.8%) who revealed that their competence ranged between enough competence and much competence were competent in encouraging grieving students share their experience with those who had been bereaved.

Respondent TC1 had this to remark:

It is significant to support grieving students through connecting them to those who had been bereaved. I sometimes share my own experience of the loss I experienced. The people who really

helped me to heal my distressed psych were those who shared that experience (personal communication, September, 25th, 2018).

A comment made by respondent TC12 was:

Talking about my own experience is quite relieving to me. In fact, it is self-therapy. If you have never been to a similar situation, no matter how good you empathize with the grieving student, they cannot easily believe you. You have been through it, you must actually know. Other previously bereaved students personal sharing and self-disclosure, knowing how to equate the grieving student's involvement is very essential. Self-disclosure by the previously bereaved student widens and touches the view of grieving student. It makes them weep because they can fully identify with everything spoken by the previously bereaved peer. Such a personal exposure by the previously bereaved student echoed with the unsaid feelings of the grieving student communicates deep empathy and genuine understanding of their experiences (Personal communication, September, 26th, 2018).

Further, respondent TC6 remarked:

I can! In fact, I feel that by telling them my experience, that is the only way they can feel they are not alone in that situation. When I had my personal loss, talking to friends who had undergone a similar situation is what pulled me through the grieving. Knowing that someone had a similar experience but came out of it touches your fabric of nerves. Somebody who is willing to share what he/she went through broadens your view about grief and cools your hard feelings and anxiety. Just knowing that you are not all by yourself in that circumstance, that other individuals were there, too. You feel safer about not being left on your own in the world (personal communication, September, 27th, 2018).

This study found that most of the respondents had competence in encouraging grieving students share their experience with those who had been bereaved. The finding concurred with that of Tammy (2016) who established that the effects of grief and subsequent adjustment were moderated by sharing the pain of grief and loss with close family members or peers who had experienced bereavement. The researchers' view on this high level of competence on sharing their personal experience was that when teacher-counsellors shared their own experience, it also had some therapy on their part as they could pour out their concealed pain and also identify themselves with the grieving because it once happened to them. They felt the company of those who had a similar circumstance like them and therefore the guilt in them that it may have only happened to them is minimized.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Teacher-counsellors were generally not competent in using various grief counselling approaches. Therefore, most of them may have offered limited grief counselling services to students who needed it and in other cases some students who experienced grief did not receive any grief counselling because the respondents had no competence in using most of the grief counselling approaches.

5.2 Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions made, this study recommends that every teacher-counsellor be trained afresh in grief counselling. During such training they can be taught and undertake a practicum on the various approaches they can utilize while offering grief counselling services. This is because they are likely to encounter a grieving student who may need their services in the course of their job. The training can be done through workshops, seminars, online studies or enrollment in counsellor training institutions which offer a course in grief counselling. This will equip them with the necessary theoretical and practical skill necessary for improving grief counselling competence.

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