

**INVESTIGATION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING
SERVICES OFFERED TO BEREAVED PUPILS IN ASEGO
DIVISION, HOMA BAY SUB COUNTY**

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Absrtract

Every culture has a way of assisting its bereaved members to deal with grief. This study investigated guidance and counseling services offered to bereaved pupils in Asego Division, Homa-Bay Sub County. The objectives of this study were to find out guidance services and counseling services offered to bereaved pupils. Eight primary schools in Asego Division were sampled for this study. Two hundred and forty Luo pupils in classes four to eight in the sampled schools were purposively sampled as participants and descriptive survey research design was used. Questionnaires were administered to the sampled pupils. Focus group discussions for teachers were held in the sampled schools chaired by the researcher with the assistance of two enumerators. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics such as means, frequency distributions, percentages and standard deviations. The findings showed that the 64 teachers offered educational guidance to bereaved pupils when they come back to school through giving missed tests and exercises and having talks with pupils on study skills. The teachers offered grief counseling through giving financial support to the bereaved pupils, expressive art, play therapy, music, writing stories or letters, drama, grief therapy and home visits to the bereaved. The study revealed that guidance and counseling services offered to bereaved pupils are important and should not be ignored even though every culture has a way of assisting its bereaved members to deal with grief. The recommend was to investigate how bereavement affects the academic performance of bereaved pupils.

Key words: Loss, Grief, Guidance, Counseling, Mourning

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Background of the study

Majority of people who live in Asego Division are members of the Luo community except in urban zone which is cosmopolitan. The Luos love their culture especially those on bereavement. Bereaved children participate in mourning rituals and might not attend school for several days (Obuya, 2011).

Payne, Horn and Relf (1999) note that there is increased risk of suicide after bereavement, increased risk of depression, and vulnerability to overuse of drugs such as alcohol and tobacco. Those whose grief follows an unexpectedly difficult course might be recommended for therapeutic counseling in order to give them empathetic support while they grieve. Mbogori (2002) notes that due to the traditional milieu that death occurs in Kenya, grief is not considered as a painful experience which needs to be worked through.

It was found by HM Inspectorate of Education (2003) survey on personal support for pupils in Scottish primary schools that class teachers knew each pupil, and that most schools were aware of the need to have in place systems for supporting pupils experiencing problems within their own families or neighbourhood, associated with poverty, ill-health, or bereavement. Teachers helped pupils to understand and improve upon their personal styles of learning.

Mehta (2009) notes that when fifteen pupils were massacred, twelve killed in the classroom and many shot from close range in the head at Winnenden in Germany in 2009, for those who witnessed the brutal event, the shock was deep. For those who lost friends and family, the grief was profound. Specialists were there to give comfort but also to encourage pupils to confront what they saw and experienced. Yule and Anne (1993) note that most children come to terms with their grief quickly if they say farewell normally. Whenever possible survivors should be encouraged and enabled to attend the funerals.

Smilansky (1987) notes that whenever a relative dies, children should be allowed to attend the funeral, but not forced to do so, and that when the child returns to school, special projects can be initiated and implemented for preventive action on the subject of death such as regular group meetings for orphans. The programme may include presenting the subject through a film or story

using special teaching methods. Then, a discussion can take place, during which questions can be asked, conceptions clarified, and feelings aroused by the subject expressed.

Morrisey (2010) notes that there are ways adults can help children cope with grief, and grief counseling is an option. Encouraging children to draw, paint, write stories or letters, talk about their feelings are all ways adults can help children open up. Schonfeld and Quackenbush (2009) notes that children should be offered an opportunity to attend the funeral, use creative activities such as drawing or writing to express their grief, play, dance or make up a song, and be encouraged to talk to someone they trust to express their anger. Payne et al. (1999) say that bereaved people are unlikely to need sophisticated therapy but rather support that compensate for the inadequacy of informal networks.

KIE (2003) notes that pupils can be offered guidance in the development of good study skills thus skills such as reading and understanding, personal timetable management, note taking and note making can be developed in them. They can as well be enlightened on the need to prepare for study and develop interest in the subjects being studied. This study was therefore to find out if there were educational guidance services for bereaved children in Asego Division.

Buckling (2005) says that death of a parent ruptures a child's sense of security. Reactions associated with children who have lost parents include low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and occasionally, aggression. Teacher counsellors need to address these when bereaved children come back to school after a funeral. This study sought to investigate what G & C services were provided to help the mourning pupils

Statement of the problem

Gathagu (2008) interviewed 48 students in selected secondary schools in Tigoni and Kiambaa locations in Kiambu District on how the students dealt with the grieving process of their relatives and found that grief recovery remained a big problem to students who failed to get adequate counselling and support from teachers but bereaved students who had opportunities to share their problems, express their experiences, read the Bible and be prayed for were assisted to recover from grief, and had a sense of belonging to the schools. Practical assistance by way of school fees and pocket money complemented the counseling help in the grief recovery process

Obuya (2011) found in a survey study which was carried out to investigate factors for failure of pupils to attend school during funerals among Luo community in Asego Division and found that respondents who had lost fathers during school going days absented from school because of the Luo bereavement customs of “padho”, suspension of regular activities, “iko”, burial, “tero buru”, a ritual demonstration of accompanying the spirit of the deceased to former battleground, “liedo”, shaving, and “tedo”, serving a meal to the deceased’s family by married daughters. Obuya also found that bereaved pupils absented from school for 8 days for mothers’, 5 days for fathers’, 4 days for siblings’, and 2 days for friends and neighbours’ funerals. No study had been done to investigate on guidance and counseling services offered to bereaved pupils in Asego Division of Homa Bay Sub County. This study sought to investigate whether guidance services and grief counseling were offered to mourning pupils or not offered due to presence of ceremonies, rituals and beliefs that the bereaved pupils participated in.

Theoretical framework

Freud (1957) asserts that in mourning, there is profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love and inhibition of all activity. Mourning was determined by the cultural background of the mourner. It was a process through which the mourner relinquished the emotional ties to the lost object. Freud suggests the detachment of the libido takes place through a “testing of reality”. He maintains that the mourner severs attachment through a labour of memory. According to Freud, when the survivor had detached his or her emotional ties to the lost object and reattached the free libido to a new object, he/ she accepted consolation in the form of a substitute for what had been lost. A pupil whose parent died might want to carry on an internal dialogue with the dead parent for years. If the bereaved pupil had not accepted the reality of the loss, the emotional energy could not be released and redirected, leading to depression hence failure to attend school. This study therefore investigated guidance and counseling services offered to bereaved pupils in Asego Division.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The target population comprised 81 primary schools, 65 were public while 16 were private primary schools, with a total of 622

teachers and 29,021 pupils.. The pupils must have lost a parent, sibling, neighbour or friend. Stratified random sampling with proportionate allocation was used to obtain the number of public and private primary schools to use as sample. The researcher used purposive sampling to get Luo pupils as participants in this study.

There were 30 pupil participants from each sampled school hence there were 240 pupil participants. Eight teachers from each sampled school constituted a focus discussion group. 8 focus discussion groups were held and 64 teachers participated in this study. This study also used questionnaires. There were questionnaires for pupils with both closed and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions made data analysis easy. Headteachers of the sampled schools were approached with the relevant documents.

Findings and discussion

There were 64 teachers who were respondents. The teachers offered both educational guidance and grief counseling. Results presented on table 1.2 show the G&C services teachers offer to pupils who absent during funerals.

Table 1.2 G & C services offered to pupils who absent from school during funerals

Educational guidance			
Services	Teachers' participation	Freq	%
Giving missed tests	Response	37	57.8
	No response	27	42.2
	Total	64	100
Talks on study skills	Response	45	70.3
	No response	19	29.7
	Total	64	100
Giving missed exercises	Response	41	64.1
	No response	23	35.9
	Total	64	100
Grief counseling			
Services	Teachers' participation	Freq	%
Financial support	Response	34	53.1
	No response	30	46.9
	Total	64	100
Expressive art	Response	41	64.1
	No response	23	35.9

	Total	64	100
Play therapy	Response	46	71.9
	No response	18	28.1
	Total	64	100
Music	Response	53	82.8
	No response	11	17.2
	Total	64	100
Writing stories/letters	Response	31	48.4
	No response	33	51.6
	Total	64	100
Drama	Response	18	28.1
	No response	46	71.9
	Total	64	100
Grief therapy	Response	11	17.2
	No response	53	82.8
	Total	64	100
Home visits to the bereaved	Response	41	64.1
	No response	23	35.9
	Total	64	100

Thirty-seven teachers accounting for 57.8% offered missed tests to pupils who absented during funerals. <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov> reports that California education code section 48,200 defines excused absences and all students with excused absences are entitled to complete all assignment and tests missed during the period of absence. The tests have to be reasonably equivalent to the tests that the pupil missed during the absence. In this study, not all pupils who became absent due to attendance of funerals were given missed tests to do. That was because some absentees stayed at home for a long time and went back to school when a new term was started. Only pupils who went back to school during the term were given an equivalent test to do. The teachers used tests to promote pupils to the next class. The average of the marks obtained in all the tests done throughout the year was used to promote the pupils to the next class. A child who failed to do a test could not compete well with those who did all tests. Due to the low average marks scored, the affected pupil was made to repeat the class without considering the fact that he missed some tests due to bereavement. To avoid repetition of classes, teachers encouraged bereaved pupils to sit make up tests.

Forty-five respondents accounting for 70.3% offered talks on study skills. The class teachers told the pupils to make personal study time tables and advised them to follow the timetables. The

finding was similar to that of HM Inspectorate of Education (2003) that reports that teachers help pupils to understand and improve upon their personal styles of learning. KIE (2003) also notes that pupils can be offered guidance on the development of good study skills. The teachers gave talks to pupils on study skills. The skills included, personal time table management, note taking and note making. The pupils were also encouraged to spare some time at home either early in the morning or at night or both to study so that they could catch up with the work that the other pupils did during the period they were absent. The pupils were encouraged to listen carefully during lessons so as not to miss the concepts taught in class. Some of the teachers never followed up to find out whether the skills taught were developed or not. Class teachers talked to the pupils, encouraging them to take their studies seriously.

Thirty-seven respondents, accounting for 57.8% gave missed exercises to help pupils catch up with missed work. House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts: Department for Education and Skills (2006) reports that the education of other pupils is disrupted because teachers have to spend time helping poor school attendees catch up with missed work. In this study, the education of other pupils was not disrupted because teachers did not spend time helping poor attendees catch up with work that they had missed during normal lessons. They attended to the pupils who were absent only during their free time. Subject teachers, specifically Mathematics, English and Kiswahili teachers gave the bright bereaved pupils missed exercises to catch up with missed work without disrupting the education of good school attendees. That was done on one to one basis. Pupils who were academically weak or slow learners therefore continued to be weaker because teachers did not attend to them. Pupils who did not like dealing with teachers on one to one basis did not also complete the missed exercises.

Thirty-four respondents accounting for 53.1% offered financial support to orphans. The teachers gave orphans financial support through contributions from both teachers and pupils. This finding was similar to the report given by Gathagu (2008) that practical assistance by way of school fees and pocket money, complement the counseling and help in grief recovery process. The bereaved pupil's classmates contributed ten shillings each. The teachers in the schools also contributed at least fifty shillings each. The total money collected was given to the bereaved pupil only after the pupil had reported back to school. The pupil's classmates together with his/ her class teacher

went to the bereaved pupil's home or house and gave him that money in the presence of the bereaved pupil's guardian or remaining parent. The bereaved pupil was given the money and was not restricted on how to use it. A total orphan who lost a guardian was never offered any financial support even though that was a double tragedy to the orphan and even though he needed financial support most.

Forty-one respondents representing 64.1% of the respondents used expressive art to assist the bereaved pupils cope with grief. This was similar to what was noted in Morrisey (2010) that children can be encouraged to draw or paint. Schonfeld and Quackenbush (2009) also notes that children can be offered an opportunity to use creative activities such as drawing to express their grief. When bereaved pupils went back to school, they were offered opportunities to express themselves through drawing or painting. The teachers used expressive art during Creative Art lessons. All pupils were offered opportunities to make free expressions. The Creative Art teachers then discussed with the pupils what they had drawn and directed the thoughts of the pupils. During some CRE lessons, the teachers created time and allowed pupils to express themselves through drawing or painting. Other subject teachers asked the pupils to draw or paint as they taught their subjects. These gave bereaved pupils opportunities to express their feelings.

Forty-six respondents, representing 71.9% employed play therapy to help bereaved pupils fit back into the system after funerals. Schonfeld and Quackenbush (2009) reports that children can be offered an opportunity to play. Bereaved pupils were given opportunities to play with other non-bereaved pupils in the school. They played during break time, physical education lessons as well as during games times. During those times, they played football, netball, volleyball, skipped with ropes as well as played hide and seek in the school. The children chose the games they played by themselves. The teachers discouraged dangerous games and the use of dangerous objects during play. Balls were readily availed for the pupils by the teachers. Some pupils also carried their own home made balls and ropes. They used them whenever they had an opportunity to play. The plays enabled the bereaved pupils to release tension

Fifty-three respondents representing 82.8% used music to enable bereaved pupils to cope with their grief. Bereaved pupils were involved in singing and dancing in the school. They

participated in singing and dancing during some lessons. Some songs and dances were performed during CRE lessons. Topical songs were sung during Social Studies lessons. During Pastoral Programme Instruction lessons, sacred songs and choruses were sung. At the assembly in the mornings before the pupils went to their respective classes and in the evenings before pupils went back to their homes, all pupils sang choruses. At times, a particular class was called upon at the parade to present a song. Both bereaved and non-bereaved pupils were involved in singing. During outdoor activities, pupils sang and danced as they carried out different activities. The pupils made their own choices of songs. They sang sacred songs, singing games, secular songs, patriotic songs, and folk songs. The teachers discouraged songs that provoked other people negatively but encouraged those that provoked people positively. The songs helped bereaved pupils to control their emotions.

Thirty-one respondents representing 48.4% engaged bereaved pupils in writing stories. Teachers asked pupils to write stories or letters. The teachers either gave the pupils how the stories were started or how the stories were ended and asked the pupils to complete the stories. At times, titles of stories were given to the pupils to write on. The writing of the stories enabled bereaved pupils to express their feelings. Bereaved pupils who had problems were asked to write down what their challenges were or the difficulties they were experiencing. Bereaved pupils who were involved in indiscipline cases were also asked to put down how they were involved in the indiscipline cases.

This finding was similar to what Morrissey (2010) reported that children were allowed or encouraged to write stories or letters. It was also similar to what Schonfeld and Quackenbush (2009) note that children should be given an opportunity to express their grief through writing letters or stories. Eighteen respondents accounting for 28.1% employed drama to help the affected pupils. Teachers engaged bereaved pupils in drama during English, Christian Religious Education, Social Studies and Kiswahili lessons when some pupils acted in short plays and the other pupils in the class became the audience. All the pupils in the classes including the bereaved pupils were involved in drama. After the performance in drama, questions were asked and pupils answered the questions. Whenever there were guests visiting the school, pupils also acted in drama to entertain the guests. That was done during parents or education days. Drama was not

utilized by most teachers because the teachers did not have adequate skills and knowledge and because it consumed a lot of time to be organized.

Eleven respondents representing 17.2% used grief therapy to help affected pupils. This finding was similar to what Mehta (2009) notes that not all bereaved persons need grief therapy. Payne (1999) recommends grief therapy to those whose grief follows difficult courses for therapeutic counseling in order to give them emphatic support while they grieve. It was also similar to what Morrisey (2010) reports that children can be encouraged to talk about their feelings. Schonfeld and Quackenbush (2009) also reports that children can be encouraged to talk to someone they trust to express their anger.

Most of the bereaved pupils came to terms with their grief more quickly because they said farewell normally. Most bereaved pupils in the region experienced normal grief. Grief therapy was, therefore, offered to few bereaved pupils. That was done to those pupils who teachers noticed had issues in their lives. Class teachers called upon the bereaved pupils and talked to them about the death. They were asked to accept the reality of the losses. They were asked to accept and cope with the changes in their lives. The bereaved pupils were encouraged to continue with their daily lives, bearing in mind that the deceased would not return to be with them or to give any assistance to them again. They were encouraged to relate well with other members of their families or caretakers. Few teachers offered grief therapy for some teachers argued that they had inadequate skills and knowledge to offer grief therapy. Some class teachers referred the pupils to the teachers in charge of G & C. The teachers in charge of G & C also complained that they lacked adequate facilities that would enable them to offer the services effectively.

Forty-one respondents representing 64.1% had home visits to the bereaved families together with the bereaved pupils' classmates. The finding was similar to what Yule and Anne (1993) reports that children who are allowed to attend funerals recover quickly. Smilansky (1987) also notes that whenever a relative or friend has died, children should be allowed to attend the funeral but not forced to do so. Payne, Horn, and Relf (1999) say that bereaved people are unlikely to need sophisticated therapy but rather support that compensate for the inadequacy of informal networks. The background to all bereavement counseling is general support- support that offers

human comfort, and care that accepts and encourages appropriate grief and mourning. Such support was offered by teachers in schools and by relatives, friends and neighbours of the pupils that were bereaved. Teachers liaised with the families of bereaved pupils whenever death of a pupil's parent occurred. The teachers asked for the burial dates of the deceased parents. On the burial days, class teachers together with the bereaved pupil's classmates attended the burial ceremonies of the deceased parents to offer the bereaved pupils emotional support. When it was not possible for them to attend the burial ceremonies, they organized for other days to pay a visit to the bereaved family. Whenever they visited the bereaved pupils at their homes, they read some scriptures from the Bible, short sermons and prayers were offered, sacred songs were sang, and words of encouragement were spoken to the bereaved pupils and their family members. Members of the deceased family also narrated the story of how the deceased's deaths occurred.

Whenever death occurred during school holidays, visits to the bereaved pupils' homes were made after the burial ceremonies had been conducted. Bereaved pupils whose parents died during school holidays and were transferred to other schools were not paid any visit. Visits to the bereaved family enabled the bereaved pupils to have a sense of belonging to their school. Such visits also made bereaved pupils' classmates to empathize with the bereaved pupils. It made pupils who attended the funerals to be prepared so that when later they became bereaved, they faced the reality of their own losses. The teachers offered non-crisis death education to all pupils when they were not in crisis. They talked to pupils to avoid scolding or bullying bereaved pupils. The teachers also invited resource persons from Women Fighting Aids in Kenya (WOFAK), Plan International, and Upendo women group to talk to pupils on HIV/AIDS, dangers of early pregnancy and early marriages so that they could be careful during funerals.

Conclusion

It is important to offer guidance and counseling services to bereaved pupils even though every culture has a way of assisting its bereaved members to deal with grief.

In as much as G & C services were offered by teachers in the schools, they were not adequately offered hence there was need to strengthen or improve on ways through which G & C services were being offered to bereaved pupils.

Recommendation

It was recommended that all pupils who miss tests due to bereavement should be given make-up tests. Grief counseling should also be offered to bereaved pupils to enable them to cope with the losses. Further research was recommended to investigate how bereavement affects the academic performance of bereaved pupils.

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