SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF BEREAVEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE

BY

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work. The work contained in it has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Jenny Shumba ……

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ABSTRACT

Death and bereavement are prevalent in Zimbabwe due to HIV/AIDS and other illnesses. It is estimated that a large population of school going learners have lost one or both parents and have become orphans. The aim of the study was two-fold: to understand the bereavement experiences of orphaned learners and to examine how such experiences can inform school counselling services.

A multiple case study involving 13 school children and four school counsellors from two secondary schools in Harare Metropolitan Region was conducted. Each of the 17 participants was viewed as a bounded case due to his or her individual unique experiences. An interpretive phenomenological approach was employed to collect and analyse the data. All the cases were purposively selected as they were bearers of crucial information on bereavement experiences and bereavement counselling.

The study established nine (9) key findings. First, it was found that the type of attachments and support systems the child had were contributory to the way the child experienced bereavement. Second, it was established that although learners manifested emotional pain, they found it difficult to verbalise it. Third, the study found that cultural practices either exacerbate or work for the better for bereaved children as some were seen to enhance their livelihood whilst some were detrimental and oppressive. Fourth, it was established that bereavement triggered philosophical and reflexive reactions on the part of bereaved children. The deaths of the parents resulted in them reflecting on the three phases of their life trajectories: life before death; at the time of death; and after death. Fifth, it was also established in the study that there was a mismatch in what children and counsellors claimed to be happening in secondary schools pertaining bereavement counselling provisioning. Sixth, the study found that most children did not receive any bereavement counselling in schools. Only three out of the 13 learner cases interviewed in this study had a teacher in the school talk to them about loss of their parents. In some instances, a child's bereavement was only discovered through the grapevine or when this researcher got to the school. Seventh, it was established that although counsellors were qualified as both teachers and counsellors, they lacked confidence in dealing with sensitive issues such as bereavement. Eighth, the study also found that although there is a lot of death in Zimbabwe the counselling syllabi lacked focus on bereavement counselling. Ninth, it was also

discovered that teachers who were not assigned to counselling duties had negative attitudes towards counselling, a matter which has serious consequences for the bereaved learners.

Based on the above findings, the study concludes that bereaved children experienced a variety of circumstances that impacted both positively and negatively on their schooling and rendered them in need of bereavement counselling. It also concludes that bereaved learners in selected Harare schools were not receiving adequate bereavement counselling; schools neither had policies nor laid down procedures on bereavement counselling.

For further research, the study recommends that there should be research focusing on methodologies designed to access children's innermost feelings of emotional pain. There should be further research on the nature of the relationship between a child's bereavement and educational experiences. Studies involving other bereaved populations, such as, children from rural areas and primary school children should be carried out in order to gain insights on how the phenomenon is experienced by different age groups in different contexts.

To improve counselling practice in schools, the study recommends that there should be capacity building programmes aimed at assisting teachers to deal with bereavement counselling. School bereavement counselling should explore collaboration with other stakeholders such as peers, care givers and government as well as non-governmental organisations. Above all, the study recommends that schools should be proactive and have school bereavement policies and procedures on bereavement counselling.

Key words: Bereavement, counselling, school bereavement counselling, secondary school children.

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ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
C1M	Counsellor 1 of school M
C1LM	Counsellor 1 of school LM
CABA	Children Affected by AIDS
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
DEO	District Education Officer
G & C	Guidance and Counselling
GMRDC	Govan Mbeki Research Development Committee
HOD	Head of Department
LM	School LM
M	School M
MoESAC	Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture
MoESC	Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NOCP	National Orphan Care Policy
NPA	National Plan of Action
PGD	Prolonged Grief Disorder
PPL1M	Pupil 1 of school M
PPL1LM	Pupil 1 of school LM
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
OVC	Orphaned and Vulnerable Children
SGC	School Guidance and Counselling
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE PROBLEM

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Parental death and the bereavement experiences that ensue have significance in the lives of bereaved learners. This chapter serves as an introduction to the whole study. It contextualises the study by presenting the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, purpose of the study, research objectives, significance of the study, rationale of the study, delimitation of the study and chapter outline of the study. The background to the study will be presented first.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Death and bereavement are prevalent in Harare, and across Zimbabwe currently, a situation worsened by the advent of the HIV/AIDS disease (Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, 1998; UNAIDS, 2008; UNICEF, 2003). In Zimbabwe, this has been further exacerbated by deaths due to the cholera epidemic (ZIMONLINE, 2009). In April 2009, the cumulative cholera deaths amounted to 4,244 (Zimbabwe Situation, April 26, 2009). Many of those who succumbed to these illnesses were adults, who parented children.

One in five (1:5) children lost one, or both, parents due to HIV/AIDS (Youthnet, 2008). UNAIDS also reports that an estimated 15 million children under the age of 18 worldwide became orphans as a result of AIDS (UNAIDS, 2008). Of these, around 11.6 million live in Zimbabwe and other parts of Africa (UNAIDS, 2008). By 2007, Zimbabwe had 1 million orphans resulting directly from communicable disease deaths (UNAIDS, 2008). Almost one quarter of children in Zimbabwe has been classified as orphans because of HIV/AIDS (Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office, ORC Marco, & The Boston Globe, 2008). UNICEF (2003) forecasted that by 2010, three African countries - Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa - would have an orphan population of between 20-30 percent of all children younger than 15 years due to HIV/AIDS.

In addition to HIV/AIDS and cholera, a major cause of death in Harare is tuberculosis, as well as pneumonia and gastroenteritis (All Africa Stories, 2008; ZIMONLINE Cholera update, 2009). In 2004, 26.5% of adults in Harare hospitals died as a result of pneumonia, followed by tuberculosis, 16.1%; and gastroenteritis, 9.5% (Highbeam Document, 2004). On the scale of these evidences, there is no doubting the magnitude of the adult mortality problem in Harare, and across Zimbabwe and the orphan population it creates.

The majority of orphaned children are of school going age. Arnett (2007) reports that many orphans fall within the adolescent category, with a lower age limit of 10 years and an upper limit of 25 years. School data from education leaders in the Harare District support this claim. In a recent survey of selected secondary schools in Harare, it emerged that orphans constituted at least 12% of enrolment (see Table 1.1). The data in Table 1.1 show that secondary schools in Warren Park/Marlborough and Northern/Central are particularly affected by orphans in their enrolment.

Table 1.1: Number of orphans in 10 selected secondary schools in Harare

Name of school	Name of district	Enrolment	Number of orphans	Percentage
A	Warren Park Marlborough	1 564	757	48.4
B	Northern Central	1 041	300	28.8
C	Warren Park Marlborough	705	173	24.5
D	High Glen	1 035	250	24.2
E	Glen View Mufakose	900	200	22.2
F	Glen View Mufakose	900	200	22.2
G	Glen View Mufakose	696	153	22.0
H	High Glen	1 725	300	17.4
I	Northern Central	780	133	17.1
J	Glen View/Mufakose	2 350	300	12.8

Source: School heads of the secondary schools in Harare Metropolitan Region (June 2009)

The loss of a loved one through death is recognised universally as one type of event singularly powerful in its capacity to give rise to acute emotional pain and major life readjustments for those survivor-victims who suffered the loss. Toynbee (1968) as cited, in Suicide Prevention Resource Centre (2009:14), makes the point that death is harsher for the survivor, “This, as I see it, is the capital fact about the relation between living and dying: There are two parties to the suffering that death inflicts; and in the apportionment of this suffering, the survivor takes the brunt.” Theoretically, the labels applied to this “brunt” are bereavement, mourning, and grief (Bennel, 2003). The features of bereavement, almost universally recognised, include crying and sorrow, anxiety and agitation, insomnia, and loss of appetite (McCarthy & Jessop, 2005; Rolls & Payne, 2007). Although it is not considered a mental disorder, bereavement, as a highly stressful event, increases the probability of, and may cause or exacerbate, mental and somatic disorders (Rolls & Payne, 2007). Orphans in secondary schools in Harare may be particularly constrained as they simultaneously have to continue their schooling while experiencing bereavement.

From personal experiences working in secondary schools in Harare, it was observed on many occasions that bereaved learners often behave unnaturally. They sometimes, seem lonely and, in school, have a tendency to sit at the back row of the class. McCarthy (2006) states one reason for this may be their developmental stage. Young children sometimes are unable to verbalise their feelings of loss, grief or mourning (McCarthy & Jessop, 2005). This is particularly the case among children and teen orphans. While infants and toddlers react to separation from an attachment figure by protesting vigorously or drift into despair (Bowlby, 1969; Rolls, 2004), older children (for example 5 to 15 years) are more likely to understand the physical change that death brings (McCarthy, 2006), but may experience hallucinations of the dead person in the bereaved children’s adult life (Mawere & Mathathu, 2008; Parkes, 1995). Both of these perspectives suggest that orphans of different age groups in schools in Harare could experience bereavement of their parents differently; thus, they require different counselling support.

But a problematic issue for teachers and caregivers of bereaved children and teens inside and outside the school context in Harare is that survivor-victims who suffer the loss of a parent (or other loved ones) sometimes develop defence mechanisms (Christ, 2000; Worden, 1996) in response to their bereavement. McCarthy and Jessop (2005) and

McCarthy (2006) assert that because of their need for parenting, children [and teens] who lose one parent often become anxious about the survival of the other, and they may protect that parent from knowing of their distress. That, and the difficulty of sustaining developmental mood states in childhood and the teen age, may lead the parent or teacher to believe the learner [child] has recovered from, or has not been affected by, the bereavement. Through observation, it was realised that some teachers in some schools in Harare often make this assumption about orphans in their class as they may tend to depend on observable aspects of grief.

The consequence of such uninformed assumptions has been that the teachers continue to treat the bereaved learners as other non-bereaved children. Two outcomes of this reality for the bereaved learners in the schools have been that, at the level of school counselling, they miss out on vital support that could be offered, and at the level of academic work, they have had to cope with their class work amidst their loss. This is unfortunate, given the trickle-down effects of bereavement on cognitive functioning. Ward, Mathias, and Hitchings (2007) provide evidence to suggest strong association between bereavement and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, and these in turn impact negatively on memory [information processing]. But the sample-group was adults, which raises questions of whether younger persons would have fared better or worse on the information processing tasks. At the same time, in terms of the Zimbabwe context, particularly within the broad field of education, there is a paucity of studies which examine children/adolescents bereavement and grief from their own view. Thus, school counselling often is undertaken without this knowledge base.

Apart from the apparent socio-emotional impact, bereavement has been shown to influence other dimensions of a school-going orphan's life. The work of Ritcher (2004) and others, (Kinghorn & Steinberg, 2007; UNAIDS, 2008; UNICEF, 2003) show that bereavement limits school attendance and affects general behaviour. Research by UNAIDS reflects that in 2005/2006 the school attendance among orphans was 87.9%, compared to 92.4% among non-orphans in Zimbabwe (UNAIDS, 2008). However, as illustrated in Table 1.1, in Harare, many children do attend school, which if school leaders understand their bereavement experiences, might be able to keep them in school. Whiteside and Sunter (2000) refer to the situation of child headed households as an impact. UNICEF (2003) and others (Abebe

& Aese, 2007; Childhood Bereavement Network, 2009; Hutchinson, Stuart, & Pretorius, 2007; Ritchter, 2004) also cited isolation as impact for survivor-victims who lost loved ones. Whether these issues predominate orphans' experience in school, or whether there are specific aspects in their bereavement experiences that trigger these responses, remain unexplored.

Furthermore, in the bereavement literature available to teachers and school counsellors in Zimbabwe, a heavy emphasis has been on bereavement in adults or in older people (Bennel, 2003), and on orphans population growth and needs (UNICEF, 2003; UNAIDS, 2008). Thus, unlike elsewhere, such as the United Kingdom, (Kinghorn & Steinberg, 2007; Rolls & Payne, 2007), less research has been done within the Zimbabwe school context on pertinent issues linked for instance to school-going children or adolescents' understanding of death, the implications for the development of children in Zimbabwe, their experience following the death of parents, and the bereavement tasks for these individuals. Yet, the way in which adult and children/adolescents respond to loss is not necessarily the same. As McCarthy (2006) and Rolls and Payne, (2007) state, children/adolescents can mourn for a lost parent, although the form of their grief differs from that of adults. It suggests that schools cannot base their student [children] counselling service decisions on adult bereavement data, per se. But, this seems, has been the practice in some schools.

Although precise statistics are unavailable, it is commonplace to have learners of different tribal and racial groups, such as Ndebele and Shona, Whites, Indians and Coloureds in schools in Harare. Culturally, 'death' and 'bereavement' often have specific undertone for different tribal, national or racial groups. Thus, while death is a universal event, Rolls (2004) notes that the subjective experience of bereavement is mediated through the interaction of the specific meaning of the death, and the survivor-victim's characteristics of resilience and vulnerability. Bereavement is also embedded in the social, cultural, and historical context in which it takes place. For this reason, the tendency in some cases to treat bereaved and non-bereaved learners alike in the schools or to adopt a one size-fits-all approach in school counselling leads to questions about whether adequate focus has been given to service efficacy.

This raises the question of: what is happening, in terms of counselling, at the school level? Indeed, at a political level, calls have been made to upscale support services – tangible and intangible – to orphans in schools in Zimbabwe (SAFAIDS, 2004). This may be partly explained by government policy shift in relation to children, as illustrated through the Zimbabwe government ratification of UN Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1989), the African Charter, and the framework of Schools as Centres of Care and Support for Children (MoESC, 2008). Many schools have been trying their best to cope but seem to have been constrained by lack of resources (Saito, Monash, Keogh, Dhlembeu, Bergua & Mafico, 2007; Zimbabwe Situation, 28 April 2009). Rembe (2006) reports that, at best, counselling programmes in many secondary schools in Harare are *ad hoc*, not well planned, as teachers initiate spontaneous activities and without proper coordination. In Zimbabwe, the current counselling provision 'seems patchy', to quote McCarthy's (2006) description of similar situations. It appears that at a time when school counselling is perhaps most needed, given the growing orphan situation in some schools, the service in some schools seems inadequate. This gap opens up a possibility for service provision planning in which issues such as those linked to school-going orphans' bereavement experiences could be taken into consideration.

This research focused on bereaved children/adolescents in secondary schools, to unravel their otherwise ignored experience of bereavement and its implications for school counselling.

1.2 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

There is an orphan population in many secondary schools in Harare, and Zimbabwe more broadly, as a result of parental death. Bereavement is a natural experience for orphans in such situations. However, it is possible that bereaved learners might hide their distress from teachers or even surviving relatives (cf. Background), and their bereavement reactions might differ with gender, age group and cultures, yet the schools are engaging in counselling without structured programmes that draw on these possibilities. In fact, despite evidence of a link between bereavement and cognitive functioning, teachers treat bereaved learners as 'normal' children who are not bereaved, which is not helping the situation of

these learners in school. In the Harare Metro, some bereaved learners are not attending schools, and others who are in school, do not seem ably supported because it seems counselling services are weak and operate in the absence of the 'voice' of bereaved learners and their experiences. Part of the reason for this state-of-affairs seems to be that there is a paucity of research on bereavement for school children/adolescents in the Harare (or Zimbabwe) context. Where such research exists, the focus is on the magnitude, growth rate, and needs of school-age orphans and on adult bereavement (*cf. background*). Research has not directly examined the socio-emotional and scholastic experiences of bereavement for orphans [children/adolescents] in schools nor sought to relate such evidence to school counselling. It is irresponsible to ignore how children/adolescents in school understand and experience bereavement after parental death. Operating in the absence of the 'voice' of the bereaved is indefensible and the schools have so far lost out on the potential of using these voices in 'planning' and 'quality assuring' school counselling service provision. Thus, the critical question becomes:

> How might exploration of bereavement experiences in secondary school children/adolescents, lead to a better understanding of what these learners go through in school and improve school counselling provisions?

1.3 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To gain further insights into the key issue raised in the main question above, the following sub-research questions are posed:

1.3.1 What are the bereavement experiences of the secondary school learners following the deaths of their parents?

1.3.2 How do adolescent learners of different cultures and gender experience the bereavement of their parents?

1.3.3 What are bereaved learners' experiences of using their school counselling services?

1.3.4 What challenges do school counsellors face in offering bereavement counselling to these learners?

1.3.5 How do existing counselling programmes need to adapt to take into account learners' experiences of bereavement post death of their parents?

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore and understand learners' experiences of parental bereavement, and determine the implications of this for improved counselling provision in secondary school. Central to this last part is an understanding of particular challenges that school counsellors encountered at their school level.

1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.5.1 Parents

A traditional definition of parent is mother or father, one who sires or gives birth to and nurtures and raises an offspring (Wikipedia, 2009). Thus, the term 'parents' is central to family, or the network of people in the child's immediate psychological field (Carr, 1999). However, in this study, the term parent is used to mean biological or adoptive parents.

1.5.2 Children's experiences of bereavement

According to Tummel (2009), the experience of bereavement is the stage one reaches after the loss of a loved one has begun to work its way through one's emotional landscape. Bereavement is usually understood to indicate loss of someone or something valuable and the consequences that a bereaved person endures after a loss (Meiche, 2008). Thus, children's bereavement experiences in this study, refers to what the bereaved child undergoes after the death of a parent or parents.

1.5.3 Bereaved children/adolescents

The UN Convention describes a 'child' as a person under the age of 18 (UN Document, 2003). In this study, bereaved children/adolescents refer to learners between the ages of 10 and 18 years in secondary school.

1.5.4 Children/adolescents

The UN Convention describes a 'child' as a person under the age of 18 (UN Document, 2003). However, in this study, the terms child, children, and adolescents refer to young people between the ages of 10 and 18 years in secondary school. These children fall under the adolescent age range of between 10 and 25 years (Arnett, 2007). Reference to the secondary school children as adolescents will also be made in the study.

1.5.5 School Bereavement Counselling

According to Sherr, Hedge, Steinhart, Davey and Petrack (1999:380), bereavement counselling is an opportunity to examine the impact of death on the future life of the individual. It can also be defined as an interpersonal relationship between someone seeking help and someone capable or trained, willing to give help in a setting that permits. School bereavement counselling refers to the interpersonal relationship between the counsellor and the learner counsellee that goes on in a school setting with the endeavour to assist children to cope with their bereavement.

1.6 RATIONALE

There is a growing interest in the plight of orphans in Zimbabwe, generally. This can be seen, for instance, from the ongoing work by government and NGOs on the topic (Saito *et al*, 2007; UNICEF, 2003; UNAIDS, 2008). At the school level, in 2008 alone, the average number of orphans in school grew by an estimated 12 percent over the figure for 2007 (UNAIDS, 2008). But, it is often the case in some schools that orphans are not disaggregated and supported in counselling services. The researcher's current interest in the topic was also prompted by her experience as a guidance and counselling teacher. In particular, cursory review of the literature demonstrated a paucity of studies in the Zimbabwean context which examined children/adolescents bereavement from their own perspective. By focusing on the current topic, orphans in school would have means through which their 'voices' could be heard, which is critically lacking, particularly in as far as school counselling planning and service provision is concerned. McCarthy and Jessop (2005) also agree with the concept of 'giving a voice to the silenced' and suggest further research into the complexities of adolescent learners' experiences following parental death. Exploring

bereavement experiences after parental death for learners in school is important because knowledge about the nature of this experience for this population is very limited and the need for informed counselling is quite high.

Furthermore, bereavement touches the most basic facts of human existence, that of life and death, which is commonly feared by people (Corr & Balk, 1996). However, with the current high prevalence of death in Zimbabwe, it is pertinent to carry out this study at this time to try and find solutions to school bereavement counselling and to empower children who are bereaved.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

School counselling is an intentional practice, with a critical role in helping bereaved learners cope, not just inside but also outside the school context (Charema, 2008). Indeed, counselling is a basic entitlement, a fundamental right for every orphan as enshrined in Article 6 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1990) and the UN Document (UN, 1993, 1996). Given that counselling is an intentional practice, it needs a strong theoretical base which can begin to emerge from learners' experiences of parental bereavement. This study can make this contribution.

Theories on bereavement are modelled on the adult grievers and mourners due to the myths and beliefs that young children and adolescents do not grieve and if they do, quickly return to normalcy. They are 'forgotten mourners' (Auman, 2007). In the light of this, Shear (2009, np) suggests "the need for research to understand the course and consequences of childhood bereavement in order to guide interventions." However, theories on bereavement of children are largely absent. Thus, this study will be of significance as it will contribute to the theory base on the notion of bereavement of children/ adolescents which remains untheorised in literature as it locates them in a functionalist/determinist perspective of childhood/adolescence (McCarthy, 2006).

Furthermore, according to Auman (2007) and Zimbabwe Secretary's Minute of 2006 (2008), schools should have policies in place that cater for orphans and other vulnerable children. This study will make an appraisal of the counselling programmes and strategies in

Harare Metropolitan secondary schools to establish the school counselling practices. Thus, the research findings will spur further discussion about policies that impact on orphans.

In Zimbabwe, at the moment, there is a dearth of documented policies on how to specifically assist orphaned children in school. The latest policy document available only hints vaguely that schools should cater for orphans and other vulnerable children (Zimbabwe Secretary's Minute of 2006, 2008). This document is silent on the "How" aspects. Findings of this research will furnish school heads, Guidance and counselling Education officers and teachers with strategies on implementing counselling interventions and postventions.

1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study focused in particular on the social reality of 'bereavement experiences' in school-age children/adolescents. Thus, issues linked to the bereavement process, or to bereavement in adulthood, whilst important, were not covered in this investigation. Furthermore, the emphasis in the study is on gaining in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of bereavement experience, thus the study was confined to select secondary schools (Form 1-6) within the Harare region. In other words, although there are 82 secondary schools within the Harare Metropolitan Region, only 2 were used. The inclusion of all the schools, while interesting and perhaps providing a global picture of learners' bereavement experiences, was not considered a source for in-depth phenomenological study, which this research seeks to carry out. By focusing on secondary schools, orphans in primary or at the tertiary level of the education system, despite having the sample characteristics, were excluded. These pragmatic decisions gave focus to the study, given constraints of time and other resources.

1.9 BRIEF CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

Chapter 1: Provides the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, and purpose of the study, assumptions, delimitation of the study and definitions of terms.

Chapter 2: The second chapter reviews related literature and presents the conceptual framework that underpins the study. Literature on concepts surrounding the bereavement phenomenon, the bereavement theories and consequences of bereavement is reviewed.

Chapter 3: This chapter covers a review of literature related to children's bereavement counselling. Key concepts related to school counselling and counselling theories are reviewed.

Chapter 4: This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study; the research paradigm, research design, population, sample and sampling, data collection methods, instrumentation, trustworthiness, reliability and validity, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5: The fifth chapter presents data presentation, interpretation and analysis. Textural and structural descriptions of participants are presented and themes discussed.

Chapter 6: This chapter focuses on discussion of this study's findings in relation to previous literature.

Chapter 7: The purpose of this chapter is to give summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES, CONSEQUENCES AND INTERVENTIONS IN BEREVEAVEMENT

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, and purpose of the study, assumptions, delimitation of the study and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 presents a review of related literature and the conceptual framework that underpins the study. The range of concepts used in the description of bereavement is discussed in this section and forms the conceptual framework of this study. The concepts include notions of bereavement, population at risk, loss, grief, mourning, end, separation, morbidity and mortality. Central to this study, is school children's bereavement experiences following the death of a parent. This type of bereavement implies permanent separation of children from the deceased parent (Abrams, 1999). The separation is often accompanied by adverse circumstances for the bereaved children. For example, they experience loss of livelihood and loss of inheritance due to the death of the breadwinner (Ritcher, 2004). These adverse circumstances due to this permanent separation present risks for the children. In conjunction with the conceptual framework, this chapter covers related literature. Key areas to be discussed are: theories and models related to bereavement; bereavement morbidity and literature on previous studies. Ideas of various authors are highlighted and interrogated in this section as a theory base for this study. Bereavement in perspective is dealt with first.

2.1 BEREAVEMENT IN PERSPECTIVE

This section presents a theoretical discussion on concepts related to bereavement in a move to put the bereavement concept in perspective. The nature of bereavement is unpacked by providing similar and contrasting views on what bereavement is.

2.1.1 The concept of bereavement

Bereavement is derived from the old English term ‘reave’ or ‘bereafian’ (Madison, 2009). It describes *loss* of something or someone dear to an individual such as loss of a job, pet, house or someone (Harrison & Harrington, 2001). Any loss leads to deprivation, for instance, when a parent dies the children are deprived of love, care and nurturing. Bereavement describes the sense of grief one experiences when someone close dies. In agreement, it can also be defined as a state a person is in when they are deprived of something important to them that is particularly applied to those who have experienced bereavement (FHI, 2009). In addition, bereavement is the consequence of the loss of something of value. In this research, bereavement refers to death of a parent or parents even though it also can occur following a divorce, miscarriage, job redundancy or any other loss in a person’s life (SAT, 2001).

Further to this, when bereavement occurs, the bereaved person goes through a process of *mourning*. To a lay person, the concepts ***bereavement, grief and mourning*** are viewed as synonymous; however, they differ (National Cancer Institute, 2009). For instance, *grief* refers to the natural process of reacting psychologically, physically and sociologically both internally and externally to the perception of *loss* (Dent, 2009) and *mourning* refers to the process by which people adapt to a loss. This seems to imply that bereavement evokes hidden (mental) and expressed (crying) feelings. The bereaved person can pass through stages in which each of these is experienced.

An additional dimension is that bereavement can be described as a stressful process that affects morbidity and mortality (Bupa, 2009). Whereas the above definitions of bereavement border around loss, feelings, processes and reactions, the National Cancer Institute (2009) suggests that bereavement is the period after loss during which grief and mourning are experienced. The time spent on bereavement is dependent upon the intensity of the attachment with the bereaved and how much time was involved in anticipation of the loss. For instance, when a parent dies, the type of bereavement is dependent on the level of attachment that existed between parent and offspring and the time spent in anticipation

of the loss. This definition seems to worry more on retrospection- the time before the bereavement. However, as the focus of the study is bereavement experiences of adolescents, these dimensions will be sought in the interviews and life narratives.

In contradiction, Neimeyer, Beery, Rosenheck and Jacobs (2006) and Kirsti's (2008) definitions add that bereavement is the state of having suffered a loss. They view bereavement as a process that incorporates the period of adjustment in which the bereaved learns to live with the loss. This period of adjustment would thus include the time when one experiences grief, the time when one is mourning and time when one is in need of counselling and when counselling is subsequently rendered. All this signifies a process not just a one day event. This could be the opportune time when interventions are instituted.

Besides the above, bereavement can be expressed in culturally various acts of mourning, for example, funeral ceremonies or ritualised withdrawal from public activities. Contrary to the given definitions above that portray the negative side, bereavement also constitutes change and not loss because not all consequences are always negative (Harrison & Harrington, 2001). This view is rather progressive and futuristic in outlook as it does not only view bereavement as a negative event but as one marking future promises in life-change. Hence, when studying bereaved children's experiences it would be naive to just focus on the negative, but to be open to positives too.

Bereavement is a term used to denote the objective situation of having lost someone significant through death (Stroebe, Hansson, Stroebe & Schut, 2008). It is generally taken to include losses experienced across the life span, for example, deaths of parents, siblings, partners and friends. Corr, Nabe and Corr (2003) also suggest that bereavement is a state of being bereaved or deprived of someone or something that is valued. The three elements that constitute bereavement are: a valued relationship with some person or thing, a loss of that relationship and a survivor who is deprived of the lost person or thing. In this study, the contention is on the death of a parent or parents; hence, the study attempts to view bereavement in terms of personal relationships of the bereaved children.

From issues raised above, it can be deciphered that bereavement has a plethora of meanings. However, the underlying factor is that bereavement occurs after a loss; it results in varying levels of deprivation; it evokes responses such as grief and mourning; it can be expressed and experienced in different ways and that it is not a one day event but a process.

2.1.2 The bereavement process

Various research contributions have been made on the bereavement process. Kluber Ross (1969) was the first to conceptualise bereavement as a process. She developed a process that involves dying. Ross's process of dying suggests that grief is experienced in a fairly linear progression through various stages. The stages are: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance (Ross, 1969). At the Denial stage, the bereaved thinks that this cannot be happening. With Anger – the bereaved questions why this is happening and sometimes seeks blame. At the Bargaining stage, the bereaved thinks that if they bargain for this not to be happening they will do something in exchange. In the case of death, the bargaining is normally with God. Unlike in the other stages, in the Depression stage the bereaved person is very sad and depressed to the extent that normal functioning becomes impossible. Lastly, at the Acceptance stage, the bereaved comes to terms with the loss and begins to move on with life. This process is linear and presupposes that every bereaved person should follow a similar path when grieving. It is important to note that the grieving process has no fixed or normal timetable. Some grieve for months, while for others, it takes years. Grieving is individual and personal, and healing is gradual. It cannot be rushed (Ridenour, 2010).

However, Worden (2002), posits that bereavement is more complex and involves the following four tasks so as to break attachment bonds with the deceased: to accept reality of loss; to work through the pain of grief; to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing; to emotionally relocate to an environment in which the deceased is missing (Van Dyk, 2008). The experiences of bereavement often vary within the process. This is why one cannot assume that, bereaved school children can all be treated similarly.

During the process of bereavement, the bereaved who experience insufficient practical and informational support are prone to have more severe loss reactions, deteriorated health and problems in social functioning after the loss and vulnerable to disenfranchised grief, that is, grief that cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported (Doka, 2002). Sometimes the onset of bereavement process can even occur before the death. McCarthy (2006) cites an example of terminally ill parents, wherein children might start grieving for ailing parents before their death. These issues provide some insights into the complexity of the bereavement process and possible experiences which need to be understood if any meaningful interventions can be given to bereaved children. Thus, there is need to unpack concepts associated with the bereavement process.

2.1.3 Concepts associated with the bereavement process

Some pertinent concepts associated with the bereavement process such as loss, grief, mourning, separation, morning and mortality are discussed in this section. Emphasis is, however, placed on how these are related to bereavement experiences and how these inform the current study. The concept of loss is discussed first.

2.1.3.1 Loss

Loss is anything that destroys some aspects whether macroscopic or microscopic of life and self (Weenolsen, 1988). For example, loss can be in terms of material objects or in terms of relationships. Weenolsen (1988) asserts that loss is not change but change incorporates both loss and its overcoming. For example, when one loses a parent, change occurs in what they experience in their everyday existence. Meaning of loss differs according to the developmental stage in which it occurs. In accordance with this, the current study seeks to establish how secondary school learners experience the loss of their parents through death; the changes that occur to them due to the loss and how they overcome the challenges they face due to bereavement.

Death is viewed as the ultimate loss (Weenolsen, 1988) as there are other secondary losses that occur after the death of a parent or parents (Holland, 2001). Loss and death are

thus, metaphorically related with loss being a smaller death of self and life. According to Weenolsen (1988:24),

> Analogously, the overcoming of loss and subsequent creation of meaning is metaphorically related to the overcoming of death by the creation of ultimate meaningfulness or immortality or rebirth. In death it is the loss of meaning that we fear.

The argument is that when we encounter losses we are constantly experiencing the smaller "death of life". Weenolsen also posits that loss results in the death of one aspect of life and self and consequent recreation of other aspects.

The implication to this could be that when one experiences a loss through death, something dies in the person until one accepts the inevitability and irreversibility of the loss and reawakens, thus creating new meaning. There are various types of losses as discussed below.

2.1.3.2 Types of loss

Loss has been classified as major or minor, for example, loss of a parent and loss of earning respectively (Weenolsen, 1988). The same author further classifies loss as primary and secondary or derivative. For example, a lay off from a job is a primary loss which brings a whole train of additional losses, such as, loss of income, loss of collegial companionship, loss of self esteem, loss of structure for one's time and life, loss of the activity that distracts us from our mortality and loss of faith in the future. In the same vein, loss of a parent (primary loss) heralds other derivative or secondary losses such as loss of material support, loss of inheritance and loss of nurturing for the children (Weenolsen, 1988). There are various types of losses and issues surrounding loss as highlighted below.

2.1.3.3 Timing of loss

Loss, like other incidentals of life has timing. This aspect of loss makes clearer why a child would react in a certain way and at different developmental stages (Spiritus-temporis, 2010). For instance, on-time loss or the age by stage developmental losses, off-time losses and time-irrelevant losses. ***On-time loss or the age by stage developmental losses*** are those losses that include such normative life events as starting school, graduating, looking

for work, getting married, having a baby and death. They are life events that are expected at a certain time but the losses associated with them often come as a surprise. On the other hand***, off-time losses*** include that which are inevitable but are commonly associated with a certain stage for example loss of a daughter to leukemia in her adolescence or of a parent in childhood. These losses are more painful than on-time ones due to the fact that one questions the predictability of on-time losses. ***Time-irrelevant losses*** are the losses that may be common or uncommon but are nevertheless unexpected. For example, they are accidents, natural disasters, economic recessions, abortions, rapes and onset of rare diseases. It would be naive for the researcher to ignore trying to establish what type of losses the secondary school learners experience when their parents die.

In view of issues discussed above, although there are a multiplicity of losses in the trajectory of one's life, loss by death of a significant other appears to generate the most traumatic experiences. People's and more specifically, children's response to loss is also varied. Hence, researchers have moved away from the 'cookie cutter' views of grief, that is, people move through an orderly and predictable series of responses to loss to one that considers the wide variety of responses that are influenced by personality, family, culture, spiritual and religious beliefs and practices (Spiritus-temporis, 2010). This study attempts to identify the losses the children/adolescents incur when they are separated from their parents by death. The concept of end and separation are explained below.

2.1.4 End and separation

Parental bereavement marks an *end* to a physical relationship between parent and child and implies permanent physical *separation*. Ending a relationship, for example, through divorce, loss of a job, relocation or death, is a stressful event and leaves an individual drained psychologically, vulnerable and susceptible to abuse (McCarthy, 2006). Bonds that bind the unity are cut or severed, more so, when the relationship is shortened through death. This premature ending of a relationship puts a bereaved child at risk, as s/he may be forced to seek employment at a tender age or may also force young girls to seek early sexual debut with older men (Ardington, 2007) commonly called 'sugar-daddies' in

Zimbabwe. Mourning and grieving often follow the separation of children from their parents due to death.

2.1.5 Mourning and grief

When bereavement occurs, the bereaved person goes through a process of *mourning*. As highlighted above, the concepts bereavement, grief and mourning are synonymous to a lay person (National Cancer Institute, 2009); however, they differ. These terms are discussed below.

2.1.5.1 Grief

A key issue is that grief is a natural process of reacting psychologically, physically and sociologically both internally and externally to the perception of *loss.* Furthermore, grief is a collection of feelings and behaviour associated with the loss of a close person such as a friend or family member (Dent, 2009). This seems to partly corroborate Madison's (2009) assertion that grief can be defined as a deep mental pain or torment that is particularly applied to those who have experienced bereavement. '*Grieving*' would therefore mean the psychological component of bereavement, the feelings evoked by a significant loss, especially the suffering entailed when a loved person dies. Madison (2009), in this respect, appears to be concerned with the psychological aspect of grieving at the expense of the other dimensions mentioned by Dent. Like, Madison (2009), FHI (2009) regards grief as a normal emotional response to an event that affects a person. Hence, it would appear that as part of their grief, children experience a wide range of feelings, notwithstanding that individuals grieve differently. Their grief experiences can include anxiety, fear and guilt. It is common knowledge, and probably instinctively understood, that loss of a close attachment ushers in a period of acute grief characterised by intense emotional distress, intrusive thoughts, and withdrawal from ongoing life (Brent, Melhem, Donohoe & Walker, 2009). All these ideas point to the psychological perspective of grief.

Research suggests that "Grieving is crucial, necessary and unavoidable for successful adaptation'' (Malkinson & Witzum, 1996:155). Grief is our emotional response to an event

that affects us adversely, for example the loss of a person, thing or idea (Malunga & Chinodya, 2006). People grieve over many things such as death of a person, separation from a parent, loss of friendships, loss of an animal, environmental loss, loss through robbery, loss of a physical part of the body, loss of self esteem, divorce and loss of achievement. However, grief over the loss by death features as one of the most tormenting life experiences. Additionally, grief is the pain and the experience of bereavement. It is how people feel the loss, which affects them physically, emotionally and spiritually. Grief is our emotional response to loss, the entire range of naturally occurring human emotions that accompany loss (Muller & Thompson, 2003) and because death of a loved one is possibly the most penetrating loss an individual experiences, grief over death presents challenges to counsellors. SAT (2001) gives a summary of the feelings and experiences during bereavement. Table 2.1 shows a trajectory of possible experiences that occur during bereavement.

Table 2.1: Trajectories of possible experiences of grief

Immediate grief experiences	**Later (several months) grief experiences**	**Long term grief experiences**
Emotions Numbness Emptiness Disbelief of death Fear of being alone, need to talk about the event	Anger/guilt/sadness Depression Anxiety Feelings of going mad	Some guilt and sadness Adjustment to situation
Physical Crying/wailing Cannot eat/sleep Aches and pains	Nightmares, restlessness Withdrawal, symptoms of deceased's illness, forgetfulness	Fewer bad dreams Appetite/sleep improve Physical symptoms fade
Spiritual Blame God Questioning Lack of meaning in life Wants to die too	Questioning beliefs Spiritual confusion Lack of purpose Tries to contact deceased	Readjustment of spiritual beliefs. New direction May accept death as part of life
Tasks Accept the reality of loss	Working through feelings	Adjusting to life without the deceased and finding a place for the memories

Adapted from SAT (2001)

SAT (2001) presents grief experiences in three phases; immediately after death, several months after death and long term experiences. From this, it would appear one has to go through each phase to achieve “normalcy” of experiences, such as the ones prior to the death. Although this study does not offer the opportunity for one to gain insights into long term grief experiences it endeavours to establish the grief experiences immediately after and several months later.

Grief, according to Stroebe *et al.* (2008), is understood to be a negative affective reaction, however, it incorporates diverse psychological (cognitive, social-behavioural) and physical (physiological-somatic) manifestations. It is a complex syndrome with which a variety of symptoms may be apparent and varies from person to person, culture to culture, across the course of time even for a single grieving individual. Breen and O’Connor (2007) and Klass, Silverman and Nickman (1996) also attest to this by suggesting that grief is the blended emotional and cognitive reactions to a loss since feelings and thoughts are not separable, especially in relation to loss. As Stroebe *et al.* (2008) and Klass *et al.* (1996) suggest, grief is about construction and reconstruction of our world and of our relationships with significant others. It is an amalgam of differing feelings and thought. Furthermore, grief varies across the course of time and between cultures. As a result of the numerous definitions and interpretations of grief, counsellors find it difficult to use a standard treatment for all their clients. The manifestations of grief can be a pointer to the counsellors on which children need counselling and how they need to be assisted. Hence, the focus of this study is to establish the grief experiences of learners in secondary school and to unravel best practice in interventions and postventions.

2.1.5.2 Experiences associated with grief

Research by Lindemann (1944), Parkes (1972), Worden (1982) and Kalish (1985) culminated in identification of a panoply of experiences of grief (Littlewood, 1992). These experiences can be divided into physical sensations and health concerns, thoughts and feelings and behaviour. The physical sensations identified by Worden (1982) are as follows:

- Experiences of hollowness or tightness. Hollowness tends to be associated with stomach or abdomen and tightness with the chest and throat.
- Oversensitivity to noise
- A sense of depersonalisation in which nothing, including the self, feels real.

- Breathlessness which is often accompanied by deep sighing respirations
- Muscular weakness
- Lack of energy and fatigue
- Dry mouth (Adapted from Littlewood,1992)

When these physical sensations as identified by Worden are evident in a learner, they might impact negatively on schoolwork. For example, fatigue can result in one not concentrating and can have a ripple effect and herald other sensations such as sleep. The current study seeks to ascertain whether these sensations are a feature for the sample of bereaved learners studied.

Many studies illuminated the following range of grief experiences: shock, numbness, disbelief, anxiety, sadness, relief, meaninglessness and despair, loneliness, confusion and difficulty in concentrating, anger, guilt, preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased and events leading up to the death, yearning, sense of presence and visual and auditory hallucinations. These are coupled with the behavioural characteristics of those grieving. Behavioural characteristics identified in studies are as follows: sleep disturbances, appetite disturbances, forgetfulness, dreams, reminders of the dead person, searching/calling for the deceased, restlessness, apathy, crying, social withdrawal and substance abuse (Littlewood, 1992; SAT, 2001). These experiences are what the researcher seeks to establish.

Grief is also manifested through yearning (Shear, 2009). Yearning is a major component of grief as contrasted to depression. Shear (2009) cites that yearning is the ‘sine qua non’ of grief and is not seen in depression. Yearning can be described as the experience of wanting, a component of the brain reward system thought to be deactivated in depression. Research also revealed that sadness is not usually pervasive during grief; rather, it occurs in waves or pangs of emotion (Shear, 2009). Grief is thus not constant, but comes in flashes and disappears for a time only to resurface again. If grief is experienced in this way, it might be elusive and difficult for the teachers and other adults to track it in bereaved learners. It is necessary, therefore, for this research to delve deeper into the experiences of grief of learners so as to equip teachers and other adults with the requisite skills to help the grieving children.

Acute grief differs from depression in that it is associated with preoccupation with thoughts and memories of the deceased, while depression is associated with self-critical or pessimistic rumination (Shear, 2009). Contrastingly, even during the initial period of acute grief, bereaved people retain the ability to experience positive emotions. These positive emotions may be evoked in a bereaved person when recalling pleasant experiences with the deceased or when expressing pride in the loved one or telling amusing anecdotes (Shear, 2009). The current research is phenomenological and hence looks at experiences of bereaved children. All these experiences of grief are of great significance to the current research as researchers and counsellors alike need to take cognisance of them if meaningful assistance can be rendered to bereaved learners. Grief is manifested in various ways as discussed in the subsections below.

2.1.5.3 Anticipatory grief

Anticipatory grief is the normal mourning that occurs when a patient or a family is expecting a death. It has similar symptoms as those experienced after a death has occurred. This type of grief includes all thinking, feeling, cultural and social reactions to an expected death that are felt by the patient and family. It includes depression, extreme concern for the dying person, preparing for death and adjusting to changes caused by the death. Anticipatory grief gives people ample time to say goodbye to loved ones and the opportunity to get used to the idea that their loved one is dying (MedicineNet, 2009; Stroebe *et al.*, 2008).

Whilst the above line of thought may be true, it does not necessarily mean that the grief after death will be foregone nor that it will be less painful as there is no direct format to grieving. Expecting the loss can make the attachment even stronger. Stroebe *et al.* (2008) further state that pre-death grief is associated with psychological distress equivalent in intensity and breadth to post-death grief.

2.1.5.4 Normal grief

Normal grief is an emotional reaction to bereavement, following within expected norms given the circumstances and implications of the death (Stroebe *et al.*, 2008). However, one wonders what the expected norms are, what the duration is and what the cut off point for the intensity of grief is. This might leave the counsellor in a quandary.

2.1.5.5 Complicated grief

Stroebe *et al.* (2008:5) proffer a two pronged definition of complicated grief. They suggest that grief involves the time course or intensity of specific or general symptoms of grief and the level of impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning. This assertion suggests that complicated grief is time reliant, has a magnitude of pain above that of normal grief, makes one to lose functionality in most areas of human existence such as in interpersonal relationships at home, at work or at school. Shear in Kelly (2009:786) suggests that the key features of complicated grief include persistent intense yearning and longing for the person who died, disruptive preoccupation with thoughts and memories of this person, avoidance of reminders that the person is gone, a range of negative emotions that include deep relentless sadness, self-blame, bitterness, or anger in connection with the death, and an inability to gain satisfaction or joy through engagement in meaningful activities or relationships with significant others. Complicated grief, she points out, does not respond to standard treatment for depression and may require targeted treatment

The following types of grief are further given: chronic grief, prolonged grief, delayed grief and disenfranchised grief.

2.1.5.6 Chronic grief

Chronic grief is associated with instances in which the expected range of reactions is present but the bereaved person does not recover from them. A variant of chronic grief is mummification, which is, a process in which the world of the bereaved individual appears to be frozen in time following the death. The bereaved person feels that the dead person would reappear at a later day (Littlewood, 1992).

2.1.5.7 Prolonged grief

Prolonged grief is characterised by long lasting presence of symptoms associated with intense grief (Stroebe *et al.*, 2008:7). The same authors suggest that prolonged grief can be referred to as prolonged grief disorder (PGD) as it borders around mental disorder. It deviates from the normative response to the death of a significant other. Key to note is that it differs from normal grief in the following aspects: those with PGD are stuck in a state of chronic mourning; it is marked by intense longing and yearning for the deceased person; the bereaved feels bitter over the loss and wishes that life reverts to the time when the

bereaved was still alive, the person feels empty, one becomes alienated and socially isolated due to his/her ruminations and inability to concentrate on other issues other than their loss, one feels a part of him/her died with the deceased, one loses his/her sense of identity and is filled with suicidal ideation as they see no reason to move on with his/her life (Stroebe *et al.*, 2008). The question one might ask is: “how soon after the loss can prolonged grief disorder be diagnosed?”

Research by Priggerson *et al.* (1997) cited in Stroebe *et al.* (2008:172) indicates that negative outcomes tend to surface 13 to 23 months post-loss. These are similar to the normal grief symptoms that bereaved people experience. However, in normal grief the symptoms subside over time. Hence, according to Stroebe *et al.* (2008:172), diagnoses of prolonged grief disorder should be done six months postloss to avoid diagnosing people whose grief is likely to resolve naturally with time. In the current study, the researcher would seek to know when the bereavement occurred and take note of the type of grief the respondent is experiencing. This would help to inform counsellors on the type of intervention and postvention to be rendered to bereaved students.

2.1.5.8 Delayed, inhibited or absent grief

Delayed, inhibited or absent grief occurs when an individual shows little or no sign of grieving early on in bereavement and in the case of delayed and inhibited grief this also occurs later on (Stroebe *et al.*, 2008). In all the three cases the individual no overt symptoms are observed though they might appear or are manifested or difficulties may be apparent in terms of some ‘grief related debility or disorder’ at a later day for delayed and inhibited grief (Stroebe *et al.*, 2008:7). This may suggest that the absence of grief was indeed problematic.

2.1.5.9 Disenfranchised grief

Disenfranchised grief is the grief that people experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported (Doka, 1989:4). To buttress this, the term denotes cases where grief has gone unrecognised, is marginalised or has gone unsupported. For instance, when bereaved individuals are excluded from normative mourning and support processes. This limits their ability to acknowledge, experience and adapt to loss (Doka in Stroebe *et al.*, 2008). The concept of

disenfranchised grief recognises that societies have sets of norms, 'grieving rules', that attempt to specify who, when, where, how, how long and for whom people should grieve. True, societies have set standards of behaviour expected of their members. For example, bereaved boys would be expected to mourn the death of a parent differently from girls in the same predicament. Rhetoric may classify this as gender stereotyping, whilst in reality custodians of the society's norms may uphold it. This research attempts to unravel experiences of bereaved learners with a view of digging deeper into disenfranchised grief and subsequently proffer ways of dealing with it, especially as it affects school age children. Doka (2002:10-17) gives the following five broad types of losses that are disenfranchised: the relationship is not recognised, the loss is not acknowledged, the griever is excluded, circumstances of the death and ways individuals grieve. Grieving is often accompanied by mourning which is discussed in the following sub-section.

2.1.6 Mourning

Mourning refers to the process by which people adapt to a loss. This implies that bereavement evokes hidden (mental) and expressed (crying) feelings. The bereaved person can pass through stages in which each of these is experienced. SAT (2001) suggests that mourning is the expression of grief. Mourning also refers to the public display of grief, the social expressions or acts expressive of grief that are shaped by beliefs and practices of a given society or cultural group (Stroebe *et al.*, 2008). Grief and mourning are sometimes difficult to distinguish. For example, grief may influence mourning and mourning may influence feelings of grief. Hurd (1999) in Holland (2001) postulates that mourning depends on the child's relationship with the deceased parent, emotional availability of the surviving parent, effective communication within the family, the child's participation in the funeral and quality of the child's support network, that is, peers, school and family. Feltham and Horton (2006:382) add that "the psychological process involved in recovery is known as mourning. It is this process that can be helped by people who listen and understand in a sustained way." The people "who listen and understand in a sustained way" can refer to counsellors. This implies that with the help of counsellors (trained and untrained) the bereaved child can be helped so as to reduce risk on this child.

2.1.7 What is a population- at- risk?

The loss of a parent means the child-parent attachment is broken (Bowlby, 1969); the bereaved child feels insecure and is prone to abuse (Nattrass, 2002). Therefore, bereaved children are resultantly a "population- at- risk." Population- at- risk refers to a specific group or sub-group that is likely to be exposed or is more sensitive to a certain substance or circumstance than the general population (Module 8, 2006). For some bereaved children, psychosocial and economic circumstances increase the risk for harm.

'At risk' or 'special populations' include a diverse range of people who are regarded vulnerable to the physical and psychological effects of their circumstances (Module 8, 2006), for example, the bereaved children, children affected by war and those with disability. Parentally bereaved children have to endure social, physical and psychological effects of bereavement (Saito *et al.*, 2007). In Zimbabwe, especially in NGO circles, these children are labelled Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) to avoid the negative connotations attached to the word 'orphan' (Mawere & Mathathu, 2008). They are also sometimes referred to as a 'generation at risk' (Ritcher, 2004; Forster, Levine & Williamson, 2005). In this study, however, 'a population at risk' refers to secondary school children in Harare Metropolitan Region bereaved of one or both parents.

The loss of a parent through death or desertion is an important aspect of vulnerability (Skinner, Tsheko, Mtero-Munyati, Segwabe & Mfecane, 2006). Additional factors leading to vulnerability include severe chronic illness of a parent or caregiver, poverty, hunger, lack of access to services, inadequate clothing or shelter, overcrowding, deficient caretakers, and factors specific to the child, including disability, direct experience of physical or sexual violence, or severe chronic illness. Important questions raised in this research include the long-term implications for the child and community, and the contribution education can play in addressing the risk factors to enable the child to be optimally engaged in the activities at school.

According to UNICEF (2004), all children are vulnerable and deemed at risk by virtue of their being children. Vulnerability is inherent to childhood development. As a result, all children require reliable support systems; adults to provide for their subsistence needs and

to nurture them through their social and emotional developmental processes. With adequate nurturing in social and emotional development children have the potential to develop and launch into adulthood healthily. However, when there is a paucity of dependable adult nurturing the inherent vulnerability can become a liability as children's developmental processes are delayed and disrupted, thus exposing children to risks. In agreement to the notion above, a Chilean Sociologist Manfred Max Neef believes that deprivation of any fundamental human need, such as emotional and social needs, leads to poverty (Max-Neef & Henhayn, 1999). Thus, bereavement results in poverty.

Subbarao and Coury (2004) bring in further issues on vulnerability and risk. For example, the conjunction of different risks may trigger further vulnerability for children. Drought may increase incidence/ probability that an orphan will suffer severe malnutrition. The degree and type of vulnerability faced by children are shaped by the risk and stress characteristics (that is, magnitude, frequency, duration and history) to which they are exposed. Vulnerability is shaped by the type and level of assets possessed. Thus, an individual's level of vulnerability is determined by its risk-asset balance. Orphaned children's vulnerability is context specific and must be viewed within the socio-cultural milieu in which children live.

Furthermore, by virtue of their circumstance, orphanhood, parentally bereaved children have heightened vulnerability which calls for a multipronged policy approach that creates a room for prevention, intervention and postvention, such as government led interventions, community based involvement (Van Dyk, 2008) and especially bereavement counselling at school level (Abrams, 1999:18). Through such policies and programmes bereaved learners are helped to cope with their bereavement. Coping and resilience is dealt with in the following section.

2.1.8 Coping and resilience

Coping and resilience are significant to the study of bereaved learners. The two concepts may seem to be synonymous but should be dealt with as separate constructs. Corr, Nabe & Corr (2003) suggest that coping is the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage external and or internal demands and internal and external domains that

are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Lazarus & Folkman, 984 in Ogina, 2008). Resilience, on the other hand, is the process of overcoming the negative effects of risk exposure; coping successfully with traumatic experiences and avoiding the negative trajectories that are usually associated with risk (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005 in Ogina, 2008).

According to Ogina (2008), there are two main ways of coping, the problem-focused and emotion-focused coping styles. She posits that problem faced coping includes attempts to define a problem, generate and weigh alternate solutions and follow a plan of action to change the problematic situation. This style of coping is outward focused. Emotion-focused coping includes processes, for example, avoidance, denial, seeking emotional support and positive reappraisal; thus, it is inward focused. One would ask: “Are these coping styles commensurate with the experiences of bereaved learners in Zimbabwe secondary schools?”

It is important to note that the grieving process has no fixed or normal timetable. Some grieve for months others years. Grieving is individual and healing is gradual and cannot be rushed (Ridenour, 2010).

However, Worden (2002) posits that bereavement is more complex and involves the following four tasks so as to break attachment bonds with the deceased: to accept reality of loss; to work through the pain of grief; to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing; to emotionally relocate to an environment in which the deceased is missing (Van Dyk, 2008). The experiences of bereavement often vary within the process. This is why one cannot assume that in terms of bereaved school-age children, they can all be treated similarly.

During the process of bereavement, the bereaved who experience insufficient practical and informational support are prone to have more severe loss reactions, deteriorated health and problems in social functioning after the loss and vulnerable to disenfranchised grief, that is, grief that cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported (Doka, 2002). Sometimes the onset of bereavement process occurs before the death. Ribbens McCarthy (2006) cites the example of a terminally ill parent, and a child could

develop anticipatory grief. These issues provide some insights into the complexity of the bereavement process and possible experiences which need to be understood.

2.2 CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS' BEREAVEMENT

Age affects the way a child understands the death of a loved person, the way a child reacts to it and the kind of help the child needs (Madorin, 1999). Developmental achievements are specific to each group. Cognition, emotions and social relationships influence a child's reaction to stress and pain, such as the loss of parent. Unlike Madorin (1999), Kastenbaum (2003) contends that a child's level of maturation is a better predictor of understanding death than chronological age. He claims that one's life experience is another factor that influences a child's understanding of death. For example, children afflicted by life threatening diseases, show realistic and insightful understanding of death beyond their age. Hence, age cannot always be considered a factor in determining an adolescent's understanding of death. However, a researcher might seek to understand what this has to do with bereavement experiences. A child's experience, the child's reaction to bereavement, the meaning the adolescent attaches to the death and the interventions and postventions instituted should be in concordance with one's age and maturity level. Schultz (2000) also adds that although adolescents are influenced by similar factors as adults, the counsellor needs to help these children through the tasks of acknowledging a death, working through the pain of that death and accommodating it.

2.2.1 Adolescence and bereavement

Adolescence and bereavement are commonly viewed as stressful periods for children; as a result, bereaved children are doubly vulnerable or doubly at risk (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006). The children are considered at crossroads pertaining to their knowledge of whether they are adults or still children. This is when society's dictates contradict what their bodies tell them. The dichotomy of adult-child makes the adolescent children at risk as they may want to try out adult roles. Another dimension of adolescent development is that they also have to deal with developing sexual role identity, claiming adult privileges, achieving peer group acceptance, coming to terms with one's mortality and the fear generated by this realisation.

An additional perspective is given by Berton (1996) in Stroebe and Schut (1999) when he reveals that adolescents are vulnerable to stress due to the developmental changes they undergo such as puberty, social role redefinition, cognitive development, school transitions, emergency of sexuality, separation and individuation. Developmental stages of adolescents influence and are in turn influenced by disturbances such as parental death. One might then argue that if adolescents are prone to stress, secondary schools need to take cognisance of that and design mechanisms to assist learners who are stressed due to parental death. Furthermore, age and stage then interact with family and environmental factors to determine the bereavement process. Secondary school children are adolescents, hence; their vulnerability by age informs the researcher on how to handle them during the research and most importantly how the counsellors need to strategise in order to help them. They can have different experiences of bereavement from younger children and adults.

As adolescents are in a transitional stage of life whereby they undergo many physical, mental and emotional changes and are in a process of separating from the security of their families and establishing their own relationships with the outside world (Madorin, 1999; Ribbens McCarthy, 2006), one of the most crucial developmental achievements at this stage is to develop a personal identity: man or woman, thus developing self concept. This self concept has two components; cognitive and affective components. In the cognitive component, the adolescents gain knowledge about oneself and self awareness such as knowledge of their capacities. The affective component includes self-esteem and self assurance which influences development of sexuality and intimacy as a new area of experience (Kastenbaum, 2003). When a close person dies, destabilisation of these already confusing changes occurs and the adolescent's understanding of death may be full of conflict.

2.2.2 Adolescents' concept of death

Children's understanding of death changes as they develop as explained by Piaget's cognitive stages of development (Ginsberg & Opper, 1969). Gaining insight into children's developmental stages allows educational counsellors to predict and institute age appropriate responses.

As highlighted above, the focus of this study is on the bereaved adolescent after the death of a parent or parents; hence, the need for the researcher to establish the secondary school children or adolescents' understanding of death. Adolescents understand fully the finality and the far reaching consequences of death (Madorin, 1999). In agreement, Ribbens McCarthy (2006:43) asserts that 'teenagers certainly grieve and have the cognitive maturity to understand death." According to Piaget's developmental stages, these children fall under the concrete operations and the formal operations stages. The concrete operations stage is characterised by reduced egocentricism and improved reasoning (Webb, 2002). Death is understood as final at this stage but children refuse to think that death would happen to them (Muro & Kottman, 1995 in Spiegelberg, 2006). Due to the increased reasoning the child is able to grasp the concept that the deceased can exist in heaven and in the grave (Saravay in Webb, 2002).Piaget's formal operational stage (11-15years) involves the child acquiring logical thinking as well as the ability to deal with abstract thoughts (Webb, 2002). At this stage, because children think logically and abstractly they perceive death as universal and inevitable which causes thoughts of self mortality. After the age of fifteen, the grieving process resembles that of an adult. In contradiction, Ribbens-McCarthy (2006:43) concedes that children gain a mature concept of death between the ages of 10 and 12. However, this seems against the common practice in many societies that teenagers and other younger children are often shielded from adult experiences of death (Corr & McNeil, 1986 in Ribbens McCarthy, 2006:43). It is crucial for the researcher to capture the bereaved learners' understanding of death as this impacts either positively or negatively on their bereavement experiences. For the school to intervene and respond accordingly it needs details on the children's bereavement experiences.

It is, also however, pertinent to note that many teens try to hide their feelings and adults must be aware that the children are grieving whether or not the grief is overtly portrayed (Schuuman & Barrett-Lindholm, 2002; Ribbens-McCarthy, 2006). Even though the grief may not be externally visible, the onus is on adults to give support to the grieving child in order to facilitate better control over the grieving process. Schools should take cognisance of this and render appropriate assistance to the grieving adolescents. It is prudent that theories and models of bereavement be discussed to further clarify issues surrounding

bereavement.

2.3 THEORIES AND MODELS OF BEREAVEMENT

Reeves, Albert, Kuper & Hodges (2008:337) opine that,

> Theories provide complex and comprehensive conceptual understandings of things that cannot be pinned down: how societies work, how organizations operate, why people interact in certain ways. Theories give researchers different "lenses" through which to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on different aspects of the data and proving a framework within which to conduct their analysis.

In this research the following theories and model serve as lenses through which the phenomenon of bereavement was viewed:

2.3.1 Dual process model

The dual process model of coping with bereavement is taxonomy to describe ways in which bereaved people come to terms with the loss of a close person. It identifies two types of stressors, loss oriented and restoration oriented and a dynamic regulatory coping process of oscillation, whereby the grieving individual at times confronts and at times avoids the difficult task of grieving. This model suggests that adaptive coping is composed of confrontation and avoidance of loss and restoration stressors. It supports the notion that a bereaved person has to get through one's grief work as grieving is regarded as crucial, necessary and unavoidable for successful adaptation (Malkinson & Witzum, 1996: 155). The notion of grief as work is derived from the fact that when one is grieving, exhaustion or fatigue occurs (Scott, 2007). Figure 2.1 represents this mode.

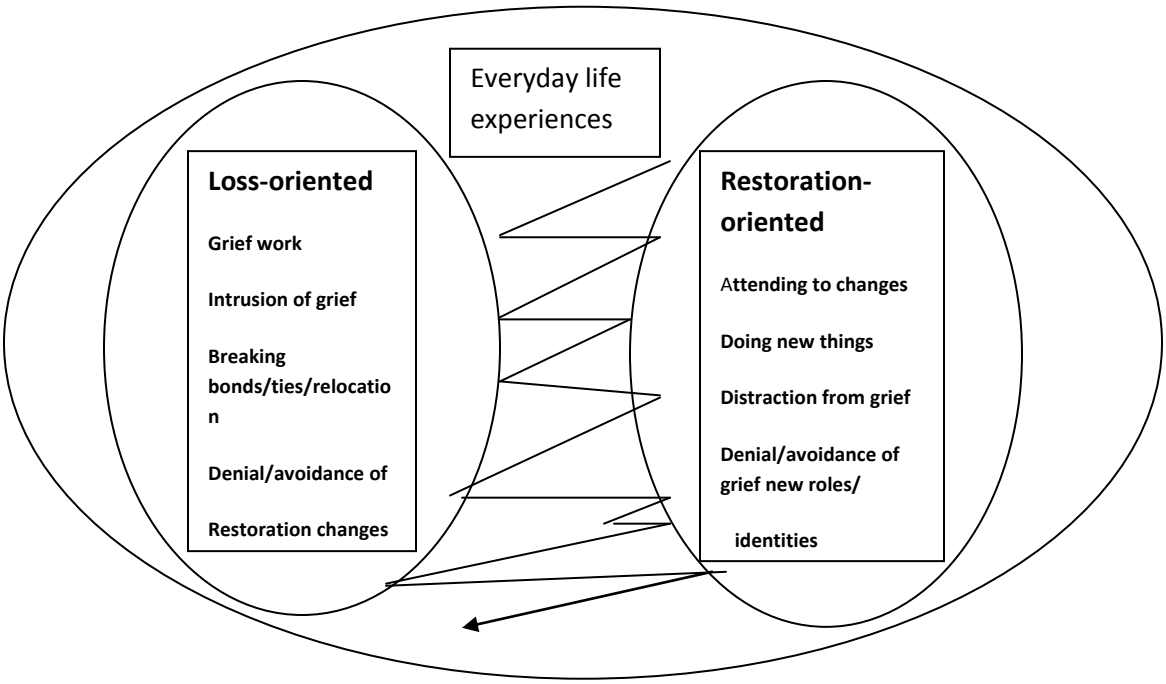

Figure 2.1: The Dual Process Model

Source: Stroebe and Schut (1999:np)

Loss-orientation refers to the concentration on and with processing of some aspect of the loss experience itself, with respect to the deceased person. It focuses on the relationship, tie or bond with the deceased, rumination about the life together with the deceased, circumstances and events surrounding the death (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Loss orientation also encompasses yearning for the deceased, for example, looking at old photographs, imagining how s/he would react when a loved one died. It involves a whole range of emotional reactions, form pleasurable to reminiscing about painful longing. Stroebe and Schut (1999) posit that during the early stage of bereavement, loss-orientation dominates but later on attention turns on to other sources of distress. The **restoration**- **orientation,** on the other hand, focuses on what needs to be dealt with, such as loneliness and how it can be avoided. When a loved one dies, there is grief for the deceased person and at the same time one has to adjust and adapt to the changes brought about due to the loss. The changes include mastering tasks formerly done by the deceased, such as, household

chores; dealing with reorganisation of life without the loved one, for instance, selling the house; and the development of a new identity, such as being an orphan. The **oscillation** refers to the alternation between loss- and restoration-oriented coping. It is the juxtaposition of confrontation and avoidance of different stressors associated with bereavement, as illustrated in Figure 2.1. At times the bereaved will be confronted by his/her loss and at other times s/he will avoid memories of and be distracted or seek relief by concentrating on other less painful things. Sometimes there will be no way of avoiding additional stressors, such as looking after siblings. As such, oscillation is a dynamic back and forth cognitive process regulating between confrontation and avoidant coping strategies. A bereaved person may take time-off, be distracted or it may be too painful to confront the situation, leading to voluntary suppression or involuntary repression (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Suppression of negative emotions sometimes causes adverse health effects, such as, high blood pressure (Horowitz, 1986). After repeated exposure and confrontation, habituation takes place and weakens reactions to the loss.

This model has practical implications to research on experiences as it suggests that a disturbance to the oscillation may result in pathological or complicated forms of grief (Parkes, 1996); the model describes male and female ways of grieving, for example bereaved mothers tend to be loss-oriented than fathers, and also cultural implications, as society expects some standard of grieving. The model provides insights into the experiences of bereaved learners, how they react to the loss and how they attempt to resolve and adapt to the loss. Bowlby's attachment theory is discussed next.

2.3.2 Bowlby's attachment theory

Bowlby's attachment model suggests that bereavement is triggered by the sense of loss that occurs when we lose something or someone to which we are attached. People make bonds with others and react strongly when those bonds are threatened or broken. Furthermore, attachments are formed to satisfy biological drives and to fulfil people's needs for security and safety. Separation or loss initiates a process of grief. The extent to which people grieve a loss depends on how attached or close they were to the person or object of their loss. Hence, the stronger the bond the more painful the loss; for example, the loss of a parent (Van Dyk, 2008; Weinstein, 2008) is a painful event.

It is also argued that the attachments one makes when young, especially with the mother, are of particular significance to one's style of mourning and grief (Weinstein, 2008). According to Yin-Lan (2008), a child develops a hierarchy of attachment relationships, first to the mother then others. Therefore, a mother is the salient attachment figure of the hierarchy and others are subsidiary attachment figures. This could imply that the death of the mother could have negative repercussions for the orphan. For this reason, a counsellor for bereaved secondary school learners has to be conversant with the bereaved child's genogram so as to establish the type of past and present attachments. The use of the systemic theory, among others, when counselling bereaved learners would be invaluable as it employs the genogram method.

2.3.3 Developmental model

The developmental perspective was developed by Stephen Flemming and Rheba Adolph in the 1980s. It utilises linkages between developmental markers and issues that are faced by adolescents who have lost a parent (Balk, 1996). This theory puts forth the notion that bereavement is handled differently by adolescents, depending on whether they are in the stage of early, middle or late adolescence (Balk, 1996). The perspective also states that adolescents, due to their life experiences and level of cognition, react differently to a number of situations than children or adults (National Cancer Institute, 2010). Both bereavement and youth can be times of major transition and significant disruption to the general flow of social life. Young people experiencing bereavement are therefore, doubly vulnerable (Harrison & Harrington, 2001). Adolescence is commonly viewed as a stressful period for children. Vulnerability to stress is attributed to developmental changes including puberty, social role redefinition, cognitive development, school transitions, the emergency of sexuality, separation and individuation (Berton, 1996 in Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Developmental stages of adolescents influence disturbances such as parental death. Furthermore, age and stage then interact with family and environmental factors to determine outcomes. Family factors would include such issues as when in the family life cycle the death occurred, nature of death, deceased person's position in the family and other social issues. Interaction of these factors results in positive or negative outcomes (Geis *et al.*, 1998 in Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

This developmental theory is relevant to this research as it focuses on establishing secondary school learner's experiences. The following issues come out of this theory:

- Individual adolescents react differently to life situations than children and adults.
- Different adolescents view bereavement differently depending on whether they are in early, middle or late adolescence.
- Both bereavement and growing up (development) are stressful times and cause disruptions in general routine of the adolescent's life; thus leading to the double vulnerability of adolescent learners. The developmental stage interacts with environmental factors to yield positive or negative responses from the adolescent learner outcomes.

This developmental theoretical perspective serves as a lens through which the researcher views and investigates the phenomenon - the adolescent learners' experiences of bereavement.

2.3.4 Life crisis theory

The second and pertinent theory for this research is Life Crisis Theory. This theory was adopted in the 1980s by Rudolph Moos and Jeanne Schaeffer. The central characteristic of the theory is "coping with crisis.'' It covers factors in person's life such as cognitive appraisal, adaptive tasks and coping skills (Balk, 1998). Adolescents who are faced with the death of a parent must initially accept the loss intellectually then integrate the loss into their worldview. The theory suggests that coping with death is not a normative life transition for adolescents (Balk, 1996). This theory relates to this research as bereavement is a life crisis that needs employment of coping mechanisms. For this research, it would be essential to establish the Harare secondary school learners' experiences of coping with bereavement.

2.3.5 Task model

This model deals with 'breaking the bonds.' It posits that a bereaved person undergoes the following four tasks: to accept reality of loss; to work through the pain of grief; to adjust to an environment in which the decision is missing; to emotionally relocate to an environment in which the decision is missing (Worden, 2002).

2.3.6 Phase model

This model is based on Kluber-Ross's work in relation to the process of dying. The model suggests that grief follows a fairly linear progression through various stages/phases: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance (Kluber-Ross, 1969).

Denial

When in denial, people often respond by being paralysed with shock or numbness. At this phase the bereaved does not comprehend that the loss is real. Denial and shock serve as protective mechanisms as they allow into the psyche only what the person can deal with. The healing process only begins when the reality of the loss is fully accepted. However, when denial wanes, the feelings that have been denied resurface (Kluber-Ross & Kessler, 2005:7). Denial and numbing thus represent efforts to avoid dealing with the bereavement, whereas intrusion and re-experiencing represent efforts to confront it (Murphy, 2000).

Anger

Anger is shown in many forms, amongst others, anger at the deceased, anger at the unexpectedness of the loss, anger at a beloved person's being hurt, anger at God and anger at being left behind. The anger is not necessarily logical or valid (Kluber-Ross & Kessler, 2005:7)

Bargaining

Bargaining occurs as an attempt to go back in time and restore loved ones. For example, the deceased tries to bargain with God if the deceased could be brought back to life in return for good behaviour by the bereaved person. Bargaining is often accompanied by guilt (Holland, 2001).

Depression

Depression is nature's way to protect the bereaved person by shutting down the nervous system so as to allow for adaptation to something difficult to understand. Depression is not a sign of mental illness; it is the appropriate response to a great loss where the person withdraws from life.

Acceptance

During this stage the bereaved person accepts the reality that the loved one is gone and recognises that the reality is the permanent reality. The bereaved person might see it fit to reorganise roles, reassign them to others or take them on himself or herself; thus, reintegration occurs. Holland (2001) refers to this phase as the resolution stage when the bereaved persons come to terms with their fate and thus complete the process of mourning (Holland, 2001; Kluber-Ross & Kessler, 2005:7). A critique of the theories and models of bereavement is discussed in the following section.

2.3.7 Comparison/critique of the theories and models of bereavement

Debates still rage on the efficacy of some of the bereavement models and theories cited above. For example, Kluber-Ross's model was described as "the best known, least understood and most misused theory about grieving" (Schuurman, 2003:3 in Scott, 2007). The justification is that she observed adults dying and not children; and therefore the model is often misapplied, also misinformed and potentially detrimental to children (Scott, 2007). Kluber-Ross's theory is presented in a linear fashion with people completing one stage before moving on to the next. McCabe (2003) claims that doing grief work means that one should "give up" what has been lost and move on. Giving up, would mean moving systematically through expected linear stages. If the moving is not timely, the conclusion is that grief work was not fully accomplished and thus could be unresolved grief or pathology. The griever or mourner is the sole focus in the stage or phase model. This inadvently means ignoring the deceased and the "self of the mourner" that may be changed. Strawn (2005) believes grief is a combination of stages and processes; grief moves unpredictably and idiosyncratically for each mourner. Hence, the generalisation of these models stress upon is unfounded. Literature also argues that past studies on childhood bereavement have failed at developing a standardised theory because some were extrapolated from adult models, such as Lindemann's (1944) model; hypothesised from attachment research (Bowlby, 1960) or taken out of context (Kluber-Ross, 1969; Scott, 2004; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007).

Walsh and McGoldrick's (2004) in Rothaupt and Becker (2007) model present no imposed expectation of fixed stages nor does it pathologise individual's unique experiences of grief.

Open communication such as sharing the grief, family involvement with the funeral and mourning rituals and expression of feelings are encouraged. There is contrast between Worden and, Walsh and McGoldrick. Whereas Worden's emphasis is on completing task for equilibrium to be regained, Walsh and McGoldrick state that equilibrium was regained by adaptation to the role changes and not trying to hold back on old structures that were now de facto and rather not making too many disruptive family life changes and to maintain family cohesion while remaining flexible enough to adapt to the family loss (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). Walsh and McGoldrick's (2004) model seems to have taken into account the rigidity in the other models and adopted a more relaxed approach.

These debates could point to the fact that in order to develop a grief theory or model, research needs to take cognisance of the griever's social context, why people grieve, nature of their reactions, how individual and social factors interact during the process of adaptation and many other cross-cutting issues on bereavement (Stroebe, Hansson, Stroebe & Schut, 2001), such as gender issues of bereavement.

2.4 GENDER ISSUES IN CHILDREN/ADOLESCENT BEREAVEMENT

There are gender issues at play in parents' mortality. Research evidence reflects that after parental death, girls carry a larger burden of domestic responsibility than their male siblings (Whiteside & Barnett, 2002), and are more often kept out of school (HIV/AIDS Assessment Team, 2001). Due to the importance of cultural expectations of male and female behaviour, girls and boys are expected to show different reactions. Strong aggressive feelings, hate and wish for revenge due to deprivation can be seen amongst boys. If it is not culturally acceptable that a boy shows his anxiety and grief, then he may show his feelings as aggression or exaggerated behaviour (Madorin, 1999). Another form of responding to shock and pain, neglect or deprivation, is expressed more by girls; it is a search for ideals, of doing good and lessening the pain of the world. Sometimes this search for ideals also makes them more vulnerable, for example, believing the words of a man that he loves her while he only wants to abuse her. This could shape the bereavement experiences of children in different circumstances.

Literature generally gives a stereotyped view of gender in the grief process (Wheeler-Roy & Amyot, 2004). According to the same authors, bereavement is viewed as gender specific. Women and men respond to bereavement differently as shown in the table 2.2:

Table 2.2: Showing gender specific responses to bereavement.

Women	Men
Women talk about their feelings of grief with little effort	Men are stoid and appear to lack feelings
Women often tell and retell their story and events to make sense of it	Men know the story is etched in their minds with no need to be reminded
Women seem to FEEL their way through grief EMOTIONS are the pilot	Men tend to THINK their way through grief, INTELLECT is the guide.
Feminine language is often described as intuitive, earthy, fluid or elusive	Masculine language is thought to be orderly, concise, controlled and goal-oriented
Women largely focus on connections and interdependence, they explore emotions.	Men focus on independence, self-reliance with external world as a priority for maintaining control
Women are encouraged to focus on affiliation, connectedness and intimacy	Men are taught to be less self-disclosing, less expressive, less interdependent
Women seek companionship to support feelings and meet intimacy needs. They find help in groups.	Men grieve on the inside and their work is more cognitive. They appreciate time alone to think it through.

Adapted from Wheeler-Roy & Amyot (2004)

The table above categorises bereavement or more specifically, grieving into two broad categories: males and females. Unlike the above categories, Doka and Martin (Klass *et al*., 1996) talk of 'transcending gender stereotypes' and describe two main styles of grieving; the intuitive griever and the instrumental griever. They also present a third type, the blended style griever. The intuitive griever is more inclined to Wheeler-Roy's categorisation of women. This griever experiences intense feelings, expressions such as crying and lamenting, mirror the griever's inner experience, prolonged periods of confusion occur, inability to concentrate, disorganisation and disorientation, physical exhaustion or anxiety result. On the other hand, the instrumental griever's experiences are similar to men's. Thinking is predominant and feelings are less intense.

School children experience bereavement differently from adults. They lack skills for understanding, coping with, and expressing what is happening with them during times of bereavement. Due to the fact that children lack these crucial skills, they often use defence mechanisms to help them recover during times of bereavement (Emswiler & Emswiler,

2000; Spiegelberg, 2006). There are three defence mechanism strategies employed by bereaved children: denial, splitting and devaluing (Emswiler & Emswiler, 2000; Bowlby in Lenhardt & McCourt, 2000).

When many children are unable to face the reality of a loss they turn to denial as a defence mechanism. Bowlby cited in Lenhardt and McCourt (2000) suggests that cognitive denial occurs when a child is aware of the loss and its details but views the loss with skepticism. On the other hand, affective denial occurs when a child accepts a loss cognitively but does not express emotions that are congruent with loss.

The second defence mechanism is splitting which occurs when children claim to be experiencing only feelings that they believe are accepted by others or that are manageable. Feelings that are unacceptable or unmanageable may be attributed to other people, toys or pets (Emswiler & Emswiler, 2000). This mechanism may be used as an avoidance tactic to avoid talking or dealing with their emotions and feelings during bereavement (Spiegelberg, 2006).

Devaluing is the third defence mechanism explored. It occurs when children pretend not to care or have emotions about a loss that has occurred in their lives (Emswiler & Emswiler, 2000). When using this defence mechanism, a child is attempting to dissociate himself or herself from the situation (Emswiler & Emswiler, 2000), which allows for the child to experience less pain. This only gives the child temporary relief as it is not indefinite. Spiegelberg (2006) posits that it is important for adults (teachers and school counsellors too) to be aware of these mechanisms so that they can help children to face the feelings and thoughts they are trying to avoid. If these feelings and thoughts are left unexplored, the child may be negatively affected by unresolved grief. Consequently, the current research will explore the experiences of the bereaved learners and probably unravel defence mechanisms employed by these children as a way of informing the counsellors on good practice in counselling them. Having explored the gender issues of bereavement, cultural issues of bereavement are discussed next.

2.5 CULTURAL ISSUES OF BEREAVEMENT

Bereavement occurs within cultures and is therefore culture bound. In support, Rosenblatt in Stroebe *et al.* (2008:594) states, “No knowledge about grief is culture free…culture creates, influences, shapes, limits and defines grieving, sometimes profoundly.” Pertinent African cultural issues that have secured a place in literature include rituals and funeral rites (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007); ancestoral worship (Stroebe *et al.*, 2008; The Encyclopedia of Death and Dying, 2011); consulting diviners or traditional healers (Gundani, 1994); superstition (Park, 2008; Ukwendu, 2011); extended family net (Drew, Foster & Chitima, 1996; Edlund & Rahman, 2004; Gombe,1986) and inheritance (Arisunta, 2010; Dube, 2008; Drew *et al.*, 1996; Gombe,1986: Kabweza, Hatugari, Hamutyinei, Hove, 1979).

Literature indicates that culture is influential in determining the usefulness and meaning of continuing bonds for parentally bereaved individuals, albeit with variations (Brewer & Sparkes, 2011). For example, Chinese and North American populations believe in continued contact with the deceased. Bereavement occurs across all ages and cultures. As such, variations occur in mourning ceremonies, traditions and behaviours to express grief. This is in accordance with cultural norms of a society (National Cancer Institute, 2009). Similarities and differences can be noted between the Chinese and African cultures highlighted above with the Japanese traditional ancestral worship ‘sosen suhal’ which ensures that bonds are maintained through rituals such as offering food to the deceased daily at a family altar (butsuman) and making yearly visits to the deceased person’s grave by both the immediate and extended families, talking to the dead person at the grave and altar, and performing Buddhist rites for the dead person for many years (Mallon, 2010).

Attitudes, beliefs and practices regarding death must be described according to myths and mysteries surrounding death within different cultures. The current study, attempts to show how culture may interact with the experience of parental death in order to help predict some long term bereavement outcomes. Hence, according to Haine, Ayers, Sandler and Wolchik (2008), counsellors should build a knowledge base regarding cultural factors related to children and families’ responses to death of a parent and how culture can influence intervention implementation and effectiveness.

2.6 PSYCHOSOCIAL (SOCIO-EMOTIONAL) CONSEQUENCES OF CHILDREN/ADOLESCENT BEREAVEMENT

2.6.1 Social consequences

Parental mortality also has consequences that affect the social life of the bereaved children. For example, studies in Zimbabwe and other African countries reveal the following: the introduction of child headed family establishments, relocation to join other families (Tahir *et al.*, 2005; Rembe, 2006); emergence of behaviour problems such as pilfering and truancy (Black, 1981); vulnerability to child physical and sexual abuse due to lack of parental protection and guidance; loss of social security and protection from stigmatisation; lack of protection from all these due to poverty (Central Statistical Office (CSO) [Zimbabwe] and Macro International Inc, 2007; Van Dyk, 2008, Bray, 2003), have earlier sexual debut than non-orphans (Tahir *et al.*, 2005) and are easy catch for terrorist recruitment (Scott Evertz in Salaam, 2005). A study in South Africa by Davids, Letlape, Magome, Makgoba, Mandivenyi, Mdwaba *et al.* (2006) revealed that children become vulnerable and at risk when compromised in terms of material things. Some turn to deviance such as running away from home and drug abuse (de Witt & Lessing, 2005). In support, Rembe (2006) indicated that bereaved children often compared life before and after the parent's death, preferring the former.

The bereaved children's social life is dismantled, resulting in loss of physical and emotional parental and or familial love and nurturance. Loss of sibling and peer friendships and extended family contact due to family fracture and relocation is imminent after a parent's death. Another loss is that of an environment for expressing emotions and processing grief (Madorin, 1999). This loss is accompanied by loss of family, community and cultural identity and stable childhood environment for healthy self-esteem development. The bereaved adolescent loses the sense of belonging. In some instances, the bereaved child loses time for leisure due to adult responsibilities of sibling and self care and sometimes a surviving ailing parent. This can alienate the bereaved child from the peer group. The concomitant loss of peer friendships has serious developmental implications. Bereaved children often

face loss of domicile, family structure and marital status for the girl child (Madorin, 1999). Wolchik, Ma, Tein and Ayers (2008:1) concur with the allegations above, and, they discovered that,

> Parental death is a traumatic event for children not only because of the actual loss of the parent but also due to the changes it causes in multiple domains of children's lives. Most researches conceptualize parental death as a series of stressors related to a decrease in economic resources, change in residence, less contact with friends and neighbours, increased responsibilities and loss of time with surviving caregiver.

In the same vein, Gertler, Levine and Ames (2004:212) opine that,

> The theoretical literature on intergenerational altruism, mutual insurance and intrahousehold allocation describes a number of pathways by which the loss of a parent might reduce the family's subsequent investments in a child's human capital. For example, lack of a parent decrease financial resources and parental involvement- two key inputs to education. … household preferences for the quality of children may change. … There may also be psychological costs associated with a recent death. … the value of a child's time may change.

This economic analysis of the losses that the child incurs after the death of a parent leads to the idea that bereavement is a multidimensional issue that might also need multifarious solutions.

Physical poverty and deprivation are some social consequences of bereavement (Abebe & Aese, 2007; Doek, Kumar, Mugawe & Tsegaye, 2009; Ritcher, 2004; Tahir *et al.*, 2005). For example, loss of parental earning capacity invariably results in dramatic changes in the family economy leading to spiralling poverty and deprivation. As a result of the above, it is not uncommon for some children to spiral into maladaptive coping mechanisms and to carry this dysfunction into their adult lives. The major maladaptive symptoms include depression and anxiety. These affect the way a child thinks and behaves and often translate into suicide ideation, delinquency, truancy, school dropout, promiscuity, criminal behaviour and substance abuse (Tahir *et al.*, 2005). Children living in crisis are at high risk due to the extreme environmental pressures to which they are exposed (Central Statistical Office (CSO) [Zimbabwe] and Macro International Inc, 2007). Unresolved complicated grief, ongoing fear, uncertainty about their future and lack of hopefulness and poverty all contribute to the development of these disorders. These children are at risk of living lives plagued by a deep rooted sadness and an underlying fear and distrust of the world and others.

Another social consequence highlighted in literature is self-destructiveness. This can be another answer to accumulated losses and hopeless deprivations. Self-destructive behaviour may appear as actions taking high-risk, or as rebellion against figures of authority, as refusal to go to school, as drugs and alcohol abuse, as abuse of one's own body (prostitution) or as a career in criminal activities (Madorin, 1999). The worst outcome, of course, will be the attempt to take one's own life – suicide. Suicidal thoughts are often expressed by adolescents of both sexes when talking to somebody they know and trust, but they are often hidden from family members. Self-destruction can be seen as an attempt to escape reality.

Lack of psychosocial support for orphaned children leads to secondary social problems such as: corrosion of culture; lack of parenting skills and mentors; dysfunctional society; breakdown of civil society; jeopardizing years of investment in national development and loss of security and stability at a nation level (Saito, Monash, Keogh, Dhlembeu, Bergua & Mafico, 2007).

Currently, Zimbabwe is embroiled in a humanitarian catastrophe in which nearly one in four children's fundamental human needs are at risk of not being met adequately enough to ensure healthy development. There is the emergence of the anomalous and now insidious "child headed households" which are perhaps the most tragic of oxymorons of contemporary Zimbabwe. In a 1997 study, Forster *et al.* in Tsegaye (2009) found out that 3% of households in Zimbabwe were headed by children aged 18 or below. This was also confirmed by Rusakaniko *et al.* that, in 2000, USAID estimated that there were over 40 000 children living in child headed households in Zimbabwe (Rusakaniko, Chingono, Mahati, Mupambireyi & Chandiwana, 2006). The heads of these homes, predominantly girls under 15, invariably leave school in order to provide for their siblings, marry young and further perpetuate the circuitous nature of children caught in critical life situations (Saito *et al.*, 2007).

Many children whose families have disintegrated, upon finding themselves on the brink of social and emotional poverty, choose to join the urban drift in search of alternative "family"

structures. Numbers of children living or working on the streets increased from 12 000 in 2002 to 92 000 in 2003, in Zimbabwe (Forster, Levine & Williamson, 2005).

The effects of AIDS on families and children are in themselves devastating, but for Zimbabwean children, there are numerous additional stressors to contend with (Saito *et al.*, 2007). These include food insecurity, drought, unemployment, a derelict health and social service delivery system, the rapid demise of schools through the loss of teachers and basic school supplies and one of the highest inflation rates in the world. All these may have psychological consequences on bereaved learners.

2.6.2 Psychological consequences

Children also experience psychological consequences of parental bereavement. In support, (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006) opines that 50-60% of children bereaved of a parent show distress and depressive symptoms and these persist over time. Apart from mental distress, Gwandure (2007) goes further to suggest that bereaved children have low cognition on numeracy and spelling, especially when parents are terminally ill, because they will be experiencing anticipatory grief. Self esteem and motivation may be lowered (Rembe, 2006). Post-traumatic stress disorder, uncontrolled defiance, aggression and suicidal ideation are some of the impacts of bereavement on bereaved children (de Witt & Lessing, 2005; Ndetei, Khasakhala, Seedat, Syanda, Ongecha-Owuor, Kokonya & Mutiso, 2008).

Psychosomatic complaints are also very common in this group. "Psychosomatic symptoms" are symptoms related to the body and expressed by the body, but caused by psychological stress. Symptoms will usually disappear to the same degree that the psychological stress will diminish (Madorin, 1999). A study by Cluver and Gardner (2007) on the psychological well-being of children orphaned by AIDS in Cape Town, South Africa, indicates that orphans were more likely to have difficulty in concentrating and report somatic symptoms. However, in the study there was no evidence of conduct or behavioural problems amongst orphans. Evidence also shows that bereaved children often experienced nightmares. This is one defining symptom of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Yule, 2001). These reactions could have been related to a number of stressors such as, the death of a parent from AIDS,

caring for the terminally ill parent and watching the parent's death in degrading circumstances. This situation can be traumatic for the children.

Within the group studied more orphans (45%) than non-orphans (13%) suffered from nightmares all the time. These researchers used quantitative methods and statistical analysis. It would be interesting to investigate if similar findings could be unravelled using qualitative methods. To cap on this, some non-controlled studies in rural Zimbabwe reported anxiety, fear, stigmatisation, depression and stress as evident in orphans (Foster, Makufa, Drew, Mashumba & Kambeu, 1997). Another study affirming this was carried out by Nampanya-Serpell (1998) who used structured interviews with families of rural and urban Zambian orphans, and found emotional disturbance related to separation from siblings and increased family size. Volle *et al.* (2002) also interviewed 788 orphans in Zambia. 89% reported unhappiness, and 19% running away from their new homes. Makaya *et al.* (2002), used clinical interviews with 354 Congolese orphans, and found 20% were experiencing psychological difficulties, including depression, anxiety and irritability (34%), fugue, offending and hyperactivity (27%), and PTSD (39%).

Bereavement, while a normal part of life for human beings, carries high risk factors when no support is available. Severe reactions to loss may spill over into familial relations and cause trauma for the bereaved. Many forms of what is termed 'mental illness' have loss as their root and aetiology (Grief summary, 2010). Implications to this are that if psychological effects of bereavement are not handled ardently and urgently the bereaved person may suffer from a mental illness; depression is cited as an example. Kelly (2009), in agreement to this, says a parent's death highly increases the risk for depression for children, adolescents and young adults. University of Pittsburg's Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic researchers reported that 10% of bereaved youth compared with 2% of non-bereaved youth suffered from depression after a loss. They further stated that those who continued to be depressed nine months after the loss are likely to continue to suffer from depression during the second year after the loss (Kelly, 2009). The same researchers postulate that these data confirm the existence of a 'window of opportunity' in the period soon after a parent's death when appropriate intervention might be most effective at preventing long term depression in young people who have suffered a loss of a parent.

The cause of parental death has a bearing on depression levels. Higher incidence of depression occurs when parental loss is due to suicide and accidental loss (Kelly, 2009). Another research was carried out by Brent *et al.* in Shear (2009) on 154 bereaved children (7-25 years) versus 100 matched controls with two living parents in order to establish their incidence of depression. The bereaved children had lost a parent due to suicide, accident or sudden natural death 9-21 months prior to the research. The research revealed that risk for onset of depression increased after about 9 months with children whose parents died by accident or natural death. However, depression continued to soar until 24 months in those whose parents died by suicide (Shear, 2009). This has implications to bereavement counselling as the counsellor has to be aware of the cause of death in order to avoid triggering further depression.

Pfeffer, Karus, Siegel and Jiang's (2000) study on stress depressive symptoms on 38 children found that a third of them suffered symptoms of the major depressive disorder 2 months after parental death from varied causes, such as, cancer, cardiopulmonary stress, stroke or accident and these symptoms lasted 14 months after the parental death. Pfeffer *et al* (2000), however, differentiates between grief following anticipated deaths from cancer, for example, and grief following unexpected or violent forms of parental death, such as, suicide. Pfeffer *et al.* (2000) focused on 64 child survivors of parental death due to cancer and 16 children of parents who died of suicide. The subjects completed a self–report questionnaire (Children's Depression Inventory) within 18 months of the death. The other findings were that although all children's grief from all forms of parental death is characterised by symptoms of depression, there are additional reactive symptoms following sudden death, particularly by suicide. These symptoms include severe anxiety, hyper-arousal and intrusive thoughts within the first year after parental death. In corroboration, Brown (1999) and Worden (2003) posit that bereavement is especially difficult when death was sudden or violent.

Brent *et al.* in Shear (2009) also posit that apart from depression, bereaved children suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and intense grief. These are pathological symptoms that need prompt intervention or postvention as bereavement support becomes difficult if PTSD is not treated (Stroebe *et al.*, 2008). Other studies on bereavement corroborate the assertions stated above and further extend them. For example, Donnelly and Connon (2003) point out that the impact of trauma on children can be so strong that

emotions and thoughts about the event can remain vivid for years after the event and threat has passed. The researchers stress that if the trauma remains unresolved or is not fully understood by the grieving children, “it interferes with normal grief process, engenders secondary difficulties and increases the period of distress” (Donnelly & Connon, 2003:5). A study on families of fire-fighters who died on September 11, 2001, revealed that bereavement and trauma were intertwined, and hence needed to be addressed simultaneously (Christ, 2005). Monroe (2001) added another dimension that bereaved children are bound to return to bereavement issues and loss repeatedly overtime and their resolution of grief depends on their life trajectories before and after the death and the functioning level of the surviving parent. For example, children with poorly surviving parents showed more anxiety and depression as well as sleep and health problems and hence, the need to provide parents with a supportive relationship (Worden, 2003). Sometimes, bereaved children encounter behavioural challenges.

2.7 BEHAVIOURAL CONSEQUENCES

Social theorists speculate the likelihood that the social upheaval caused by AIDS may well lead to Anomie (Durkheim). Anomie is described as lawlessness especially in a youth culture as a result of breakdown of societal norms and mores which lead to extreme feelings of isolation and alienation (Wikipedia, 2009). Durkheim, a sociologist who studied youth cultures with a view to trying to understand juvenile delinquency argued that social forces caused crime. For Durkheim anomie (without law) was a consequence of sudden disturbances, crisis or rapid change in societies. In these conditions he believed society becomes unable to exercise a regulating influence on behaviour (Wikipedia, 2009). The possibility of this in a parentless society, where children are bereft of healthy social and emotional nurturance is high. Behavioural consequences also include dreams, sleep disturbances and substance abuse. Holland (2001:413) suggests that children sometimes “‘cope’ in negative ways” insinuating the taking of substances could be one example. In agreement, Fauth, Thompson and Penny (2009) found that some bereaved young people turned to substance abuse to help them cope with their loss. Cobe in Williams and Merten (2009:69) brings out another dimension that boys are more likely to use humour or to “disengage via substance abuse.” This research sought to unravel whether these

behavioural consequences were exhibited by parentally bereaved learners. Educational experiences are discussed next.

2.8 EDUCATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

During the illness or after the loss of a parent adolescents may have difficulties of concentration. The decreased ability to concentrate is often caused by the long duration of a difficult situation and/or the intrusion of painful memories and sadness. In addition, the children fear to lose all they have struggled for during so many years. Their vision for a better future is under threat. They may appear distracted, restless and unable to focus and complete their schoolwork. Consequently, school performance may decline (Subbarao & Coury, 2004). Furthermore, many adolescents may express a deep pessimism and cynicism about their future life; however, many also appear to have kept alive their dreams in spite of the grim reality of their situation. Such a pessimistic outlook may be part of a general depression or it may be a realistic assessment of the situation in which they find themselves.

Parental death sometimes affects bereaved children's schooling. In support of this notion, a study in Zimbabwe exposed that 98% of guidance and counselling teachers interviewed agreed that bereavement has negative impact on school performance (HIV/AIDS in Education Assessment Team, 2001). Studies also revealed that children drop out of school to fend for siblings, to look after the remaining parent and to seek employment (Gilborn *et al.*, 2006; Sengendo & Nambi, 1997; Dewagtand & Connoly, 2008). A study carried out in South Africa showed that when a mother died, the bereaved children dropped out of school to take more domestic chores to replace her labour (Whiteside & Barnett, 2002). When parents die, school attendance becomes less frequent, progression rates are erratic and the bereaved children's academic attainment and performance drop (Mpasi, 2004; Ritcher, 2004; Subbarao & Coury, 2004; Tahir, 2005; Maphosa *et al.*, 2007). In Zimbabwe, a study by SAFAIDS (2009) confirms the adverse impact of bereavement by stating that the dropout rate among orphans and other vulnerable children was higher at secondary school level due to lack of parental support and lower financial support from donors. It was also

this study's concern to investigate the children's bereavement experiences to establish if similar occurrences are a feature in their lives.

Research has found education to be a key need for orphaned adolescents. A study in Zimbabwe using data from a household survey involving more than 14 000 children younger than the age of 16 analysed the completion rates from primary school in relation to orphans' household circumstances. The study found that the greater the number of years it is since the mother died, the smaller the chance that a young man or woman will have completed school. It was also established in the study that double orphans have the greatest risk of dropping out of school. In Tanzania, the school attendance rate for non-orphans who live with at least one parent is 71% compared to 52% for double orphans. The study was based on household surveys and did not include those living on the street or in institutions; hence, it probably underestimates the impact of orphanhood on child well-being. Children living in households headed by relatives fare worse than those living with parental heads, and those living in households headed by non-relatives fair worse still. In another study of child-headed households, one-third of the school-aged children had dropped out of school, especially those in secondary school. "If my mother was alive, maybe I would have finished my schooling," said Timothy, age 20 (Ruland, Finger, Williamson, Tahir, Savariaud, Shweitzer & Shears, 2005).

Children who suffer from emotional exhaustion and stress seldom function well in school. Learning requires emotional energy which many children affected by AIDS (CABA) do not posses. To this end, together with the multitude of other challenges facing these vulnerable children they are at risk of under functioning in the classroom and eventually failing or dropping out of school (Ruland *et al.*, 2005). The above negative impact of bereavement on education highlights the need for greater understanding of bereaved children's experiences to help them cope with bereavement. Interventions of varied nature would need to be instituted.

2.9 INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS WHO SUFFER BEREAVEMENT

Given the complexity of the situation bereaved learners are thrown into after the death of their parents, different intervention and postvention programs exist for them. Stortz (2007)

suggests that these programmes include socioeconomic and psychological support. Bereaved children can be offered economic support such as being loaned initial capital to start small businesses to aid them financially. This has been found to yield positive results (Abebe & Aese, 2007 in Stortz, 2007).

Community capacity building is another intervention that has been adopted to alleviate the plight of bereaved children. Research claims that Africans showed a preference for community based care as it kept the orphans within their clan and village in line with their collectivist perspective to life (Beard, 2005 in Stortz, 2007). This endeavour may include formulation of orphan committees and volunteers, who identify, assist and monitor the orphans in their village.

Psychosocial intervention is the third initiative implemented to assist the bereaved children through the multiplicity of challenges they face. The interventions cited by Stortz (2007) include counselling, leadership opportunities, self-discovery, trust-building activities, support groups, reaction and bonding with other orphaned children, getting meals, therapeutic play, therapeutic art, children's story books and memory boxes or books. The goal of this type of support is to build self efficacy and interpersonal skills for working through guilt and grief (UNAIDS, 2001). Of concern to this research, however, is how the counselling intervention of bereaved learners is instituted at school level.

2.10 REFLECTIONS ON AND CRITICISMS OF THE CHILDREN/ADOLESCENT BEREAVEMENT LITERATURE

Some gaps and silences were noted in the literature presented in this chapter. For example, the theories in the literature seem to be tailored and fashioned with the Western bereaved individual in mind as the research participants from whose findings the theories were produced were from the West. This raises a critical question on how representative the theories are for other cultural groups other than the Western cultures who may view bereavement from a divergent perspective.

This review noted some silences and gaps in bereavement literature. For example, literature does not portray experiences of people being possessed by deceased family

members and appeasing spirits of the dead as revealed in Table 5.1. Neither does literature reveal how difficult it is to access psychologically related information from bereaved children, nor does it go into detail to emphasise the great role played by the extended family net in counselling bereaved children. Emphasis is given on provision of physical and social support by the extended family at the expense of psycho-support; however, the intra support appears to be ignored. This would call for more research on this aspect of children's bereavement. It might appear that what Freud (1917) yearned for all those years back – healing of the inner self – has not been fully embraced. However, the debate rages on as the need for more understanding of the bereavement experiences continues to be explored. This research endeavours to contribute to that too, albeit in a small way. Research literature on bereavement experiences of children in Zimbabwe is limited and seems to be concentrated in NGO documents probably as a way to get information to justify their budgets. For this reason, this dearth in bereavement literature needs to be redressed through research.

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter addressed a variety of fundamental issues about bereavement. The conceptual framework was presented as a way of clarifying key concepts in the area of bereavement. Theories and models relating to how children experienced bereavement were also explored together with literature on consequences of bereavement (social, psychological, educational, and physical). The next chapter is a continuation of literature review, however, with emphasis on school bereavement counselling.

CHAPTER THREE:

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

SCHOOL COUNSELLING AND ISSUES IN CHILDREN/ADOLESCENT BEREAVEMENT

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the second part of literature review. The first part dealt with literature pertaining to the concept of bereavement. Concepts discussed were notions of bereavement, population at risk, loss, grief, mourning, end, separation, morbidity and mortality. The current chapter will cover the aspect of counselling as it relates to bereavement. Key ideas to be discussed are as follows: the notion of school counseling as a postvention strategy, approaches to school counselling, the school counselling process, school counselling as a component in the curriculum, literature on existing counselling programmes in schools in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, models of bereavement counselling, challenges to counselling bereaved individuals, strategies to effective counselling of bereaved children/adolescents, ethical issues in counselling bereaved children reflections on and criticisms of the literature. It is imperative that the chapter begins with unpacking the concept of school counselling.

3.1 SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN PERSPECTIVE

3.1.1 The notion of school counselling as a postvention strategy

Postvention is an intervention rendered after a profound loss such as death of a parent. School counselling, as a postvention strategy, includes all the activities and support that help with the traumatic after effects among survivors of profound loss experiences (Corr & Balk, 1996), for instance, the provision of basic food, clothing and counselling. The main goal of postvention programmes is maximising resilience and reducing risks and to change a situation that is risky and 'disruptive to the extent that one cannot continue through the normal passage of life ...without stress, dissatisfaction or unhappiness' (Connect Module 1, 2004:5). Situations such as these, invite organisations such as schools, to implement

postvention plans to assist children at risk (Auman, 2007). Thus, school counselling is a component in the wide ranging postvention activities.

3.1.2 Rationale for postvention

According to Auman (2007:34), it is important that the bereaved children get "bereavement support so they can learn and grow in an environment that provides stability, meets their need for solace and understanding and provides measures for their psychological health and wellbeing". Postvention, thus, helps children to work through their grief so that they can cope with other pressures such as school work. Auman (2007) also cites the school as the first place where the behavioural and emotional problems of orphans are often exhibited. Other positive views on postvention are that it affords one the opportunity for re-evaluation of the loss and some even gain new strengths and insights from life before and be propelled into a forward looking present (Meiche, 2008). Postvention's primary purpose is the prevention and de-escalation of problems and it focuses on enabling the child to develop self esteem and the internal resources to cope with difficulties more effectively and it also includes remediation of mental health symptoms and problems. This calls for educators' support and the need for them to be trained to identify bereaved children's postvention needs.

3.1.3 School counselling as Postvention strategy

Counselling is a structured conversation between a counsellor and one or more clients that assists the client to work through particular problems he or she faces (SAT, 2001). It can be defined as a process that involves an interpersonal relationship between someone actively seeking help and someone willing to assist. Counselling, thus, gives people the opportunity to be heard, gives them time to talk, cry, shout or think (Dent, 2004). School counselling is one of the postvention strategies that can be employed to alleviate the plight of bereaved secondary school children. Black's (2005) research in America suggests that a school must create a support team mandated to deal with grieving children. The team would meet four times a year to review methods of supporting bereaved children at different ages and developmental stages, promote bereavement education for staff, identify bereaved children

and refer them to the school nurse (school counsellor for Zimbabwe). The nurse (counsellor) would then assess the bereaved child's family to determine how the child can be assisted (Auman, 2007).

Furthermore, of key importance is that researchers and school counsellors acknowledge parentally bereaved children's strengths as well as risk factors. Both these inform the strategies and interventions used in school counselling programs. School counsellors must be aware of and bolster grieving children's positive development as this helps them to cope with grief (Eppler, 2008). Counsellors would need to be conversant with approaches to counselling bereaved children.

3.2 APPROACHES TO COUNSELLING

Lapan, Gysbers and Sun's (1997) study on counselling programs in schools showed correlational evidence of effectiveness of fully implemented school counselling programs on high school learner's academic success. This is also corroborated in a study by Carey, Dimmitt, Hatch, Lapan and Whiston (2008) who found that best practices from high school counsellors raised college going rates in the USA and also that schools had documented implementation policies and approaches to follow.

Approaches to counselling are varied as is presented in literature. For example, Pattison and Harris (2006:101) classified the approaches as encompassing listening attentively and patiently, perceiving difficulties from the individual's point of view, helping people to see things more clearly, possibly from different perspectives, reducing confusion and facilitating choice and change. Individual focus is an approach that helps people to explore life and feelings, examine behaviour and difficult situations enforce people to initiate change and explore options and advice giving, guiding and providing direction. They viewed this as a Western type of approach.

Another approach revealed by Pattison and Harris (2006) is the collectivism focus with emphasis on group counselling of people presenting a similar problem. Counselling in other contexts involves giving "advice and guidance… enabling, facilitating, planning, organizing, motivating, educating training" (Naidoo & Sehoto, 2002; Nolte, 2001; Pattison, 2003; Trivasse, 2002 in Pattison & Harris, 2006:101) and in some African countries, "healing"

(Naidoo & Sehoto, 2002 in Pattison & Harris, 2006:101). However, no two cases may be identical; hence, this approach can be used to deal with the general issues surrounding the problem. A more functional approach would probably be taking an eclectic focus and integrating the two approaches to create one that takes advantage of both.

Schools are considered to "provide safe haven for newly bereaved children whereby the familiar daily routine of school life serves as a shelter from the turbulent and unfamiliar events that tend to follow tragedy" (Wells in Braund & Rose, 2001:66). These authors also posit that time constraints and lack of confidence to deal with bereavement make many teachers ambivalent on which approach to take when faced with bereaved learners. Hence, there is need to seek ways of equipping teachers with the skills to deal with bereavement.

3.3 THE SCHOOL COUNSELLING PROCESS

According to the Connecticut School Counsellor Association (2001), the school counselling process should be firmly grounded on well synchronised key foundations: planning; provisioning, monitoring and evaluation. This association advocates for four major processes in the school counselling programme, that is, curriculum, individual planning, responsive services and systems support (Connecticut School Counsellor Association, 2001:17). This is in tandem to the components proposed in the Southington Public Schools (2011) advocate for the same programmes; however, the latter gave details of the processes. Curriculum should consist of the structured developmental experiences that are presented to learners systematically through classroom and group activities; individual planning should consist of activities that assist each learner to interrogate his/her education, personal goals career and plans; responsive services are in reaction to needs and concerns of individual learners and may require individual or group counselling, information dissemination, crisis intervention, consultation or referrals, system support activities include programme development, programme evaluation and assessment, parent education, materials development, community relations and support for administrators.

3.4 SCHOOL COUNSELLING AS A COMPONENT OF THE CURRICULUM

There seems to be a lot of debate regarding whether or not loss education or death education should be included in the school curriculum. Literature on this and other issues pertaining to school bereavement counselling will be discussed below.

3.4.1 Literature on existing counselling programmes in schools internationally

Before delving into the specific study context, it would be befitting to have a general view of literature and researches done internationally. In Western societies, death has become 'professionalised' (Ribbens McCarthy, 2006). People die in hospitals and taken to the morgue before children have the opportunity to bid their farewells to the dead. In terms of bereavement literature, it leaves crevices in the bereaved children's lives; grief is deferred. It is in this 'cold' scenario that the bereaved child and the counsellor have to operate.

Internationally, in the United States of America, it is the responsibility of the school nurse to provide counselling support to students (Auman, 2002; Fox & Butler, 2009; Lohan, 2006). In the United Kingdom, some schools have policies on how to deal with bereavement from the time they come back to school after bereavement as stipulated in the Department for Education and Skills policies (Pattison & Harris, 2006). However, the school based counselling service is still "patchy" (Polat in Fox & Butler, 2009:95). The same is the case in countries like Finland, where legislation was passed on school counselling systems. For example, the Basic Education Act 1998 states that every student must receive school counselling services. All school counsellors in Finland should have a teaching certificate and a master's degree in a specific subject and a specialised certificate in school counselling (Wikipedia, 2009). However, as the same author contends, in Japan, school counsellors were introduced in the 1990s and often on a part-time basis especially to assist with behavioural issues. Hong Kong, like Japan, experiences a major flaw in implementing counselling due to lack of trained counsellors in grief work (Yuen, Chan, Lau, Gysbers & Shear, 2007). These systems are different and can even produce markedly different results.

In Ireland, however, a study carried by McGovern & Barry (2000), found that death was a taboo subject and teachers and parents were uncomfortable discussing it with children. These researchers recommended the need for death education and for grief to be integrated into the school curriculum in Ireland to help teachers and students to understand the impact of death in the lives of learners. It would help to array disasters as when a child is made to make a Mother's Day card. As Tracey (2006:143) puts it, it is "your worst nightmare when your mother is dead." Tracey & Holland (2008:264) made recommendations that schools need community links to help support learners after bereavement; due to the training gap they identified, schools need awareness raising training in-service courses to develop skills and confidence of staff in handling bereaved learners, need to develop clear policies to avoid pupils "slipping through the net" and finally inclusion of loss education in the curriculum as a proactive way to help children gain "understanding of loss as a life experience and so be better placed to cope with life." Children also seem to support the inclusion of death education in the curriculum. This was established in a survey carried out by Jackson and Colwell (2001) on 14 and 15 year olds. They found that most young people asked thought death education should be taught from primary school and should be across the curriculum rather than as a special subject. However, Ribbens McCarthy (2006) opines that the idea is noble when the method of teaching is not fraught with controversy. An example cited was that of learners who were asked to make their own wills and design their own coffins as part of death education.

3.4.2 Literature on existing counselling programmes in schools in Africa

In Nigeria, counselling exists in some high schools beginning from as early as 1959. In federally funded secondary schools, there are professionally trained school counsellors but in many cases there are teachers appointed as career masters/ mistresses often with teaching and other responsibilities (Wikipedia, 2009). However, Aluede, Adomeh & Afen-Akpaida (2004) in Wikipedia (2009:np) cited that in Nigeria, there was overreliance on textbooks from the USA and proposed the need for home grown counselling practices that take cognisance of "a whole school approach and lessen the focus on individual approaches and honour the traditional African world view that values the family and community's roles in decision-making as a paramount for effective decision-making in

schools". In Gambia too, school counselling was a common feature as the Department of State Education set up a Guidance and Counselling Unit as a mitigatory measure for the reduction of child abuse, HIV/AIDS and sexual health education and counselling. Their school counselling adopted a child centred relationship approach that includes visits to parents, work with police, social services and help children to access financial support, give advice and guidance and monitor behaviour and attendance (Pattison, 2009). This approach seemed embracive of many stakeholders in children's issues. As shown by the length of this section, literature was rather limited and this probably justifies the relevance of the current study. The next section discusses existing literature on school counselling programmes in Zimbabwe.

3.4.3 Literature on existing counselling programmes in schools in Zimbabwe

School Guidance and Counselling (SGC) was introduced in Zimbabwe in 1988 (Chipenyu, 2007:3) and was "geared towards assisting learners integrate their academic, social, career and personal growth in order to enhance student performance and maximise their ability to make a meaningful society." Chipenyu also contends that despite the introduction of School Guidance and Counselling in 1988, it was only accepted in principle, but the implementation was not given due attention. The Nziramasanga Commission (1999) also attested to this by stating that non-examinable subjects, such as Guidance and Counselling were not taught effectively as they were regarded inferior to examinable ones by teachers and administration. The commission then recommended that implementation be improved through the monitoring of District Education Officers and school heads. It also recommended that it be offered at all levels of the Education system. Despite SGC having been introduced in 1988, Chireshe's (2006) study on an assessment of the effectiveness of SGC services in Zimbabwe secondary schools pointed to the need for clear implementation strategies. Another study in 2010, also reported that "despite circulars from Head office, implementation of Guidance and Counselling syllabus is patchy." The same study also brought out that there were no teacher's colleges that were training Guidance and Counselling teachers per se, though some zealous teachers were getting counselling training from CONNECT, CONTACT and the Zimbabwe Open University. This provided them with the general counselling skills of which bereavement counselling is a topic.

Literature also revealed that in Zimbabwe, the focus on children with special needs seems to focus on hearing, visual, cognitive and physical impairment (Chitiyo *et al.*, 2008) ignoring orphans and other vulnerable children. The counselling programmes in Zimbabwe are said to be *ad hoc* and respond to crises (Rembe, 2006). Thus, the programmes tend to be reactive rather than proactive. The policy framework of school counselling in Zimbabwe will be dealt with next.

3.5 POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL COUNSELLING

As the reasearcher could not locate any policy specifically designed for bereavement counselling, it was necessary to contend with policies for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children. The school counselling policy is informed by national policies, some of which are highlighted in the following sections.

3.5.1 Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy (ZNOCP)

This policy is premised on the UN Convention on the Rights of the child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) whose key principles are:

> ***The best interests of the child-*** *Article 3 (UNCRC) Article IV (African Charter)*
> *This policy is based on the belief that in all matters pertaining to orphans the best interests of the particular child shall prevail.*
> ***Survival and Development-*** *Article 6 (UNCRC) Article V (African Charter)*
> *Every child has the right to life and state parties have an obligation to ensure the orphan child's survival and development.*
> ***Participation-*** *Articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 (UNCRC) Article VII, VIII (African Charter)*
> *Orphans must be allowed, where possible, to express their opinions about issues pertaining to themselves and they must be given the opportunity to associate with others.*
> ***Protection of a child without family-*** *Article 20 (UNCRC) Article IV (African Charter)*
> *The government of Zimbabwe as a state party to the UN Convention agreed to provide special protection for a child deprived of family environment and to ensure that appropriate alternative family care is provided where need dictates.*

(Adapted from **Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare Zimbabwe, (n.d.): 6-7)**

The ZNOCP above was translated into the National Plan of Action (NPA) discussed below.

3.5.2 National Plan of Action

NPA's aim was to reach out to all orphans and other vulnerable children with basic social services that impact positively on their lives. Of significance to this study is the NPA's stance (similar to NOCP) of increasing child participation, increasing school retention and strengthening existing programmes for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) (Dhlembeu & Mayanga, 2006). Though vaguely put, it can be deciphered that the school policies on orphans are in synchrony with the dictates of NPA. The National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children Phase II launched on September 27, 2011, through the Child Protection fund comes in the heel of the now dubbed NPA I, in retrospect, highlighted above (The National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children Phase II, 2011). This initiative, sponsored by the Government of Zimbabwe in conjunction with donors, is a cash transfer programme that endeavours to cushion the OVCs. Its interventions include cash transfers to the poorest families, that is, child headed families, grandparent headed families, those with chronically ill members and those with members living with disability, education assistance through Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), and child protection service delivery for child survivors of abuse, violence and exploitation. Although the plans above seem to be sensitive to the experiences of OVCs and reflect efforts being done by the government of Zimbabwe and its partners in alleviating their plight, they seem to be silent on the counselling intervention of orphans and other vulnerable children. Below is the discussion on the Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture's policies on orphaned children.

3.5.3 Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture's policy on orphaned children

The Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (MoESAC) in Zimbabwe drew its policy on OVCs from the UNCRC and the National policies highlighted above. MoESAC Director's Minute states that schools should be centres of "Care and Support" for children and should thus be "child friendly schools" (Director's Minute No... of 2006 dated 9 May 2008:1). This is in concordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and The African Charter that the Zimbabwean Government ratified. According to the same document in article 2.4, child friendly schools should be gender sensitive or girl friendly and

'orphan and vulnerable' child friendly. These specifications are rather hazy and are subject to various interpretations. Different schools may interpret the contents of the document differently. It appears there could be lack of congruency in the institutionalisation of the directive by schools since the document allows each school to deal with the problem of orphans autonomously. While these measures are vital, they do not specifically address experiences linked to the children's ways of coping with bereavement following the parent's death. This study will, therefore, seek to unravel what the situation in Zimbabwe is like pertaining to counselling of bereaved children.

Specifications translated from national policies in Zimbabwe are highlighted in Secondary School Guidance and Counselling syllabi (Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture Guidance and Counselling Syllabus, 2007).

3.6 MODELS OF BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING

There are a plethora of counselling models to which counsellors are aligned. Some of these are discussed below.

3.6.1 Psychoanalytic model

Grief, according to Freud (1961:255) in Littlewood (1992) is "each single one of the memories and situations of expectancy which demonstrates the libido's attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists." The loss implied by Freud was oedipal loss (loss of attachment) to the parent. He posited that grief frees the ego- "where it was, ego be." According to Freud, mourning implies painful dejection over the loss whereby the mourner's outside interests cease to exist. The bereaved person loses the capacity to love; general activity is inhibited and preoccupied with the deceased. In addition, the psychodynamic model postulates that grief work marks the extrication of ties that bind the bereaved's internal arrangement to the deceased (Klass et al, 1996). It is apparent that the psychoanalytic theory concentrates on the intra-psychic agents of bereavement. This model sounds rather extremist and concentrating on intra-psychic alone

precludes other social factors. It may be viewed in relation to other contemporary models such as the Roger's person centred model that is discussed below.

3.6.2 Roger's person centred model

This model is also referred to as the client-centred therapy or the Rogerian psychotherapy (Wikipedia, 2008). Mulhauser (2010) posits that the Roger's person-centred approach views the client as their own best authority on their own experience. It also views the client as being fully capable of fulfilling their own potential for growth. However, it recognises, that achieving potential requires favourable conditions and that under adverse conditions, individuals may well not grow and develop in the ways that they otherwise could. In particular, when individuals are denied acceptance and positive regard from others or when that positive regard is made conditional upon the individual behaving in a particular way, they may begin to lose touch with what their own experience means for them, and their innate tendency to grow in a direction consistent with that meaning may be stifled.

Taking into account that every individual has the internal resources they need for growth, person-centred counselling aims to provide three 'core conditions': unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence/genuineness which help create a conducive atmosphere for growth and therapeutic change to occur. The counsellor's role is that of a facilitator. This model has however, been criticised for lack of structure.

3.6.3 Gestalt model

The Gestalt model is a conceptual and methodological base from which counsellors can craft their practice. It emphasises personal responsibility and focuses on the individual's experience at the present moment (Wikipedia, 2008). Essentially, the model focuses on process (What is actually happening) rather than content (What is being talked about). Emphasis is what is thought and felt at the present moment, rather than on what was, might be, could be, should have been (no psychological baggage carried forward). In Gestalt therapy, the client learns to become aware of what they are doing and how they can change. However, it seems to neglect history and that might mean ignoring past bereavement experiences that have a hold on the present. It would be useful for a school

counsellor to probably use this model in conjunction with other models that encompass the past.

3.6.4 Meaning reconstruction and reauthoring life narratives

This model is premised in constructivism and suggests that grieving entails reconstructing a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss. Grief is not just a symptom to overcome but a process of "meaning reconstruction" (O'Connor, 2001 in APA 2010). The death of a loved one, in meaning reconstruction, inspires a more profound perception of one's own existence. Bereavement is, thus, seen as a vehicle for personal appraisal and subsequent growth (Strobe *et al.*, 2001). Similarly, Walter (1996) opines that the purpose of grief is the construction of a durable biography that enables the bereaved person to integrate the memory of the dead into their ongoing lives. Meaning reconstruction appreciates the relevance of continuing bonds with the ones we have lost and reappraises grieving as a "potentially adaptive or even transforming process" not just symptomatic suffering (Neimeyer, 2001). This model considers communication with the deceased not pathological but a ritual for celebrating the loved one. In agreement, Strobe *et al.* (2001) opine that retelling a story of loss uncovers its significance and is central to grieving. In this research, storytelling will be used as a phenomenological tool to uncover the participants' life story and at the same time serve as a counselling tool.

The justification for meaning-making is that human beings are by nature 'hard wired' to impose order on random events and try to establish patterns in the world around and within them (Payne *et al.*, 2002). These authors further stress that human beings are condemned to meaning. Through beliefs, critical meaning making can be either enhanced or hindered. Some beliefs enable (positive) or restrict constructive engagement with life (pathological). Reactions to bereavement would therefore need to be closely explored to establish how the parentally bereaved children try to establish meaning in their situation. Meaning making would thus, occur within not only the bereaved child's immediate family context, but a wide cultural context (Encyclopedia of Death & Dying, 2011).

There are, however, three types of narrative disruptions that can work against meaning-making:

> disorganised narratives and the loss of coherence (e.g., trauma)
> dissociated narratives, silent stories (e.g., incest, suicide)
> dominant narratives and stories that constrict (e.g., depression)
> (Neimeyer in Payne *et al*., 2002).

Thus, when bereaved people encounter these different narratives, meaning making can be hampered. Further justification for meaning making is that when dealing with traumatic situations, such as death, the realm of thought or meaning surfaces. This issue of meaning then becomes a central tenet when a significant other such as a parent dies. The bereaved child would begin searching for answers on what the death means and what life without the deceased would mean (Encyclopedia of Death & Dying, 2011).

3.6.5 Continuing Bonds

Continuing bonds imply that the bereaved maintains links with the deceased; the bonds are not severed as opposed to Freud and Bowlby's theories that suggest decarthesis – the severance of ties with the dead. This may be in tandem with many cultures around the world that believe there are links between those alive and the dead (Baxter & Stuart, 1999). Unlike Freud and Bowlby, Klass *et al*. (1996), Holland (2001) and Mallon (2010) identify the key reason of grieving as the need to establish and maintain continuing bonds with the deceased or absent person. This is appropriately buttressed by Klass *et al.* (1996: 22) when they challenge

> … the idea that the purpose of grief is to sever the bonds with the deceased in order for the survivor to be free to make new attachments and to construct a new identity. The resolution of grief involves continuing bonds that survivors maintain with the deceased and that these continuing bonds can be a healthy part of the survivor's ongoing life.

This theory is valuable when assisting bereaved children. It helps the counsellors to appreciate the bereaved children's actions and guides them to identify strategies appropriate for the children.

3.6.6 Systemic theory of bereavement counselling

The systemic theory is premised on the assertion that no one part can be seen in isolation, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Systems are highly organised and conservative. As such, relationships within them remain consistent over time. In systemic counselling behaviour is best understood as a circular rather than a linear process. All elements are interdependent, interrelated and co-ordinated as one cannot change one part without impacting on the other (Weinstein, 2008). Systemic thinking is interested in interaction, relationship, in context, more than one person unit, reciprocal influence, process, pattern and integrative or holistic affairs (Corey, 2005). As such, when bereavement occurs all systems around are consequently affected. For example, when a parent dies, children will be affected. A counsellor would need to ascertain the systems around a bereaved child in order to facilitate interventions (Corey, 2005). This theory points to the use of the genogram method (CONNECT Module 1, 2004). A genogram is a family tree that includes three or more generations and records family relationships and events, such as deaths and births. The genogram, thus, would assist the counsellor in capturing the relationships that a client has or had with the deceased parent and the other systems around him/her. This would become a pedestal from which counselling would be launched.

Although the theories discussed above are relevant and have informed counselling practice of bereaved individuals, Levers (2006) in Ross and Deverell (2010:307) expresses dissatisfaction with their use on Africans and posits that,

> While well intentioned, Euro-American donor organizations, for the most part, have failed to perceive, understand, appreciate and engage the cosmological, ontological and epistemological differences that separate Euro-American and African medical and cultural understandings….

This implies that the models are not grounded in African traditional values and may ignore some of the intricate details that are held dear by Africans. There is, therefore, need for culturally sensitive and appropriate counselling. Levers in Ross and Deverell (2010:237) conceptualises an African model of counselling “that does not rely exclusively on British, European or American models but which draws on indigenous best practices and indigenous knowledge and culture from the African continent.”

3.7 CHALLENGES TO COUNSELLING BEREAVED INDIVIDUALS

Counsellors face a plethora of challenges in implementing school bereavement counselling. Some of the challenges are discussed below.

3.7.1 Ambiguous role definition

The school based counsellor's role is not clearly defined in most setups and has three main domains: academic, career and personal/social. This is evidenced by the American Counselling Association (1999) in Free Library.com (2010) which suggests that, in America, the school based counsellors provide individual counselling, conduct classroom guidance interventions, consult with parents, be developmental specialists in the school and be mental health specialists in the school, among other roles. The current research will seek to verify these facts with regards to the Zimbabwean context, hence, the inclusion of the school counsellors in the sample of respondents.

3.7.2 Increasingly diverse student populations

Due to migration, student populations are increasingly becoming diverse in schools. Lee, (2001) in Free Library.com (2010) refers to this as the changing demographics of society. This further implies different cultures in the schools. The counsellor, thus, faces major differences in those who seek counselling. This scenario demands the counsellor to be culturally versatile (Lee, 2001) in Free Library.com (2010) so as to be effective in dealing with children's needs.

3.7.3 Succumbing to triggers

School counsellors and teachers often succumb to triggers which are a result of their past experiences. Capewell and Beattie (1996:51) refer to this as transference, a form of projection in which feelings from the past are unconsciously awoken within the listener. Thus, in the researcher's view, the pupil's loss can destabilise the teacher involved in

support since carers of bereaved children are more open to having their own existential fears triggered. Prior knowledge of triggers equips counsellors to be on guard and to derole each time they enter into sessions with clients. Failure to derole can affect the counselling process retrogressively. Counsellors can succumb to stress and other psychosomatic symptoms.

3.7.4 Time

Individual counselling requires many sessions (Child & Family Centre, 2007; CONNECT 1, 2004) as a result the counsellor needs a lot of time to deal with each individual case. This might cause conflict in time allocation.

3.7.5 Heavy caseloads

School counsellors are inundated with heavy caseloads (Lohan, 2006; Van Dyk, 2008) as their client base is huge. It is not only bounded by the school fence but goes beyond to include parents, teachers, caregivers and other community members. Counsellors may suffer from burnout (Van Dyk, 2008). Because of bereavement overload due to HIV and AIDS, many orphaned children are referred for counselling in schools as such schools offering counselling services are overstretched beyond their capacity. Service delivery can be compromised by the heavy caseloads in a bid to save time. For example, a counsellor can fail to give proper diagnoses. One wonders whether this situation pertains in the secondary schools in Harare.

3.7.6 Overwhelmed by case

Van Dyk (2008) contends that counsellors and educators are sometimes not prepared for the deaths of parents. In a study by Van Dyk, counsellors commented that, “They were not used to the client’s, school child’s or student’s parents dying” Van Dyk (2008:315).

3.7.7 Conflict with caregivers

Counsellors can encounter resistance from caregivers especially in abusive homes. Caregivers who are abusive would try to cover up their actions by being vindictive towards

the counsellor as they feel that their actions are being monitored (CONNECT Module 2, 2004).

3.7.8 Lack of qualified manpower/ lack of capacity

Literature highlights major concerns in lack of capacity in schools with regards to counselling service provision. Suggestions are that teachers are ill-equipped to deal with loss (Reid, 2002) and at the same time lack training on dealing with grief issues (Lohan, 2006). To redress the situation, schools need to have clear policies on how to effectively deal with the counselling of bereaved children. Furthermore, as Yates, Clinton and Hart (1996) put it, teachers in initial and continuing training need training in counselling. In Zimbabwe Teacher's colleges, programmes are in place to train teachers in initial training for some basic counselling techniques (Morgan ZINTEC Teacher's College Syllabus for Life Skills Education, 2009). However, it is mostly aligned to HIV and AIDS counselling.

3.7.9 Lack of school and classroom policy on bereavement counselling services

There seems to be a general view that some schools do not have school policies. In a study by Yates *et al.* (1996), 70% of surveyed teachers had no policy on discussing loss and death in classrooms. When confronted by a bereaved child, the teacher would be in a quandary. Resources are needed to empower the teacher so that the bereaved child can be assisted.

3.8 STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVE COUNSELLING OF BEREAVED CHILDREN/ADOLESCENTS

According to Payne, Jarrett, Wiles and Field (2002), the main counselling strategies employed by the practice counsellors with the bereaved have been divided into eight themes. These are:

1. Discovering family structures and relationships

The study by Payne *et al.* (2002) reported that counsellors employed the discovering family structures and relationships strategy to assist bereaved people. Nine (31%) of the

counsellors described counselling strategies aimed at eliciting an understanding of family structure and dynamics, especially evidence of previous losses.

2. Letters and pictures

Another frequently reported strategy employed by the counsellors when working with the bereaved, involved the use of writing and looking at pictures or diagrams. Fourteen (48%) counsellors mentioned the use of writing in their counselling such as writing a book about the deceased for the grandchildren, keeping a journal or listing emotions. The most frequently reported technique was asking the bereaved client to write letters, both to the deceased and to others such as the counsellor (Payne *et al.*, 2002).

3. Saying goodbye and unfinished business

Facilitating the closure of the relationship with the deceased was seen as a high priority by ten (34.5%) of the 29 counsellors who indicated that they worked with bereaved clients on issues of saying goodbye and unfinished business. Seven of the counsellors commented that not having had the opportunity to say goodbye (perhaps by not attending the funeral) or having things left unsaid (perhaps by not being with the person prior to or during their death) was an issue for bereaved clients. The strategies the counsellors used to facilitate closure were writing a letter and visualisation/empty-chair techniques. Only one counsellor described telling bereaved clients that they did not have to say goodbye completely and that they could keep a bit of the deceased with them, ask questions of them and talk to them (Payne *et al.*, 2002).

4. Information and advice

Ten (35%) of the 29 counsellors saw their role as providing advice and information to bereaved clients or support and help during the acquisition of new skills. The areas covered included: information on grieving patterns, acquisition of social skills, giving specific information or advice and giving practical help. In a few instances, counsellors reported that they felt advice giving was inappropriate and that their role was to listen to the client (Payne *et al.*, 2002).

5. Listening and allowing the client to talk

Active listening and encouraging the client to talk was a frequently mentioned counselling strategy. Twenty (69%) of the counsellors discussed this in their interviews. Almost half (14; 48%) of the counsellors indicated that they believed it was therapeutic to talk about the deceased, the funeral, the death itself and associated issues. They described how clients wished to talk and/or how it was beneficial, and that they encouraged, helped or gave permission to the client to talk. Moreover, eight of the counsellors indicated that the counselling session provided the client with the opportunity and time to talk about the deceased and related issues (Payne *et al.*, 2002).

6. Telling stories

A specific counselling strategy employed with bereaved clients and described by six of the counsellors in Payne *et al.'s* (2002) study involved getting the client to tell their story. This included whatever the client wished to present and might start from their childhood or more recently. Four of these counsellors described examining the story for patterns and differences in terms of events and evidence of how the client coped before their bereavement. In particular, the opportunity was provided for the clients to explain the death, the funeral and related events. This would imply that counselling of bereaved children in schools demands that they be given space and opportunity to talk about their bereavement.

In a study by (Payne *et al.*, 2002) on counselling strategies used for bereaved people it was found that while most counsellors used a stage model of bereavement to understand the loss process when clients were referred, they did not necessarily use these models in working with clients. These data highlight that while some counsellors stated that they explicitly employed and demonstrated to their clients during counselling how their grieving might progress, others felt this was inappropriate. That it is useful to identify normal stages for clients featured in interviews from eight (28%) counsellors, while in three interviews it was reported as not helpful. Counsellors often used the concept of being stuck in a stage, to refer to instances where clients were not progressing through bereavement in a way that was perceived as 'normal.' Counsellors drew on a variety of broad conceptual approaches

including person-centred, psychodynamic and non-directive counselling. A key objective of this research was to understand children's bereavement experiences with the aim of seeing how best they can be counselled in schools. Whatever model is recommended for counselling bereaved children, such as Figure 6.2, should encompass the divergent nature of children's responses to bereavement and the need for a multi-dimensional model of counselling. Ethical issues in bereavement counselling will be discussed next.

3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES IN COUNSELLING THE BEREAVED CHILDREN

Just like researchers, a school counsellor also faces many ethical dilemmas partly because some of the clients are minors. As minors, there are many interested parties: learners, parents, guardians, teachers, staff and school administration (Free Library.com, 2010), notwithstanding the out of school systems, such as the state, church, community and voluntary organisations. Each party has its own expectations and boundaries of the role of the counsellor and if these are not met the counsellor may be deemed to be crossing ethical lines. For example, in America, the counsellor is bound by ethics of federal, state and school policies and it is mandatory for all counsellors to be affiliated to American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) (Hernandez, 2010). A counsellor may cross ethical boundaries trying to adhere to ethics. An example can be when a counsellor has to consider student confidentiality behind the backdrop that every counselling case has to be reported (CONNECT Module 1, 2004). It is a sticky situation for the counsellor and calls for training in the initial and continuing teacher training. In agreement, Herlihy, Gray and McCollum (2002:55) contend that

> School counsellors deal routinely with complicated situations in which students have acute counselling needs, including cases of severe depression, suicidal ideation, pregnancy, substance abuse, school violence and child abuse. To respond to these needs, counsellors must have both strong clinical skills and a keen awareness of the legal and ethical ramifications of any actions they may take or fail to take.

This could imply that whatever action the counsellor takes he/she must take cognisance of the ethical issues around it. However, this problem can be compounded by the fact that over and above gazette ethical standards, there might be other ethical issues and standards that are context specific with culture and other statutory laws playing a part in influencing them. Hence, there is need for schools to make an assessment of cultural and

ethical issues that either impair or promote their counselling service provision. Having explored the literature on counselling of bereaved children, reflections and criticisms of the literature will be discussed as a way of highlighting the gaps in the literature.

3.10 REFLECTIONS ON AND CRITICISMS OF THE LITERATURE

It would appear that documented literature on school bereavement counselling in Africa is a rarity compared to the abundant literature on initiatives in Western countries or other developed countries, such as, Britain, Canada, United States of America, Australia and Japan. This reflects paucity in literature which this research seeks to redress, albeit in its small way. Literature on school counselling in Zimbabwe reflects that the services are *ad hoc* and patchy. This could imply that the policies outlined above are inadequate and that there might be no clearly laid out models to guide schools in rendering bereavement counselling intervention and postvention support.

3.11 CONCLUSION

Issues discussed in this chapter include the conceptual framework to help unpack concepts on bereavement school counselling. Theories on counselling, postvention strategies and challenges encountered by counsellors in their work were also explored to form a foundation for implications for best practice in counselling that is presented in chapter 6. The next chapter deals with the methodology adopted for this research.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter departs from the literature review presented in Chapters 2 to 3 and explores the methodological orientation and paradigm in which this research is located. The research procedure is elucidated and its appropriateness discussed. Outline of the chapter is as follows: Research orientation; research design; case selection; gaining access to participants; data collection; data analysis techniques; issues of research rigour; ethical considerations and methodological challenges.

4.1 RESEARCH ORIENTATION

This research is located in the qualitative approach and aims to describe and understand in a subjective manner the qualitative nature of a phenomenon (bereavement) rather than to explain it in terms of the laws of cause and effect as adopted in quantitative research (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1999). Qualitative research provides depth to research on a phenomenon of bereavement and is suited to revealing unique meanings that underlie each bereaved person's experience (Stroebe, Stroebe & Schut, 2003). It is the researcher's prerogative to decide on the research paradigm to situate the study in tandem with the ontology, epistemology and methodology. The orientation exposé focuses on the research paradigm and in particular the interpretivist paradigm.

4.1.1 Research paradigm

A paradigm is a cluster of beliefs and practices associated with a particular worldview about how scientific practice should take place (Becker & Bryman, 2004:401). It also refers to philosophical frameworks that guide the researchers in carrying out their research (Gibbons & Sanderson, 2002:5). Paradigms are also viewed as the all encompassing systems of interrelated practices and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their inquiry

along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology. “Ontology specifies the nature of reality that is to be studied and what is to be known; epistemology specifies the nature of the relation between the researcher (knower) and what can be known and methodology specifies how the researcher may go about practically studying whatever he or she believes can be known” (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:18). In other words, as Ching (2008:1) reiterated, “each paradigm can be thought of as a different set of binoculars through which a practitioner views and works within the field. Each paradigm is grounded in a particular set of generally accepted approaches regarding ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology.” For example, ontologically, interpretivism grants that social reality is a result of interactions between actors in real social contexts and that reality of the social world resides in the minds of the social actors; thus, a researcher can get information from participants through questioning them. Hence, this study sought to find out more from participants about bereavement. This helped the researcher to make claims about knowledge on participants’ bereavement experiences (ontology), decisions on how we know it (epistemology), what values go into it (axiology), how we write it (rhetoric) and the processes for studying it (methodology) (Creswell, 2003).

There are a plethora of research paradigms that can be used in studies. However, it is the researcher’s prerogative to select the paradigm that is dictated to by the researcher’s orientation or the research question that he or she poses in the study. For the current research, I resorted to the use of the interpretivist research paradigm as it provides best fit of the phenomenon being studied bereavement experiences. The justification for my use of the interpretivist paradigm is discussed next.

4.1.2 Interpretivist Research Paradigm

The interpretivist research paradigm strives to understand and describe human nature. In this paradigm, knowledge is subjective and idiographic because what counts as truth is context dependent, unlike natural sciences that look for consistencies in data in order to deduce laws (nomothetic) (Gray, 2005). There are, therefore, multiple realities, which are constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Research designs or strategies in the interpretive approach are usually qualitative, phenomenological, case studies, ethnographic and naturalistic (Polit & Hungler, 1997). Thus, data gathering is achieved through interviews,

participant observation, diaries, pictures, and documents. This is in contrast, for instance, to a positivist approach, which emphasises precise, measurable and verifiable observations as truth (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Gephart, 1999).

Epistemologically, a qualitative researcher assumes that the knower and the known are interdependent and that research is subjective and for the social world, can only be understood by occupying the frame of reference of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Krauss (2005:759) asserts that epistemology poses the following key questions "What is the relationship between the knower and what is known? How do we know what we know? What counts as knowledge?" These questions have methodological and ontological implications.

Ontologically, interpretivists assume that reality is socially constructed and fluid and what we know is always negotiated within cultures, social settings and relationships with other people (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The interpretivist paradigm looks at the social world from a subjective viewpoint and places emphasis in the "subjective consciousness" (Ching, 2008). Axiologically, the interpretive researcher "seeks to understand values, beliefs and meanings of phenomena, obtaining *verstehen* (a deep and sympathetic understanding) of human cultural activities and experiences" (Kim, 2003:10). The epistemology and ontology explained above were the keystones of my methodological decisions. Methodology refers to the practices and strategies used to acquire knowledge of a phenomenon (Krauss, 2005).

I am guided by the interpretivist paradigm for this study because the phenomenon of "bereavement experience" is not an entity that can be known and described as a static event; neither can it be measured separately from the researcher and the participants. The researcher, thus, joins the participants in this search for the reality of bereavement experience that can only be known in the "realm of the knower" (Smith, 1983:46). The complexity of the social world of bereaved school-age individuals is acknowledged, as Smith noted, and is too complex for laws of causality. The interpretivist paradigm allows such flexibility of shaping the research as it develops.

When a researcher works within the interpretivist paradigm, she or he can be transcendental: that is, able to disclose her or his own model of the phenomenon that she or he is investigating in order to form a new perspective (Maree, 2007). The key issue in this research is how I, as the researcher, view reality and how I can come to "know" a social and emotional phenomenon termed: *bereavement experience*. As a qualitative researcher, I am at liberty to give my personal view on issues pertaining to the study (Krauss, 2005). Hence, personally, I view bereavement as a complex, multi-layered, phenomenon. I take note of the fact that there are behaviours that can be observed and noted, but there is another level of experience that only a person living in that situation can describe and explain. In this sense, I strove to give the bereaved learners a voice by capturing their verbatim accounts so that they could bring out their lived experiences in their own words.

Given the need for disclosure of intimate life experiences in this type of research (Ribbens-McCarthy, 2006), it was deemed necessary to use qualitative research techniques in general and a *phenomenological case study design* in particular. Before delving into the details of the design, however, one would ask: "What is phenomenology?" It would be apt to first unpack the term to help in its conceptualisation.

4.2 PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY DESIGN

4.2.1 Conceptualisation of the term 'phenomenology

This section serves to introduce the term 'phenomenology' and some concepts surrounding it that were used in the study. Phenomenology has its origins in Husserl's philosophy. For Husserl, phenomenology is a discipline that describes "what is given to us in experience without obscuring preconceptions or hypothetical speculations: his motto was 'to the things themselves' rather than to the prefabricated conceptions put in their place." Husserl's phenomenology is transcendental because it adheres to what can be discovered through reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlates (Moustakas, 1994:26). According to this statement, Husserl posits that the only things we truly know are the things that appear to us in our consciousness. These can be known by the researcher through use of

questioning and other methods that draw responses from both the conscious and the sub-conscious, for example, interviews.

As this research adopts phenomenology as its guiding methodological philosophy, it is sound to first unpack what phenomenology is. From an etymological perspective, phenomenology is rooted in two Greek words *phainomenon* (an appearance) and *logos* (reason or word). Phenomenology is thus a reasoned inquiry (Stewart and Mickunas 1974: 3). It is therefore, a reasoned inquiry that aims to discover the inherent "essences of appearances". In phenomenology "an appearance is anything of which one is conscious" and anything that appears to consciousness is deemed a legitimate area for philosophical investigation and thus is researchable. However, one might question: *What are essences?* Essences or *Eideia* are ontological concepts that are reached after a phenomenological reduction. According to Husserl an essence "is the entire or part of the what of the real individual as abstracted from its instantiations or embodiments in real existence and as determined to be invariant amidst imaginative variations". In this case, essences are dependent on reality as perceived and interpreted by an individual's mind. To add to this, Wiersma (2000:238) posits that "the phenomenological approach emphasises that meaning of reality is in the eyes and minds of the beholders, the way the individuals being studied perceive their experience". This is in tandem with this research as it is concerned with the phenomena of bereaved children's experiences as perceived by the bereaved children themselves.

In the same vein, Lester (1999) suggests that:

> Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches are based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As such they are powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom.

The citation above implies that phenomenology is the descriptive study of how individuals experience a phenomenon from their own perspective and therefore is fraught with subjectivity as opposed to the objectivity inherent in quantitative research.

Phenomenology is about descriptions of experiences not explanations or analysis. In Husserl's view, one can achieve pure and absolute transcendental ego (totally unbiased) without presupposition (Suter, 2006), using the first person reports. As a qualitative researcher, I also reported the research process in the first person narrative in tandem with the position stated above. Husserl terms this phenomenological epoche. This view calls for "bracketing" by the researcher so as to set aside prejudgements and prevailing understanding of phenomena (Moustakas, 1994) and "let the phenomena speak for themselves unadulterated by our preconceptions" (Gray, 2005:21) to allow it to show itself so that new meanings can emerge. Once the researcher's attitude and 'current understandings' (Gray, 2005) are 'bracketed', one can experience noema (external perception) and noesis (Internal perception). Noema is that which is experienced and noesis is the way in which it is experienced (Moustakas, 1994). This process yields rich narrative descriptions of phenomenon to arrive at a deeper understanding and broader descriptions of phenomena. In other words, phenomenological epoche is obtained through "phenomenological reduction". Phenomenological reduction is the process of continually identifying one's presupposition about the nature of the phenomenon as it is. Researcher introspection (reflexivity) is, thus, necessary in all stages of the phenomenological study. It would also be naïve to ignore the intersubjectivity that permeates the whole phenomenological research. In line with this, Levering (2006) contends that the story is up to the research object whilst the analysis and theorising is up to the researcher, hence, the two cannot be separated in the creation of the shared meaning. The shared meaning is also a result of the context.

All phenomenological methods have a similarity; they "stress the need or establish foundations for exploring human subjectivity" (Arfken, 2006:38). However, there are other views on phenomenology that counter and in some instances extend Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. For example, existential phenomenology is interested in understanding the actuality of being, the whole person's existence not just consciousness like what Husserl stated. On the other hand, Hermeneutic phenomenology does not attempt to start from an absolute zero point of presuppositionless knowing but aims to interpret meanings which lie beyond descriptive phenomena. Heidegger viewed pure descriptions as limited in their ability to reveal meaning (Osborne, 1994). Hence, in this research I decided to lean more on Hermeneutic or Interpretive phenomenology as it goes

beyond Husserl's stand on descriptions, to discover meanings. Some key differences between transcendental phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology are that: whereas transcendental phenomenology strives to develop a rigorous description of essential features of consciousness of human experience to avoid the prejudices that result from interpreting phenomena, interpretive phenomenology is mainly concerned with interpretation so as to reveal "that which shows itself in itself, the manifest" (Arfken, 2006:38). Thus, from the children's life stories I aimed to capture the phenomenon of bereavement, let it reveal itself in itself and providing interpretations.

Bearing in mind the stance I took of looking for not only descriptions in data but meanings too, I felt obliged to ask the foundational question in phenomenology, which is: "*What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon by an individual or by many individuals*?" (Patton, 2002:np). Responses to this question draw the researcher to gain access to an individual's 'life-worlds', which is their world of experience, where their consciousness exists.

In summary, the phenomenological epistemology is grounded in the following beliefs that:

- The world is socially constructed and subjective.
- The researcher is part to what is being researched.
- Science is driven by human interests.
- The researcher focuses on meanings, tries to find what is happening.
- The researcher constructs theories and models from the data (inductive approach). (Adapted from Gray, 2005: 46)

The above epistemological positioning had implications on how I conducted the research. It implies use of a qualitative phenomenological case study that allows the researcher to get at the inner experience of participants to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture and to discover meanings rather than test variables (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

4.2.2 Phenomenological case study design

The phenomenological case study design fits best with the research approach adopted in this study, especially, that the purpose is that of investigating *experiences* of bereavement. This allowed me, the researcher, to understand the particular phenomenon (O'Leary, 2004), in this case, secondary school learners' bereavement experiences post death of

parents. Ribbens-McCarthy (2006) supports the notion of carrying out an in-depth qualitative study in order to 'hear more' and understand young people's experiences of bereavement.

Bereavement is a lived experience. As indicated above, Husserl's theory of lived experiences is within the phenomenological approach to the study of experience (Smith, 2008). The phenomenological approach is geared on intentionality as a central structure of conscious experience and considers meaning a key mechanism in the construction of such experience (Smith, 2008:2). This is often described as 'aboutness' and consciousness is always about something and is revealed by consciousness in perception, memory, retention, protention and signification (Waters, 2010). This approach asserts that our conscious experience is directed toward 'intends' or represents things through particular concepts, thoughts, ideas, images, among others, and that it is these that make up the meaning or content of a given experience (Husserl, 1989; Smith, 2007). Husserl (1989) and Ponty's (1996) 'lived experience' model of phenomenology exemplified this approach and thus is key in a phenomenological design.

There are assumptions that guide how a phenomenological research should be conducted. Wiersma (2000) provided the guide:

1. A priori assumptions regarding the phenomenon being studied are avoided.
2. Reality is viewed holistically.
3. Data collection and instruments used should have minimum influence on the phenomenon being studied.
4. Openness to alternative explanations of the phenomenon.
5. Theory as applicable, should emerge from the data as grounded theory rather than preconceived theories.(Wiersma 2000:238-239)

The phenomenological multi-site/case study design is suited to this research as it provided understanding of phenomena from different perspectives and different contexts.

The methodology used in this investigation was qualitative (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and phenomenological (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research attempts to elicit an understanding of phenomena. In this case, it aims to gain an understanding of adolescent/child bereavement at a deeper level. Furthermore, this type of research explores grieving children's experiences and traits from their own perspectives (Boss, Dahl, & Kaplan, 1996; Holmes, 1998). Underpinning this research approach is the belief that bereaved children, such as the participants in this study, are the experts on their own

grieving and mourning and can inform researchers about the complexities of loss, grief, mourning, adaptation and resiliency (Eppler, 2008a) in their subjective way (Levering, 2006).

The central issue of 'bereavement experiences' is the focus of concern in this study, thus, I investigated the phenomenon across multiple bounded cases. As such, a **multiple-case study design** was adopted (Yin, 2003). Each of the 13 orphaned children and 4 school counsellors in the study was treated as a bounded case. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Yin, 2003; Rule & John, 2011), 'bereavement' of the learners and school counsellors. In support, it is noted that a multiple case study design offers the researcher a proven tool for achieving a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon, in this case, bereavement experiences.

Critics question the rigour of the case study approach (The Free Library, 2006). However, the same document proffers a counter argument that researches done over the past twenty years demonstrate that the case study method can be used to efficiently probe beneath the surface of a situation and provide a rich context for understanding phenomena under investigation. Yin (1994) further justifies the utility and efficacy of a multiple-case study I selected. He argues that it allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon under study through the use of a replication strategy. According to Yin (1994), the replication strategy can be compared to conducting a number of separate experiments on related topics. If most of the selected cases provide similar results, there can be substantial ground for development of a preliminary theory that describes the phenomena (Eisenhardt, 1989). Notably, these cases were selected from learners who had one major characteristic in common-bereavement of a parent or parents. However, there is need to expatiate how the participants were selected.

4.3 CASE SELECTION AND DESCRIPTION

Whereas populations and samples are prominent in survey research, in case studies, the focus is on "case identification" (Rule & John, 2011:13; Gerring, 2007:211); "case selection" and "case description" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: 450). In support of this, Terre

Blanche *et al.* (2006:460) assert that, “case studies are ideographic research methods; that is, methods that study individuals as individuals rather than members of a population.” It is in this vein that I, as the researcher, embarked on case selection that is described below.

I purposively selected the cases for this study on the basis of my judgement about which ones would be best suited to the research purpose (Maxfield & Babbie, 2006). Extreme case purposive selection was used to select participants as it is used to select units that have special or unusual characteristics (Wiersma, 2000:238). The unusual characteristics bounding the research participants were ‘bereavement of a parent’ for the secondary school bereaved children and ‘association with the bereaved children’ for the guidance and counselling teacher. The criteria I used for selecting participants for the research are that the offspring had to be bereaved of one or both parents in line with the definition of ‘orphan’ adopted for this research (cf. Chapter 1). Criteria for selection were also bound by other specifications, that is ‘secondary school-age orphans’ and ‘recency of the bereavement’ as is elaborated below.

Secondary School-age orphans: The study sought to involve 13 orphans enrolled in secondary schools in Harare. Each of the 13 children was viewed as a case as each bore unique experiences of bereavement. A sample size of this nature is suited to qualitative investigation (Devers & Robinson, 2002). According to Terney & Dilley (2002: 461), the sample of 13 participants is “small but theoretically significant”. Patton (2002:46) also suggests that in qualitative phenomenological research a researcher can even use single cases of N= 1; with only one participant. The researcher does not dispute the authenticity of using a single case with one participant, but could have opted to follow the suggestion by Ploeg (1999) that recommends selecting participants until no new themes emerge from the data, when data have reached saturation. Yin (1994), explains that saturation implies that data collection is done until no significant new findings are revealed. This is buttressed by Macnee & McCabe (2008:206) who assert that “In phenomenologic methods, neither length of time for collecting data nor number of participants is defined before the study starts. Rather data are collected until all information is redundant of previously collected data- until saturation occurs.” I however, aligned myself to what Creswell (1998:64) as cited in Mason (2010) and Leedy and Ormrod (2005:139), recommends the use of 5 - 25 cases (all of whom have direct experience of phenomenon being studied) as he feels that the range is

large enough to assume that most or all of the perceptions that might be important are uncovered. Morse (1995) and Bowen (2008), as cited in Mason (2010) argue that researchers claim to have achieved saturation but are not necessarily able to prove it and as the researcher analyses the data deeper there is always the potential for the "new to emerge".

To qualify as participants, the children would have had to lose one or both parents within the last year, of the commencement of the investigation. This would improve the credibility of the information gained since recency of experience increases the possibility of recall (Kohler, 2007) in line with the recency effect in psychology. The recency effect is a cognitive bias that people tend to recall items that were at the end on a list rather than items in the middle. Thus, it was logical for the researcher to capitalise on this knowledge and engage with recently bereaved children.

To locate participants, I visited the two schools I had purposively selected. In school LM the deputy head cum counsellor provided a list of children who had lost parents in the last year. Initially I got six names of children in forms 1 – 4, the seventh name came up for a boy who was in form 6. In school M, the senior woman supplied a list of six bereaved learners. The first group of 6 bereaved learners identified were children who had been bereaved more than a year earlier; hence, all did not qualify for inclusion in the current study. Rather than dismissing them, I asked them to write their life stories using the sheet I was going to use for my study. In a way it helped them to "tell their story." However, the stories were not used in the data for this research, but helped me to further clarify the instructions.

In both cases, I got the participants with the assistance of the school gatekeepers, such as the deputy head of school LM and the senior woman of school M, who might have used their own biases to select them. As there were no records of orphaned children in both schools, the gatekeepers announced in classes or assembly for bereaved children to go to their offices. I felt this mode of identifying research participants flouted the confidentiality rules. I had explained the composition of children I needed to the gatekeepers: that is, 2 children each in forms 1 – 2; 3 – 4 and 5 – 6. The actual composition of the participants is shown in Data Sets 1-4 (See pages 280-306).

School counsellors: The study sought to involve 2 school counsellors (4 cases) from each school to participate in the study. Again, as this is an interpretive study concerned with meaning rather than generalisation, the small sample is suitable as the aim of the phenomenological study is to broaden the theoretical understanding of children who experience grief (Eppler, 2008). By having counsellors from the same schools as the bereaved learners, the researcher will be able to relate and gain a deeper understanding and broader perspective of the issues raised by both learners and counsellors and not for cross-referencing.

For this current study, both bereaved learners and school counsellors made up the sample as they are information rich sites that are reservoirs of first hand information about bereavement and the interventions and postventions given by schools. Purposive selection is apt for a phenomenological study as it grants the researcher in-depth information of specific life experiences of participants. Lydall (2004) posits that informants in a phenomenological study proffer richly-textured descriptions of their lived experiences.

The selection criteria noted above was used to decide on the participants to include. It was advantageous to use purposive or judgemental selection as it allowed the researcher to select unique cases satisfactory to my needs (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Gaining access to participants is discussed next.

4.4 GAINING ACCESS TO PARTICIPANTS

In order to gain entry, cooperation and support from settings (the two schools which were research sites), I identified key gatekeepers who controlled the setting (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2005). In both schools my first port of call was the head's office but was referred, in one school, to the senior woman and in the other case, to the deputy head. The school counsellors served as *gatekeepers* to the bereaved learners (Jupp, 2006). Gatekeepers are formal and informal authorities that control access to site (Neuman, 2000:352) who introduce the researcher into the field. The researcher gained the approval and consent from the school head who is the child's main caregiver at school. They acted as *loco-parentis* for all learners under their care. The school heads of both sites referred

me to the deputy head (LM) and senior woman (M). To the extent possible, all the details about the selected caregivers will be kept anonymous. The manner of communicating the details about the research to the caregivers was written correspondence, face to face and in some instances was complemented by telephonic means for expediency, for instance in setting up appointments. I regarded this as the most prudent means to access these individuals. Once the names of the bereaved learners were selected, I sought to gain access to these individuals. The counsellors and bereaved learners signed consent forms (See Appendices I & H).

Access to the schools and the school counsellors was sought through the Ministry of Education, Harare. Letters were written to the Head Office of MoESAC, Harare Metropolitan Provincial Director, School Heads and guidance, and counselling teachers *informing* them of the research and soliciting their cooperation (See Appendices A & B). Field work only commenced after their permission had been granted as indicated in Appendices C, D, E & F. Once approval was granted, I had direct contact with the school counsellors, and invited them to participate in the research.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

There are many ways in which participants can describe their lived phenomenal experiences. For this study, the primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews, supplemented by written narratives. This is because of the nature of the research questions posed. Unlike in quantitative research, in qualitative phenomenological research, the researcher strives to be as non-directive as possible and seeks to capture descriptions of the participants' experiences, for example, asking the bereaved children to describe how they felt after the death of their parents. Although the key data collection methods were in-depth phenomenological interviews, life narratives and document analyses were used to enable me to collect more comprehensive data on bereavement and school counselling services. However, before delving into the actual data collection methods, it was prudent that a pilot study be carried out.

4.5.1 Pilot study

A pilot study is a feasibility study that is designed to test logistics and gather information prior to a larger study in order to improve the study's quality and efficiency. It can give advance warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated (Van Tejlingen & Hundley, 2001). In line with this, I conducted a pilot study to try and eliminate flaws in the main study. The pilot study was carried out using 6 purposively sampled bereaved secondary school learners from a school other than those in the main study. The pilot study helped me to rephrase some questions (both English and Shona versions of the interview guide) and in preparing me on how to handle bereaved children as I had to enlist the assistance of the school counsellors in making formal introductions. Two school counsellors were also interviewed in the pilot study to ensure suitability of the interview schedule for counsellors. Having discussed pilot study, the interview will be discussed next.

4.5.2 Interviews

An interview is "a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participant questions to collect data and learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant. The aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant" (Maree, 2007:87). My primary data collection instruments were the in-depth open ended interviews for which I prepared interview guides as suggested by King & Horrocks (2010). Interview schedules are shown as Appendices H and I.

4.5.2.1 Phenomenological In-depth interviews

For the sample involving the bereaved learners, the interview was phenomenological because of the phenomenon being investigated. Thus, an in-depth interview was conducted. The phenomenological in-depth interview is "a conversation between researcher and informant focusing on the informant's perception of self, life and experience, expressed in his or her own words" (McNair, Taft & Hegarty, 2008). The phenomenological interview would be open-ended so as to capture first hand unadulterated data from participants as they are accorded ample time to tell their tales in a free and

flexible liaison (Robson, 2002). Respondents also describe distinct experiences as the goal of the in-depth interview is to draw out rich descriptions of lived experiences. For example, the researcher would ask what it feels like (to be bereaved of a parent), what it reminds them of and how they would describe it (O'Leary, 2004). Respondents to open-ended questions are asked to comment about the events thereby providing the researcher with valuable information that the researcher might not have thought of. In agreement, McNair *et al.* (2008), posit that in-depth interviews are commonly used in research on sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS, loss and grief and child abuse. Denzin and Lincoln (2003:343) suggest that the open-ended interview gives the researcher opportunity to "gaze into the soul" of the interviewee, hence, my decision to use in-depth interviews. However, the approach is highly emotional and is fraught with ethical dilemmas.

According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:293), the researcher in open-ended interviewing prepares 'a handful of main research questions' to begin and guide the discussion. Hence, in this research, a main question started the interview: for example, "Tell me about your experience…." This was followed by probing questions. The interview style was non-directive, and a process of not just probing but reflecting was employed (e.g. "Could you tell me more about…"). Probe questions followed the main questions to help clarify issues, add detail and depth to the evidence. The phenomena of bereavement experiences were probed until "the thing itself is illuminated and describing". Follow-up questions were posed "to pursue the implications of answers to the main questions" (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:294).

In all stages of conducting a phenomenological inquiry, including interviewing in data collection, I used the process of epoche by conducting a reduction of my biases and preconceptions through 'bracketing' of my preconceptions or presuppositions. The aim was to adopt a "phenomenological attitude" (Cope, 2005), that is, being as open as possible to whatever reveals itself in the data. In doing this, I was reflexive as opposed to my everyday non-reflective state of mind. However, like Tonore (2011), I ensured that the participant's everyday life; preconceptions, details, biases, errors and prejudices in relation to bereavement experiences, were not bracketed as these were what I wanted to capture and understand through the interview. The participants' stories with all their biases were the data I needed in my phenomenological study.

The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. However, when I tried to play the recordings, some of the tapes were inaudible and had to rely on the notes I had taken. Furthermore, the individual interviews were not done in one day as follow up sessions were made. In some instances the interview was completed in 3 (PPL2LM) or 4 (PPL1LM) days depending on the issues coming up and the availability of time.

4.5.2.2 Biographical Methods

Biographical methods use life stories, narratives, letters, recounted biographies and autobiographies in order to understand the phenomena under study. Ritchie and Lewis, (2003) call these 'documents of life'. Denzin (1989:7) as cited in Jones (2001) defines the biographical method as "the studied use and collection of life documents, which describe turning-point moment in individuals' lives. These include autobiographies, biographies, diaries, letters, obituaries, life histories, life stories, personal experience stories and personal histories (Jones, 2001). The biographical methods are valuable in understanding major shifts in the lives of participants as they sometimes detail sensitive and private experiences (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). They were valuable in this study as some of the children presented more vivid private experiences than they dared give in the interviews. In support, Rule and John (2011:65) contend that story telling offers participants freedom over the data generated and that it produces rich data in a "rather informal, non-directive and non-threatening manner." Above all it "can provide opportunities for unanticipated data as the participant gains maximum freedom in terms of content and sequencing of their story" (Rule & John, 2011:65). However, this method has flaws, especially, as bias is an ever-present reality that biographical researchers should acknowledge and accept (Jones, 2001). In reading some narratives I encountered challenges in trying to decipher what participants wanted to communicate and had to follow it up in interviews. In this research, life narratives were used as other life documents were difficult to obtain.

The bereaved learner participants were given sheets of paper with instructions (See Appendix J) and asked to write their life stories on them. They were instructed to use any language in which they felt comfortable to write, hence the Shona, English and a mixture of both languages were produced. Albeit the numerous spelling and grammatical errors, the

narratives helped fill gaps in the data and gave insights into some issues on the phenomenon of a bereavement post death of a parent or parents.

4.5.2.3 Document analysis

Although this study was on bereavement experiences of secondary school learners from their own perspective, it was imperative that I analyse documents relating to school counselling to get insights into what services are available to learners. Hence, document analysis was used in this study. According to Bowen (2009:27), document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic. Documents contain text (words) and images that were recorded without the researcher's intervention and for this reason it is reasonably free from the researcher's influence (Creswell, 2008). Like in life narratives, documents can include official records, letters, newspaper accounts, diaries and reports. Bowen (2009) also contends that document analyses yield data in the form of excerpts, quotations or entire passages that are then organised into major themes, categories and case examples. Documents have an advantage of helping researchers to understand the central phenomenon, such as in this case, school bereavement counselling. The documents are ready for analysis without any transcriptions, such as required for interview and observational data (Creswell, 2008) and are stable sources of data (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2006). Like Robson (2002), I found the document analyses unobtrusive and used them without imposing them on the research participants as explained below.

For the current research, school timetables were studied. There was, however, no Guidance and Counselling timetabled and no records on bereaved learners. The following syllabi documents were analysed: Ministry of Higher Education HIV/AIDS syllabi for teacher's colleges, secondary school Guidance and Counselling syllabi. Analysis of these documents provided me with insights into the experiences of children's bereavement counselling through the content they learnt and that teachers (counsellors) are taught in preparation for counselling. Although the documents listed above may have been written for different reasons, other than research, I found them to be informative.

Robson (2002) asserts that in documentary analysis there is need for a systematic exploration of content in search for patterns and themes related to the research question.

Hence, in this study I endeavoured to make a step by step combing of the syllabi documents in search for information pertaining to counselling.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Interpretive phenomenological analysis was employed to analyse the interview transcripts, life histories and documents. This analysis focuses upon identifying recurrent themes across transcripts. Recurrent themes are the similar and consistent ideas, thoughts, images, and accounts shared (Moustakas, 1994). On the same note, Rule and John (2011:150) suggest that "Themes are recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterizing particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question." Being phenomenological, the emphasis in the analysis of data was on the essences and structures of the phenomenon, that is, the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological research generates a large quantity of interview notes, tape recordings jottings and other records that need to be analysed. For this reason, analysis of phenomenological data is "messy' and does not fall into neat categories (Lester, 1999). This calls for organised strategies of data analysis. According to Waters (2010), the first principle of analysis of phenomenological data is to use the emergent strategy "to allow the method to follow the nature of the data itself". The focus is on understanding of the meaning of the description. For the researcher to get the essential meaning of the experience there is need to abstract out themes. Waters goes further to explain that themes are those elements that cannot be changed without losing meaning of the narrative.

There are steps that I followed in identifying common themes. Creswell (1998) in De Vos *et al.* (2005) suggests the following steps: identifying statements that relate to the topic, grouping statements into meaning units, seeking divergent perspectives and constructing a composite. Colaizzi (1978) in Goulding (2004:303) suggests seven steps:

(1) The first task of the researcher is to read the participants' narrative, to acquire a feeling for their ideas in order to understand them fully.
(2) The next step "extracting significant statements," requires the researcher to identify key words and sentences relating to the phenomenon under study.
(3) The researcher then attempts to formulate meanings for each of these significant statements.

(4) This process is repeated across participants' stories and recurrent meaningful themes are clustered. These may be validated by returning to the informants to check interpretation.
(5) After this the researcher should be able to integrate the resulting themes into a rich description of the phenomenon under study.
(6) The next step is to reduce these themes to an essential structure that offers an explanation of the behaviour.
(7) Finally, the researcher may return to the participants to conduct further interviews or elicit their opinions on the analysis in order to cross check interpretation.

I followed the steps given above, not wholesale, in my endeavour to be rigorous. The process needed a lot of reflexivity, bracketing or epoche since I had to draw out essences and structure of the phenomena. This meant "acknowledging the assumptions, naming them and setting them aside so as not to impede their view of the phenomenon or…to colour their (phenomenologists) perception" (Rule & John: 2011: 98) The approach I used was to take one case, describe it and identify inductively the themes that emerged from the data. Inductive analysis implies that patterns, themes and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis (Cope, 2005; Rule & John, 2011). On this part I drew some ideas from the generic qualitative data analysis where one identifies cross-participant themes and interpret them, rather than first coding for each participant as is common in some phenomenological studies.

Identifying themes is not an easy task. In support, King and Horrocks (2010:149) claim that "…identifying themes is never simply a matter of finding something lying within the data fossil in a rock. It always involves the researcher in making choices about what to include and what to discard and how to interpret participants' words". As I discovered this exercise requires going over and over and over again reading and re-reading transcripts to come up with some semblance of themes. These were reworded and rephrased endlessly. Peer assistance was also sought to verify if these were meaningful. A high level of reflexivity was called for in order to bring out the meaningful units.

As will be shown in Chapter 5, individual cases were identified and described first using textural and structural descriptions, analysis was done to establish the themes coming out of the individual cases and across cases. Main findings were then drawn out and these fed into the discussion of findings.

4.7 ROLE OF RESEARCHER/ RESEARCHER ATTRIBUTES

The researcher in phenomenological research, pertaining more specifically to bereavement post death of parent, needs specialised qualities. By its nature, bereavement and in particular after the death of a parent is a highly charged emotional experience and thus the researcher needs to tread cautiously when interacting with a bereaved participant. Empathy is called for in this delicate exercise as the researcher intends to collect first hand, truthful, lived experience data from children whose pasts have been ripped off. According to Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:559), empathy means "'feeling with' a person or situation. Placing oneself 'in their shoes.'" In this research I strove to achieve empathy through attentively listening to the intimate stories of the bereaved learners, offering support to them through reporting cases that needed prompt intervention, such as PPL6LM who had a case of suicidal ideation; and as Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) put it, "telling it like it is" (telling the children's stories in their context).

Reflexivity is another attribute that the researcher should have. This is a process of reflecting critically on self as researcher, the human instrument (Guba & Lincoln 1981 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Reflexivity forces the researcher to come to terms with the research problem, the participants and with the self (the many roles one plays in the research). Shulamit Reinharz (1997) as cited in Denzin and Lincoln (2008:278) contends that in qualitative research, the researcher does not only bring the self, but also creates the self in the field. She further suggests that researchers bring in three categories of self onto a research: research-based self, brought self (the self that historically, socially and personally create one's personal standpoint) and situationally created selves. All these have a bearing on how one conducts a research. Hence, reflexivity requires the researcher to interrogate each of the selves he or she brings along into the research to be able to collect, analyse and present the multiple truths in qualitative phenomenological research. Jupp (2006:244) also contends that reflexivity is a "process of monitoring and reflecting on all aspects of a research project from the formulation of research ideas through to the publication of findings and where this occurs, their utilization." In tandem with the definitions of reflexivity cited above, I endeavoured to achieve reflexivity through self examination, examination and re-examination of all the processes throughout the research process. As such, the whole process of carrying out this research adopted what the researcher could

term a “seesaw approach” whereby one keeps on passing through the point one has already looked at.

Stroebe, Stroebe and Schut (2003) suggest that bereavement research calls for the researcher to adopt two roles; as interviewer and as therapist. In the current research, this was evidenced when I had to provide tissues for the crying child and when I had to listen to painful accounts that needed to be set out of the children’s systems.

Another key role of the phenomenological researcher is to describe from a first person point of view the experiences of the participants and inductively generate ‘bottom-up’ theories “grounded in the lived experiences” (Cope, 2005). Therefore there is the use of the first person narrative in the research report and the elucidation of descriptions of participants’ accounts.

4.8 QUALITY OF THE RESEARCH

Some authors regard trustworthiness and rigour to be synonymous (Meyrick, 2006). For the sake of this research, I use them as synonyms. Trustworthiness refers to credibility and validity of qualitative research (Johnson, 1997; Rule & John, 2011). However, some qualitative researchers reject the framework of validity that is accepted more in quantitative research, basing their assumption on the fact that there is no single truth or single external reality. For example, Padget’s (1998) as cited in Bowen (2005) proposed six strategies of enhancing rigour which are: prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing and support, member checking, negative case analysis and auditing. Lincoln and Guba (2000) also proposed four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research and offered alternative criteria for judging qualitative research as opposed to the traditional criteria for judging quantitative research. Table 4.1 shows the two criteria for judging the two orientations: quantitative and qualitative.

Table 4.1: Showing criteria for judging the quantitative and qualitative research

Traditional Criteria for judging Quantitative Research	Alternative Criteria for judging Qualitative Research
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Source Trochim (2006:np)

The criteria pertaining to qualitative research is discussed below:

4.8.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is the concept equivalent to internal validity in quantitative studies (Rossouw, 2003). Threats to credibility in qualitative research relate to collecting data, analysing data and choosing population and sample. Hence, the credibility criterion involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. Since from this perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participant's eyes, the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results**.** To ensure trustworthiness, there is need for factual accuracy of the account (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In the current study, this was obtained by using mechanically recorded data and presenting verbatim accounts of respondents. Peer reviews of instruments also assisted me in making the data I collected credible. Member checks on transcripts and analysed texts were also done to ensure credibility of data (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Rossouw, 2003). The member checks were done as explained in Section 4.11.4 on Deception. Some participants such as PPL2LM added some data. However, the others just concurred with what I had recorded.

4.8.2 Transferability

External validity and transferability have to do with the applicability of the research. Whereas external validity deals with the generalisation of findings from the target sample to

the population (Rossouw, 2003), transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, 2006). In qualitative research, the aim is to understand a phenomenon in a particular context. Thus, it is possible to transfer findings to similar contexts. Trochim (2006: 3) further contends that:

> From a qualitative perspective transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalizing. The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. The person who wishes to "transfer" the results to a different context is then responsible for making the judgment of how sensible the transfer is.

In the current research, issues of transferability were catered for as I strove to give a full description of the research milieu, both the concrete context of each participant in Chapter 5 and the theoretical context in Chapter 2, Literature review.

4.8.3 Dependability

Reliability and dependability deal with consistency of research findings (Rossouw, 2003). The quantitative view of reliability is based on the assumption of replicability or repeatability and is concerned with whether we would obtain the same results if we could observe the same thing twice. In reality, however, one cannot actually measure the same thing twice because by definition if we are measuring twice, we are measuring two different things. In order to estimate reliability, quantitative researchers construct various hypothetical notions (for example, the true story theory) to try to get around this fact (Trochim, 2006).

The idea of dependability, on the other hand, emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached the study. Hence, to ensure dependability of research findings, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), I provided a thick description of the research methods to create the opportunity for repeating the research. I also carried out an investigative audit to confirm consistency of the data. I triangulated methods of data collection as an option to ensure dependability. Hence, my use of interviews and life narratives as discussed in Sections 4.6.2 and 4.6.3 above.

4.8.4 Confirmability

Qualitative research tends to assume that each researcher brings a unique perspective to the study. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). There are a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. In line with Trochim (2006), I documented the procedures I followed for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. I also gave another researcher to take a "devil's advocate" role with respect to my methodology and results, and received feedback which I used in reshaping my document. I also actively searched for and described *negative instances* that contradicted prior observations. After the study, I conducted a *data audit* that examined the data collection and analysis procedures and made judgments' about the potential for bias or distortion.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Educational researchers, like researchers in other disciplines, are guided by certain ethics when carrying out studies. Ethics embody individual and communal codes of conduct that require adherence to some principles (Briggs & Coleman, 2007). As such, this research was guided by ethical considerations as espoused in the University of Fort Hare Research Ethics Policy 2010 and the Post Graduate Qualification Policies and Procedures Handbook 2010. Some of the ethical issues are highlighted below:

4.9.1 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality are two ethical standards that are applied in order to protect the privacy of the research participants. The researcher assures the participants of anonymity and confidentiality (Cook, 2002). Anonymity essentially means that the participant will remain anonymous throughout the research, even to the researcher herself. This was done through use of codes and pseudonyms instead of actual nomenclature (Trochim, 2006). On the other hand, confidentiality is guaranteed when the researcher can identify a given person's responses but promises not to divulge the information to anyone. I, as the researcher had the responsibility to conscientise the participants about this and to also ensure to keep the promise (Babbie, 2004). This means, their personal information

was and will not be divulged and I will not share the information that they share with others in ways that will reveal these identities. However, as is explained in section 4.11.6 the researcher violated the contract in a way and sought consent at a later stage. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) also emphasise confidentiality of locations. In line with this, I consciously coded the schools and their names will remain anonymous.

4.9.2 Voluntary participation

The principle of voluntary participation prohibits securing consent to participate in research through coercion. Coercion means forcing participation by exercise of the social dominance of the researcher especially when dealing with vulnerable populations (Cournoyer & Klein, 2000). I informed the participants through the consent form that all participation in the study was voluntary, with the option of quitting at anytime. This was further verbally communicated to the participants as I felt conveyance of the written message would probably be curtailed by language. Informed consent was sought and obtained before the bereaved learners participate in the study.

4.9.3 Informed consent

Informed consent means that prospective research participants must be fully informed about the purpose of the study, procedures and risks involved in research (Flick *et al.*, 2004) and must endorse their consent to participate despite the inherent dangers. According to Gray (2004), “participants, gatekeepers and sponsors need to be informed about: the aims of the research, who will be undertaking it, who else is being asked to participate, what kind of information is being sought, how much of participant’s time is required, that participation is voluntary throughout, that responding to all questions is voluntary, who will have access to the data once it is collected and how anonymity will be preserved” (Gray, 2004:59). This in a way, bars use of undercover research (Flick *et al.*, 2004) as participants should be well informed about the research and are made aware of the fact that they can withdraw from the study at any time during the research. I, thus informed the participants about the purpose of my research, the procedures and risks and further adopted Bond’s (2004) idea of process consent, of which, though not signed, I kept on asking the respondents if they are still willing to continue. Bond (2004) suggests that a

researcher uses process consent rather than having informed consent at the beginning of study. Process consent is done at intervals, where consent is reaffirmed on a regular basis throughout the research process. Initial consent, consent throughout the project and closure consent. There are, however, some ethical problems when working with some groups, for example, children in general, bereaved children and other vulnerable groups. One queries whether these “children can rationally, knowingly and freely” give informed consent (Robson, 2002). In the case of bereaved children, consent will be sought from their parents (for those with one parent alive) or guardians or teachers. Some school children are double orphans and head of households, with no guardians, hence school teachers will do the honours as they act in *loco parentis* for these children. In line with this, consent was sought from the School head, who in turn delegated the duty to subordinates as stated in section 4.5 on selection of participants.

4.9.4 Deception

Deception can mean that individuals participate in research under false pretences (Huysamen, 1994). The false pretences can be that the true nature of the research is withheld from the participants or that they are deliberately deceived or misled. It is, therefore, important for the researcher to debrief the participants after the study is over (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). In this research, the researcher strove as much as possible to avoid deception by informing participants about the purpose of the research, procedures and to clarify any incidentals. I also had the opportunity of allowing the research participants to review the data before writing it down. The counsellors and older participants, such as PPL7LM, checked through the transcripts of their interviews for consistency. However, it was a folly not to include the younger participants for member checks. For me, the exclusion of younger participants seems to be a deception too. I subscribe to divulging the deception in line with Cournoyer and Klein (2000) who aver that the research exercise involves a complete explanation of research, including the deception, if any.

4.9.5 Accuracy

Another ethical issue concerns accuracy. This research will ensure that all data is accurate. “Fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions and contrivances are both non-scientific and

unethical" (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:145). Accuracy is especially called for when reporting the research. I made a serious attempt to report accurately on the research findings by using a substantial amount of verbatim accounts of participants.

4.9.6 Human rights

Ethical standards in research require that researchers should not put participants into harm by exposing them to risky situations. Harm can be viewed as both physical and psychological (Darlington & Scott, 2002). The participants' human rights need to be protected. This is in tandem with what Stroebe *et al.* (2003) in Balk and Corr (2009: 41) assert. They assert that "… the most basic ethical principle in research is the protection of the participants' rights, dignity and well being." This implies that no psychological risks are inherent in the current study since interviewing is the main method of data collection. However, some psychological risks do exist: that is, painful memories can be activated, and awareness of their loneliness may be heightened. The researcher will rely on her experience as counsellor, as well as consult regularly with expert clinicians to develop clinical strategies as needed, to diminish the potential psychological risk involved. It should be noted that the bereaved learner will benefit from participating in this study by having someone to listen – to share – their memories and experiences (Cook, 1995; Weiss 1994 in Oka & Shaw, 2000). Release of personal data may be a source of human rights violation (Flick *et al.*, 2004), for example, research on bereaved children can yield that a child is being abused. According to the Zimbabwean laws, all cases of abuse have to be reported to the police and other appropriate authorities as they are a contravention of the children's rights. The requirement to report all cases of abuse, overrides any confidentiality agreements the researcher has made and it is ethical to inform the participant of the obligation to report such malicious acts (Robson, 2002). However, in research, it is contrary to research principles of anonymity and confidentiality. As I was carrying out this research I was confronted by this scenario, where upon a bereaved child participant (PPL1LM) telephoned to seek audience with me about his predicament, I had to refer him to the deputy head of his school who was also a counsellor. I was also forced to break the confidentiality pact I had with the child and explained his case to the deputy head. However, before I divulged the issue to the deputy head, I consulted the child about it and he agreed as he felt his salvation was through that route. This actually made me reflect and

I realised that when talking to respondents about confidentiality at the initial stages, I should also make them aware that where need be, I would breach it for their own good.

4.10 METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

In agreement with Bowen (2005), interviews were found to be time consuming as there was need for probes to clarify certain issues about the phenomena. The phenomenological method calls for the researcher to bracket herself (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006; Bednall, 2006). Thus, another challenge for me was not only to be clear about my background as the researcher and how to position myself, but also to what extent I had to bracket out my own perceptions as I gathered and read the data, and analyse them. During data collection I had a fleeting feeling of invasion by personal past experience. Like Gilgun (2008:182), I had no idea that the price of acquiring a sense of lived experience of bereavement was coming to grips with a lifetime of "hurts, slights and fears" about my physical and psychological safety. I did not foresee that I would have to face up to the torture in my own heart as I relived some of the bereavement experiences. However, I had to bracket, derole, derob all those experiences for the sake of quality of the data I was collecting. The counselling training and practice I had obtained earlier on came to the fore.

Reporting **–** dichotomy in presentation, having read so much literature on bereavement experiences, it was hard to put a line between inductively and deductively arrived at themes. As I read the transcripts through, I would see that these data were aligned to what idea-theme. However, it was expected in qualitative research to get the idea from a grounded theory perspective. I had to go back to seek literature that would justify my intended position. Fortunately for me, I found out that research was not a one person band but I was at liberty to seek expert advice on thorny issues. I therefore sought "expert advice" from some academic staff in our department. These experts, served as a "check and balance on the researcher's tendency for interpretive projection and loss of perspective and investigators lack of experience in conducting hermeneutic phenomenological studies" (Armour, Rivaux & Bell, 2009). The experts thus, helped me to remain focused by reading some of my reports in relation to my transcripts and proffering suggestions.

4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the methodology of the study. The interpretivist paradigm and the case study design were chosen for this study as the researcher sought to understand the experiences of bereaved learners with an aim to inform school counselling on good practice in bereavement counselling. Data gathering techniques such as interviews and life narratives were also discussed. This chapter also included sampling, data analysis, issues of rigour in phenomenological qualitative research, ethical considerations and challenges encountered in the study. The next chapter focuses on the presentation of data and analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 outlined the methodological approach adopted for this research. The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse qualitative data gathered through interviews and life narratives from secondary school bereaved learners in Harare. The data aim to respond to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Brief biographical data comprising of textual and structural descriptions of each participant are given to allow themes to emerge from the data. Textural accounts comprise of “naïve” descriptions obtained through open ended questions and dialogue and give “what was experienced.” Structural accounts present “how it was experienced” and are based on reflection and interpretation of the research participant’s story (Moustakas, 1994:1). Descriptions are given so that data speak for themselves and themes can be explicated from them. Themes emerging from the data are discussed. Background information of each respondent is presented first.

5.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF EACH PARTICIPANT

This section serves to introduce the participants by providing summaries of their background information. The background information assisted me as the researcher to contextualise and have knowledge about each participant that helped me to understand in some instances “how” and “why” some pupils reacted the way they did after the death of their parents.

5.1.1 Introduction to participant PPL1M

PPL1M, a 17 year old girl was doing form 3 at School M at the time of the research. Her home language is IsiNdebele. She is a Christian of the Roman Catholic denomination. PPL1M is currently staying with her father and siblings since birth and continued to do so after her mother’s death. She is the youngest child in a family of four; all the other siblings are male. Her father is a de-miner. At the time of the interview she had been recently

bereaved of her mother who passed away barely a month before, on May 19, 2010. She cried during the first interview session, was given tissue paper and the interview had to be rescheduled.

5.1.1.1 Textural and Structural description of PPL1M's experience of parents' bereavement

When the interviews were conducted PPL1M was still experiencing a lot of pain that she described as "*it is so hurting.*" She was still in shock as evidenced by her jittery response when asked how her mother had died. Her initial response was *"I don't remember,*" then after a pause, stated *"Hmm…BP."* The child went on to elaborate that *"her kidneys were blocked"* and *"had an operation"*. In the oral interview she claimed not to *"remember much"* of the experience surrounding her mother's death. She seemed not to want to talk about her mother's death as her pain was raw because her mother had died a month prior to the interview. However, this lack of knowledge about the issues surrounding the death was in contrast to the following clearer and more factual account she gave in her life narrative.

> *She was a BP patient but didn't fall ill most times as she always took her tablets. She started to get sick and was admitted at C hospital. The doctor told us that the pills she took were the one which made her sick and her heart was filled with a lot of carbon dioxide. She was later admitted at P hospital and was on oxygen for several days. After two days she had an operation for kidney failure so they did it but it was not successful as they cut her on the position. An operation was held again which lead to her death. I suspect that there was foul play which caused her death. I know it's God who took her but I disagree that her time wasn't yet arrived.* (Life Narrative)

The explanation given above about the mother's death is a reflection of one in disbelief and one who had not accepted her predicament. In contrast to the interview responses, she felt comfortable pouring her heart out on paper as there was less human intrusion. This might have methodological implications on bereavement research.

PPL1M indicated that her mother was a *"heroine"* as she was a *"true fighter and strong";* many people were in attendance at her funeral, she was a soldier, she was a war veteran and above all a supportive and loving mother. For these, she felt her mother was given a befitting send off with full military honour and a Gun Salute.

Before her mother's death, she indicated that they were *"very close, very close*" and she told her mother *"everything I knew*." These pronouncements resulted in her crying as it was *"so hurting*." The interview was adjourned and was rescheduled for another time. According

to PPL1M the pain of losing her mother was still there. She revealed that nothing had changed as she still harboured the same feelings as she stated, *"…still have the same feelings"* and was still crying when she saw *"some people with their mothers.*" A streak of envy resonated from her words as the hurt and pain. PPL1M opined that although she knew that God *"took"* away her mother, she sensed that *"there was foul play which caused her death*." This could have caused her disbelief, as she stated "*first…I couldn't believe it!"* However, she later on "*overcame the situation"* with the support of her brothers who comforted her saying "*it happens in life"*. In both interview and life narrative she revealed that *"God did it for a reason*" and "*God had a special reason for that."*

Her mother was buried after they had done body viewing and other funeral rites and rituals but "*cultural things"* were still to be done. Despite her mother's death, PPL1M also alleged that she was "*still brilliant*" at school. She also was grateful for the "*caring and support"* of her classmates who contributed money and were present at the funeral. She felt obliged to thank her mother for the love and *"great care"* she took for her brothers and herself. PPL1M actually addressed her mother as if she was sure of an audience with her. She proclaimed, "I LOVE YOU MOM!!" This expression of profound love for a dead mother implied belief in life after death as she felt the mother could read the message.

PPL1M claimed that a friend informed the teachers about her bereavement but they *"did nothing"* and there was "*no counselling yet*." The counselling, she felt, "*was going to help in some way."* She seemed resigned to her predicament as she remarked, *"it has happened"* and life must go on.

5.1.2 Introduction to participant PPL2M

PPL2M is a form 2 pupil at school M and is aged 14. At home, he speaks Shona and also uses English for communication. He attends the New Life Covenant Church. PPL2M has been staying with a paternal aunt (father's sister) for the past 6 months. He is the younger of the two orphaned siblings. The older one is a girl. Both parents passed away in a car accident on 18 November 2009.

5.1.2.1 Textural and Structural description of PPL2M's experience of parents' bereavement

PPL2M's parents died seven months prior to the interview. He claimed that he "*was in shock"* when he heard that his parents had passed away; he could *"not believe it*", *"felt lonely", "could not eat",* and "*could not stop crying".* According to PPL2M, he could only eat two days after his parents' deaths. They (his elder sister and himself) were only told about the death on the day the parents were buried and on the day of the accident they were sent to their aunt's house where they are currently residing. He suggested that the people around might have thought it would hurt them very badly. On that ominous day, he said he knew something was wrong but did not associate it with his parents.

Prior to their death, he was close to his parents as he avowed that *"the relationship was good - that good"* and he hinted he was even more attached to his father as "*it was a boys' stuff*." He was reminiscing and was being nostalgic about how *"with dad,"* they would *"go out to watch movies"*, *"braai sometimes with mum"* or go *"for shopping."* However, all this changed when the parents died. He asserted that *"life has changed a lot*" as he now had to "*save money to buy school material unlike when they were alive they would buy things"* for him. Even though he got along with his aunt, in whose custody he was, he felt there *"was something missing in his life."*

PPL2M expressed a deep sense of longing when he claimed that he even wished there was "*someone I (he) could just call mother or father."* This child also suggests that he tried to forget about the bereavement but *"it keeps coming back.*" It is at times like this, when he thought about his deceased parents, that he cried, as opposed to the time immediately after the deaths that he "*cried, cried and cried.*" He remembered of a case when he sang at church and thought of them then cried as he "*felt lonely"* and *"wished they were there."* This bereaved boy looked tormented as he reiterated that, *"I thought if only they were there. I sang. I sang a church song and thought of them then I cried … at the church."*

His experience of his parents' funeral included a church service, *"no n'angas (traditional healers)*" were involved and "*no cultural things,*" the choir sang and there were Bible readings, body viewing was done and they were also allowed to do body viewing to "*say our goodbyes to our parents."* His mother was buried first.

When the parents died PPL2M was worried about who was going to look after him but he realised he had aunties *"taking care of him.*" Furthermore, he was helped by family members who went to church and to visit friends with him. He even smiled when he shared his bewilderment at his sister's positive change; she was now passing yet she used to fail when the parents were alive.

Decisions to rent out their house were made amicably by their grandmothers who *"discussed*" how this could be done. Whereas some family property, such as "*clothes, tv, DVD and decoders"*, was shared among his mom and father's relatives, the house was still theirs.

He claimed to have only informed his friends about the bereavement. These then comforted him but he did not inform the teachers. The school, he alleges, only got to know about it when I (researcher) got to the school. He averred, "*ma'am (senior woman) asked about us (bereaved learners) when you had come."* The death of his parents *"gave me (him) hope … courage to work harder."*

5.1.3 Introduction to participant PPL3M

PPL3M is a 14 year old form 2 learner at school M. She is Coloured and speaks mainly English and Shona at home. The girl is a Christian and attends the African Baptist Church. At the moment she stays with her grandmother, uncle (mother's brother) and her four siblings since her mother's death on 5 March 2010. The siblings were sired by different fathers. The first born is a boy who is currently working at a garage selling bottles.

5.1.3.1 Textural description and Structural description of PPL3M's experience of parents' bereavement

PPL3M's mother was a "*friend and a sister*" to her. She only *"got ill*" for *"about a week".* According to this child the thing that "*kills*" her is that she never got the chance to *"say goodbye"* to her mother. However, they made sure she had a *"great beriwall (burial)"* as there was a church service. Her mother loved God hence this was a good send-off for her. A preacher preached to the many people who were at the funeral, some were from the father's family.

She suggested that the death of her mother *"taught her to be stronger and to be independent."* Before, her mother's death she never regarded death to be a serious thing. She posited that, *"I thought it was just a joke when someone died, not knowing that it is the most 'painfullest' thing.*" PPL3M and her sister comforted each other by talking about how they missed their mother. The pain she felt after losing her mother was "*quite bad … felt hurt.*" She even suggested that she "*wasn't ok but tried to make myself strong because of my little sister and grandmother."* Her siblings comforted her by telling her that life goes on. Her mother feared God and she drew strength from that.

There had been some change in her life as her mother was *"always happy,*" and she felt she had gone "*somewhere, she's gonna come back."* She now felt *"low"* when her *"granny starts shouting*" or when she was in *"her quiet times"* such as when washing dishes or watching television. She still wished she was here. She took comfort in what one of her friends told her that,

> Even if they are not here with you in the physical world they are with you in the spiritual world and they will always be with you no matter where you go and that life also goes on.

After her mother's death she said she had headaches and used to dream about her, however, it had stopped in April. Although all five children had different fathers, they all lived with their maternal grandmother, who was finding it hard to pay the school fees for her grandchildren.

PPL3M intimated that at school it was not "*really that bad"* but "*a little bit hard on concentrating."* She thought her grandmother could have informed the school about her mother's death. Moreover, the deputy head stayed in their neighbourhood but only got to know about the death after the funeral. By the time of the interview, this learner had not had any counselling support from the school or church as she claimed, *"I never got any counselling."* Their church pastor had promised to visit them but had not done so by the time the child was interviewed.

5.1.4 Introduction to participant PPL4M

PPL4M is sixteen and doing form 3 at school M. She is a Seventh Day Adventist. Her home language is Shona. Their household is now headed by her mother from the 5th of January

2010 after her father's death. She is the second born in a family of five. All the siblings are female. The elder sister has a baby and no longer lives at home.

5.1.4.1 Textural description and Structural description of PPL4M's experience of parents' bereavement

After her father's death PPL4M was living with her mother and siblings. She initially indicated that her father was ill for two months but then explained that, "*He was positive"* and had been sick for some time but only got worse in the last two months of his life. PPL4M claimed that she was close to her father as you expect of a father and child and had misunderstandings sometimes which they would solve amicably through dialogue. She realised he wanted the best for her. Her father, she intimated, passed away due to HIV/AIDS. This child posited that, *"The most painful thing is that my father died of HIV/AIDS."* Her statement carried some overtones of stigma. She seemed to be comparing the HIV/AIDS with other non-stigmatised diseases. As she made this disclosure I noticed her change in posture as she stared straight into my eyes as if to try and see my reaction, meanwhile she was balancing her head in her hand. Years of being involved in counselling came to the fore as I remained straight-faced and this encouraged her to continue talking.

She explained that he died in their presence. He was in the same room they were and just went silent as he had been groaning. They thought that he was asleep but their grandfather who checked on him made the pronouncement that he was dead. She indicated that she could not believe it until she saw people gathering at their house. He was mourned for three days before burial. Her father had expressed a wish to be buried in their rural home in G, hence, he was ferried there only to be returned and interred in Harare because the people there said it was not possible as *"he did not belong there"* (implying that he was not sired by their relative and it is a taboo to bury a non-relative.)

At the funeral, there were no cultural things due to their Christian beliefs. She avowed, *"SDAs don't do cultural things, no memorial service and no bringing the spirit of the dead person home*." The burial was attended by their parents' relatives. However, as she revealed, her father's relatives did not make contributions towards the funeral costs; they had to get assistance from her *"mother's well to do relatives*". Body viewing was done.

She also indicated that all her father's property was grabbed by the father's younger siblings. The property included the car and his work items and the children were given the

house. They claimed that the parents did not have a marriage certificate, hence the grabbing of the property from the sister in law. As PPL4M put it, *"the only thing they left me with is the wisdom and the words my father used to advise me, because they can't take it, it's in my head."*

PPL4M was pained by the death. It was even worse, at the time of the interview because she was encountering many challenges and realised that, *"He is really dead".* The challenges included lack of school fees, being transferred from a boarding school to a day school and her mother's ill-health. She lamented that if her father were alive he would be assisting with medical bills as her mother's medical aid was insufficient to cover all the medical costs. Prior to his death she had been pained by watching her father *"deteriorate in health and the subsequent death"* as he "*was thin and could not talk."* She also stated that she was pained by his dying wish for them; *"I want obedient children."*

When their father died, she alleged, the siblings were all in pain and no one comforted the other. It was worsened by the fact that her elder sister and father had an unresolved conflict because her sister got pregnant and was thrashed by their father and his younger brother. The youngest sibling was still crying for the deceased father as she declared, *"I want to go to daddy."*

Her school work was not spared as she had no school fees and this resulted in her constantly being sent home. She was always absent from school due to lack of bus fare or due to care-giving of their ailing mother. For the care-giving duties they would take turns with her younger sister who was in another school. She claimed to have been brilliant at school prior to the death of her father but her work had seen a tumble due to the many challenges she was encountering as an orphan and because their father was no longer there to encourage her to study. This girl had to repeat form 3 as she had missed the third term examinations when her father was sick.

They sometimes got some reprieve through the assistance from their aunt who was in the UK who helped them with money. PPL4M also pointed out that their aunt had sent two Kombis (Mini buses used to ferry commuters for a fee) so that the takings would assist the family members. However, one of the mini buses was off the road and only one was operating and the takings were not adequate for the large family that included their late uncle's children. The aunt in the UK was not employed and the husband was the one

helping out. She felt they had a heavy load as they also had their children in the UK to fend for.

She indicated that she got counselling at her former school where she was told that her situation was not unique as death of a parent happens in the lives of many. The teachers told her it was up to her to study hard to improve her life as problems were temporary. This helped her make her new resolution; to work hard at school so that she would *"look after her younger siblings."* She paused and added, "*and also looking after mama.*" The pause signified lack of hope that her mother would live long enough to be looked after by her. She also intimated that her mother had been in hospital and had been discharged the previous Friday but could not afford some medication.

The bereavement changed her life and has taught her the difference between good and bad and to *"obey my parent because if you lost the one you love you will begin to think if you were with him/her obeying him/her."*

5.1.5 Introduction to participant PPL5M

PPL5M is a sixteen year old male learner and in form 3. His home language is Shona. He is a Christian and a member of the Apostolic Faith Mission. Being the last born in a family of three, PPL5M lived with his elder brother and sister. The brother mostly stayed at his work place and sometimes came home. The sister is the first born. He has been staying with them since 15 December, 2009, when their mother passed away. Their father passed away in 1995 and PPL5M reported that he did not know him well. The impression of PPL5M I got as I was conducting the interview was summarised in the field notes as "rather reserved- does not open up easily, guarded responses, ended up with more probes, bottling up."

5.1.5.1 Textural description and Structural description of PPL5M's experience of parents' bereavement

PPL5M claimed he had a cordial relationship with his mother. He said, "*She was alright."* However, he did not know his father since he died of cancer in 1995 when he was one year old. When both parents died there was no issue of consulting traditional healers or prophets. He indicated that when his father died he did not feel any pain because he *"was still young,*" but when my mother died he felt pain because he *"knew what was happening."*

He stated that he was in pain and cried a lot. She had stroke and spent one year bedridden. In his life story he had indicated that she had had stroke on the left side but corrected that to right side in the interviews. The stroke recurred and the third one was fatal. He was also pained when she was taken to hospital by his aunt (mother's elder sister), his sister and *"cousin brother"* when she could not talk. These maternal relatives were close to them as they actually brought them up.

The death message was delivered by a nurse who telephoned his sister. He claimed that the death of his mother distressed him and he was still enduring a lot of pain and claimed there had not been any change in the pain for the better. He tried to make the pain vanish by not to dwelling much on thoughts about her. PPL5M would avoid thinking of his deceased mother by looking for something interesting to do, for example, at home he would watch television and at school he would talk to peers and forget about the issue.

His mother was buried at her rural home. The body was first placed in the house, people were crying, there was body viewing and then was brought out and taken to the grave yard for interment. Close relatives were asked to *"throw soil"* but PPL5M said he was not sure why it was done. However, he explained that body viewing was done so that the surviving relatives could see their deceased relative for the last time. As a member of an Apostolic sect (Madzibaba, literally meaning Fathers), there was singing of church hymns and the mother's funeral was public as everyone who wished attended. Her belongings were shared the morning after the burial and he purported not to have much detail as he had gone back to Harare.

When the interview took place he was living with his older siblings at the house he was living with their mother and they were paying his school fees. The brother, who was a commuter bus driver was not at home most of the time and only came home *"sometimes."* He claimed that there was no change in his school work and that his friend informed the classmates about his bereavement. The classmates then conveyed their condolences. No assistance had been given by the school. According to PPL5M, the bereavement *"meant losing someone who was caring for you- that is all*." The caveat, "that is all" was a sign of dismissing the interviewer.

5.1.6 Introduction to participant PPL6M

PPL6M is an orphan having lost his father on 16 December 2009. He is aged 14. His home language is Shona; however, the family has also incorporated English as a means of everyday communication. He lives with his mother and younger sister at the same house they were residing before the death of his father. According to him, they were comfortable at home because his father's employers had given them money. At the time of the interview his school fees was being paid by BEAM.

5.1.6.1 Textural description and Structural description of PPL6M's experience of parents' bereavement

PPL6M's father died after a short illness. He complained of a headache on a Tuesday and died on a Saturday. When he was alive, he claimed, *"they did not have any conflict*." He got the message of his father's death when he saw his mother crying. She was in the company of his uncle (mother's brother).

The death really pained him and he cried and was confused. He posited that he did not know *"whether to run or not*"; he locked himself in their bedroom and only came out when his elder cousin begged him to do so. PPL6M said his confusion stemmed from, *"worrying about the future - fees and mama."* He added, *"When he died I was pained and worried about who was going to look after me, maybe mama will not manage. Who will pay our fees? I thought about all this but could not get answers - there was nothing I could do."*

At the time of the interview, that is, six months after the father's death, he stated his pain had subsided a bit and thought about his bereavement less especially when he had done something wrong and was being reprimanded by his mother. He thought if he forgot about the death, it might help ease his pain. It was especially painful when PPL6M's father's headache came two weeks after his uncle had been to their house. Their father wanted to take them to South Africa. He claimed that when the headache started they did not sleep as he was in pain.

Family members comforted him. He posited that he dreamt about his father beckoning him to follow him and sometimes chasing after him. He would tell his mother and they found solace in praying together. At the time of the interview it was better though he would

sometimes "*see his picture"* while asleep. He now together with mama always *"ask God why"* his father died.

During the burial, there was a church service at home where there was *"singing and preaching*." Body viewing was done by all. The deceased's clothing items were distributed before the burial by an uncle and they still have all the other property. When they came back from their rural home after the funeral they went to consult a certain woman about the cause of his father's death and were told it was his elder brother's doing. PPL6M claimed he no longer wanted to see this uncle who worked in a bank in town.

The death had an effect on his school performance. He averred that he *"failed"* and *"passed 2 subjects only"* as he lacked concentration. At the time of the interview his concentration was back. PPL6M informed his class teacher about the bereavement when he told him/her that "BEAM" (Basic Education Assistance Module) was going to pay his school fees because his father had passed away and *"the teachers said it will be over.*" At school, he asserted, he did not have counselling from a counsellor. However, if counselling had been done it was also going to *"help"* him. He claimed that they were comfortable at home and his fees were paid. Through all this experience, he asserted, he has *"accepted"* his predicament and he learnt that, *"that is life*." His goal now was *"to become a pilot"* so that he could help his mother and sister.

5.1.7 Introduction to participant PPL1LM

PPL1LM is a 15 year old form 3 male learner at school M. He is a Shona speaker and suggested that he comes from Bulawayo. His mother comes from the Mbatata (pseudonym) district in the Midlands Region and that is where his paternal grandfather stays. Originally his father came from Malawi, where his mother and siblings stay. Currently he is staying with an uncle, his mother's younger brother who happens to be the last born in his mother's family. The uncle is 24 and recently married. PPL1LM claims his uncle recently came from the rural areas and thus is not well schooled in the operations of his business of selling car parts. He is the third born in a family of four, from his mother's side and has two elder half brothers (mother's sons). His youngest sibling is a girl who now stays with his mother's elder sister in Muve (pseudonym). He claims the brothers are thieves who have now been sent to their father by their maternal grandfather. He says he is

not willing to live with them. His father also had a daughter from another relationship with whom they were staying. This girl passed away when she was in grade six. His mother passed away on 30 May 2010 and the father passed away in 2001.

5.1.7.1 Textural and Structural description of PPL1LM's experience of parents' bereavement

His father passed away when he was in grade 1, *"after a short illness.*" At that time he was very young and thus did not know what was happening. He only realised that he did not have a father later. He felt *"it was not good"* for him because as he presents it, he *"saw other children having fun with their parents but it wasn't very bad"* when he still had his mother. His mother gave him everything he wanted. He asserted that he loved his mother who also loved him in return. She was his confidante. His mother passed away on 30 May 2010, three weeks prior to the interview. He felt *"so lonely"* when his mother died because she was the "*only person"* he had. His life *"changed"* and he also became a *"changed person*" because he was *"no longer the same with (as) other children who have their parents*." However, he claimed to be *"looking forward"* and *"never look back"* where he came from.

His mother actually passed away in his presence and he saw her die *"with my (his) own eyes*." She said the following prayer to God; *"I am now leaving my children. There is nothing to do. God is the one who created us."* He also kept on reiterating that his mother *"was in pain*" as she suffered from *"blood cancer*" and would cry due to pain. His mother's *"tummy was swollen.*" He experienced her mother's crying and she would tell her sister that she never knew that one day she would be bathed and would also insinuate that she was going to die because Satan was at work. He reiterated that the death of his mother *"pained him a lot"* because he loved her and she loved him in return. She told him *"to look after my (his) sister*" who was now living with his aunt (mum's elder sister) in Mutare.

PPL1LM now had *"to prepare his own food'* and to *"source"* it too. He got bereavement support through talking to his twenty four year old uncle as they were "*good friends"* and *"tell each other the truth.*" He claimed that he had asked his grandfather so that his uncle could live with him because he could not live with his two elder brothers whom he alleged were thieves.

This bereaved learner experienced problems with relatives in relation to the inheritance of his bereaved parents' property. After his father's death, his paternal relatives from Malawi *"took away most of the property."* He was now *"afraid*" of telling them that his mother had passed away *"for fear that they will come for the property*." They had to *"go to court to resolve the inheritance issues"* and now the house was in his name. However, he now had conflict with his maternal uncle who "*came to fetch the papers for the house"* so that he could register it in his younger brother's name. The uncle argued that his "*father had not paid lobola in full*" and had *"died before the cottage was completely built, so these belong to his sister.*" PPl1LM had decided to "*lie to him (his uncle) that the papers were needed at school"* so that he could be registered as an orphan. He also avowed that if that failed he would *"take further steps.*" One old lady had *"advised"* him to *"wait and see what his (uncle) intentions were."*

His bereavement greatly affected him as suggested by the following, *"I always come to school late because I have to do business before I come to school.*" He kept a cellphone and brought it to school *"so that customers can phone."* Although he knew it was "illegal" he could do nothing since he needed to "*eat*" as his father had *"trained him about the business of selling spare parts".* Furthermore, the uncle he lived with came from the rural areas and did not know much about doing business.

The school was told about the death by his friends. However, nothing was done by the school. His life has changed because he is *"no longer like other children who have parents"* and when his mother died he resolved to *"focus more on my (his) future."*

5.1.8 Introduction to participant PPL2LM

PPL2LM is sixteen and male. He is in form 4. At home he speaks English with his cousins; however, he is Shona and Zezuru specifically. His family home is Sanda (pseudonym). After the death of his mother in November 2008, he ran away from the paternal home to stay with his aunt, his mother's elder sister. He has been staying with the aunt since March 2009 before the father passed away. PPL2LM is the second born from his mother's side. He has a step brother who is 5. His father married a second wife before his mother died. His elder brother is studying medicine at a University in London.

5.1.8.1 Textural and Structural description of PPL2LM's experience of parents' bereavement

PPL2LM revealed that he was born in "*a middle class family"* and lived a *"respectful life*" before the death of his parents as he *"had everything a boy could ever wish for*." He claimed that their home was *"abundantly filled with love"* and they *"had all the quality time"* they needed with their parents. His life trajectory is divided into various stages of experiences. Before his mother's death they had what he described as a *"happy family"* before his *"father changed all of a sudden into a monster"* and became *"violent, alcoholic and in the drama ended up with another wife and another child.*" The father was "*good… before he married (his) 23 year old stepmother."* His "*sorrows were further deepened"* when his mother died in *"November 2008 after suffering from an unknown terminal illness that pathologists could not prove."* He posited that the death was *"surrounded with controversy"* as her family blamed his father for the death.

Meanwhile, his brother and himself *"were stuck in a dilemma and did not know whose side to choose.*" They *"did not want to lose their father*" by choosing their maternal side *"nor did they want to disappoint"* their maternal relatives. However, in the end his brother and himself *"went separate ways.*" The brother went to live with their maternal relatives and he remained at home with his "*very busy father*" who *"spoiled"* him with money. He claimed that he *"knew little what to do with it"* and ended up *"resorting to alcohol to run away from the grief*" of his mother's death. PPL2LM was transferred to an expensive private college "*because of instability in government schools during that period."*

Something *"he had least expected happened"*; his "*stepmother together with her son"* moved into their house. He claimed that, *"not only was he dismayed by this action*" but also *"saw it as an insult*" to his dead mother and *"till then"* he *"never knew life could be that difficult under her various atrocities*". PPL2LM stated that *"there was no option for (him) but to leave (his) own home*" but was *"now too shy to go"* to his maternal aunt's place even though she *"had pledged her support*" to them. He tried many times to tell his father of his *"stepmother's misdeeds but he kept on neglecting"* him. This triggered him to leave home *"without a word"* with only his clothes and headed for his aunt's home where he was "*welcomed with warm hands"* and that made him feel "*remorseful for ever having turned his back*" on her aunt's family. He confessed to his brother about his misdeeds and "*it was a relief*" that his brother "*had not lost faith*" in him and "*advised me (him) to go back to*

church". PPL2LM claimed he had done that and no longer drank beer. Their father *"saw them as traitors to the family and he wouldn't talk"* to them.

It was at this time, three weeks after he deserted home that *"fate turned against"* them and his father "*died in a tragic accident."* He could *"describe this moment as the most shocking period of his life*." PPL2LM suggested that his *"wounds were reopened by his (father's) death.*" He claimed he *"never got over the deaths"* of his parents. This child was *"shocked and could not believe it*" when he heard of his father's death. He said it was "*the most shocking event"* of his life because his father's death *"was different"* from his mother's who *"had been ill*" and they "*expected it in a way.*" His father died when he had run *"away from home 3 weeks before he (the father) died"* to go to his aunt's house.

His father was mourned in Harare and then ferried to their rural village for burial. Many people were in attendance. He divulged that he felt *"guilty*" that his father died and said "*even when doing body viewing"* he could *"see the anger*" on his father's face. He *"did not want to look at him.*" There was a church service conducted by "*some elders"* at the funeral since his father "*had not been going to church after marrying a second wife and resorting to beer drinking."*

PPL2LM still felt *"angry"* with his uncles and stepmother and averred that he "*could not see a day when he could sit down with her at the same table to eat and talk*" because she *"hurt"* him. He just went to her house only to see her son and does *"not even greet her.*" Another thing that hurt him was the sharing of his father's property that "*did not please"* him as his uncles "*grabbed the property"* leaving them with nothing because they had run away from home. The house was given to his stepmother who was "*inherited*" by his 24 year old uncle when they had a memorial service *"in May, a month after (their) father's death*." His uncles *"said she was very young and needed to be taken care of*." One uncle *"who is an accountant took over our (their) dad's shares in the company,*" that comprised of two laboratories. In the meantime, they did not want to pay his fees until his aunt in the UK intervened. The maternal aunt he had gone to could not afford the expensive school fees at the private college, thus, he *"had to come back*" to his former school.

Since then he has had support from his brother who phones him and sends him money and his aunt and her children who have *"given him a home"* despite his *"aunt's stiff rules".*

The deaths of his parents affected him as he was shuffled between schools. However, *"the school only got to know about the deaths last week when the deputy head announced that she wanted to talk to children who had lost their parents in the last year*," hence, he did not get any school counselling. He averred that if he had got counselling *"maybe,*" he *"would not have gone to beer drinking"* after his mother's death as he thought his friends were "*helping him to forget about the sad death*". This learner claimed that because of the bereavement his life has "*changed completely"* because he now lives with his aunt and only visits their house to see his little brother with the elder brother away in medical school in the UK. His uncles now pay his fees but they do not communicate.

5.1.9 Introduction to participant PPL3LM

PPL3LM is 13 years old. She is in form 1 at school LM and is of the Ndebele ethnic group. Currently she is staying with her father and stepmother. Her father remarried in 2009. She is the fourth born out of six. Her stepmother brought in her two children, not her father's. She is a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

5.1.9.1 Textural and Structural description of PPL3LM's experience of parent's bereavement

Her mother had been *"ill for a long time"* and passed away at home as a result of a cancer ailment. PPL3LM indicated that, prior to her death; the mother *"was always in bed and could not walk."* She also confided that her mother had changed, as she was "*very thin."* This seemed to hurt her very much as tears were glistening in her eyes. The child also divulged that on the day her mother died she *"was very quiet.*" She also claimed that when her mother died she was *"not told there and then"* but was only informed of her death when the body "*had been taken to the mortuary.*" PPL3LM was *"taken by her friend so that I could sleep at her house."*

Her mother was mourned at their house in Harare where a Catholic Pastor led the funeral service. There was *"praying and singing*" of church hymns. The mourners *"threw soil into the grave*" and "*all people there did body viewing,"* however, in both cases, she claimed not to know why they were doing it.

When her mother died she was *"really in pain"* as *"she was crying very much," "could not eat neither could I sleep,*" was "*continuously thinking about her,"* had *"tummy ache"* and

"*always dreamt about her during the days immediately after her death.*" However, this disappeared on its own. She also hinted that the pain subsided with time when she claimed; "*Now things have changed, I no longer feel the same pain I used to feel immediately after her death. I am ok now. I used to have a lot of pain."* She however contradicted herself when she later indicated that; *"I am still in pain. I am still in torment/anguish these days."* This could imply intermittent pain upsurges.

She received peer assistance "*when the friend*" made her *"happy by buying her things such as food and small presents*." Her aunt (father's sister) also rendered bereavement support talking to her and *"told me that death happens in life*" and one has to *"accept it."* The aunt also offered continued support that *"if I needed anything I should tell her."* However, at both her previous and current schools, she *"never got any assistance.*" At her previous school she *"never told the teachers there"* and wonders how they got to know about it. A similar situation reigned in her current school the *"learners and teachers did not know about my (her) mother's death*" until *"the deputy head came to our (her) classroom last week to identify the students who had lost parents*." She claimed that if she had received counselling at school it could have helped her not to think about her mother as there has been *"no change so far*" and she *"would have stopped thinking of her very much."*

Her mother's clothes were distributed amongst their relatives by her niece (mother's brother's daughter). PPL3LM also inherited some skirts from the lot. The death affected her school work as she could "*not concentrate and was forgetful*" because she *"continuously thought about her*." As a result of the bereavement, she got *"27 units"* on the four subjects and because of the low grades her father wanted her to repeat grade 7. She was happy her stepmother opted to secure a form 1 place for her at her current school.

5.1.10 Introduction to participant PPL4LM

Learner participant PPL4LM is 18 years old. She is in form 4. Shona is the language spoken at home and more specifically, she belongs to the Zezuru ethnic group. Currently, she stays with her elder brother in Harare whilst her mother is resident in their rural home of Chimba. Her brother (the one she stays with) is the second born out of eight siblings and she is the seventh child in that establishment. Her father passed away on December 22, 2009.

5.1.10.1 Textural and Structural description of PPL4LM's experience of parents' bereavement

PPL4LM's father had a stroke and died in hospital after *"six painful days of illness"* as a result of *"left side celebrovascular accident, hypostatic pneumonia and respiratory arrest."* He died at "95".

She was saddened by his loss as he had been a *"unifying force"* who had *"united our (their) extended family to become one.*" Prior to her father's death she *"grew up in a loving family"* which "*did not have all the luxury things"* but *"were happy"* and "*managed to survive.*" She believed that her "*courage, passion and determination would overcome anything"* but when her father passed away she "*lost everything, my (her) courage, sense of humour," "lost herself*," she became "*frustrated, angry," "shocked"* and *"blamed everyone for the death*" of her father. PPL4LM reminisced about her loving father who was *"loving, caring and who always embraced us (them) with love whenever we (they) needed him."* She seemed to have grasped the finality of death when she proclaimed that *"he is gone forever.*" When she first heard of her father's death she was *"totally in denial*," "*could not believe it*" and *"cried till I (she) could not breathe"* and she wondered why he died without *"saying good bye."* For her that was *"the most painful part of the death."* It *"deeply hurt inside" and she felt like her "head was bleeding."*

Her elderly relatives felt that because of the *"suddenness of the death"* a traditional healer was consulted and the cause of the death was announced to close relatives. A church funeral service was then conducted by a Methodist priest. His clothes were distributed amongst male children and other relatives with girls not receiving anything. As justification for this action she contended that the children were too many, thus the items could not go round. However, the farm remained the property of all children.

After her father's burial, she tried to *"accept that he was no longer among us (them)"* and that *"he was not going to come back."* Family members comforted her and tried to make her *"understand that it was part of life.*" Key words of inspiration were uttered by her mother who told her that "*death should not weaken her but be her source of strength.*" She stated that the death affected her "*completely*" and it had "*changed"* her. It seemed like *"part of me (her) was missing"*, she lacked the will to continue with her schoolwork. Her redemption/salvation came from teachers and schoolmates who helped her to cope with

her bereavement when they "*shared the burden with"* her and gave her back her "*strength and courage,*" she "*felt loved*" and *"from that moment I (she) started to heal*." Although her father is gone, she still declared that, "*he will still be a part of me (her)"* and she vowed to work hard academically to fulfill her father's wishes. She claimed by *"fulfilling his wishes he will stay in my (her) heart.*" What she now needed was to *"learn to live without him for the rest of my (her) life"*. However, seven months post death of her father she still was trying *"to live with it"* and sometimes still felt sad and *"asked why him"* and *"want to cry."* The bereavement experience also resulted in her having *"strong headache"* which still recurred when someone hurt her or when she *"felt lonely and alone"* whilst at home. Relief sometimes came two days after the onset of the headache.

She claimed that the teachers were informed by her friend when she was absent from school during the first few days of opening. PPL4LM also hinted that she was "*different, withdrawn…not very energetic"* and *"quiet because she was grieving."*

5.1.11 Introduction to participant PPL5LM

PPL5LM is a 14 year old female learner at school LM. At the time of the interview she was in form 1. She has an elder brother also attending school at LM. Her home language is Shona and hails from Mutoko in the northern part of Zimbabwe. She is a Christian and belongs to the Methodist denomination. During the past year she also experienced the loss of her uncle (her father's younger brother). He died in South Africa where he had been working. They were very close. The death pained her a lot as the uncle used to buy them food and clothing. However, the uncle is survived by a wife who stays in one of the posh suburbs of Harare who has promised them continued support.

5.1.11.1 Textural and Structural description of PPL5LM's experience of parents' bereavement

She lost her mother due to a uterus ailment that was initially diagnosed by people who saw her "*black tummy."* The mother passed away at home and was taken to a hospital morgue by her mother whence the pathologist confirmed that she succumbed to *"uterus complications*." She claimed that when her mother was alive they *"had a happy home,"* albeit their poverty. PPL5LM also asserted that they were *"poor and would beg from others"* but they were *"content and happy.*" This was in contrast to the time immediately after her

mother's death when she claimed that she *"cried and was in shock.*" She also claimed that she "*gave away all (her) clothes*" after her grandmother had told people that when her *"mother was alive (she) did not share things with others.*" This *"hurt*" her and she "*was very depressed."*

Her mother was mourned and buried at her rural home and people were crying. However, "*others were not, especially those not related to us (them) and men.*" PPL5LM's paternal relatives were absent as they were not aware of the death due to the great distance between their home and maternal relatives' homes. Her mothers' clothes were shared amongst relatives and the remaining clothes were still to be shared in August 2010. She also confided that they (the deceased woman's children) were "*also given to an unmarried maternal aunt who stays in their mother's house."*

When her mother died she "*cried and was in shock.*" She also *"gave away"* all her clothes because her grandmother had told people that when her mother was alive *"she did not share*" her things with others. This hurt her and she *"was very depressed.*" She claimed that she was "*distressed"* because she felt *"there was no one to buy clothes"* for her. PPL5LM claimed to have cried *"when she was buried*" due to the realisation that "*there was no one to take care*" of her and she was not sure whether her *"grandmother was going to be cruel to them.*" However, her fears were unfounded as *"she (grandmother) is ok."*

At the time of the interview, she claimed, "*things*" had "*changed"* as the "*feelings"* she experienced soon after her mother's death were *"no longer the same."* This, she attributed to praying to *"God to help me (her) not to think about my (her) parents' death."* She claimed that when she arrived in Harare people kept on reminding her about it but she tried to cope by ignoring thinking about her mother. PPL5LM said she got distressed if *"someone gives her lots of clothes to wash"* and wished her parents were alive. Support has been forthcoming, for instance, her aunt (the one whose husband died in South Africa) told her not to cry because it was not her "*mother's wish to die and leave them but it was God's will"*. She reassured them that if they "*encounter a problem"* they should alert her. So far, they have done so as their aunt "*stays far away"* and another aunt (mother's younger sister) told them *"not to be distressed too much"* because if they did, their mother would "*come back to take them"* and they would also die.

Traditional doctors were consulted "*to find out about the mystery surrounding her (mother) death*" because her mother was "tormenting" her aunt (her mother's younger sister) claiming that "*she wanted her dress that was stolen.*" One traditional healer divulged that the "*dress was taken by a relative"* and another impressed on them to "*appease the spirit."* She however was not sure of the finer details save that the *"spirit needed a memorial service"* and that was done in April 2010. PPL5LM's grandmother was possessed too and *"they had to do some rituals at the graveside.*" She was not sure of what transpired there.

This young girl asserted that the death of her mother affected her. When *"she tried to read a book at home"* she would *"see her face in the book"* and then would "*stop looking at the book and stop reading.*" The death also resulted in her always being *"absent"* from her former school so that she *"could help her grandmother"* who was old and a weakling. She claimed she would write to school to inform the teachers of her non-attendance. However, now she has *"never been absent"* from her new school.

In her old school, friends asked her about her bereavement and she told them. The teachers knew too *"because in the village there were few people and they got to know about the death early.*" However, *"there was no counselling there.*" At the current school, they only knew about the bereavement when the *"Deputy came to announce that children who lost their parents should come to her office."* No counselling was done there too. According to PPL5LM, had it been done it would have helped her not to think about the deaths. The bereavement experience has taught her that there were many bereaved children like her and some even younger than her. It has also taught her to trust God in granting her any kind of job.

5.1.12 Introduction to participant PPL6LM

PPL6LM is a female 17 year old learner. She belongs to the Ndau ethnic group and is a member of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) which she joined after her mother's death. She has been staying with her brother and his family since 5 April 2010 when she left her rural home in the company of her younger sister. She is the seventh born in a family of eight and the brother they are now staying with is the first born.

5.1.12.1 Textural and Structural description of PPL6LM's experience of parents' bereavement

She claimed her mother died of *"food poisoning"* and had "*a running tummy for many months…six months.*" Prior to her mother's death she was "*very very close"* to her, *"had a good friendship"* and were *"really always happy.*" Their mother *"had to be cared for by her mother (grandmother) at her mother's home"* and that is where she died. PPL6LM and her younger sister accompanied their "*mother to her village and were out of school for a term."* They only returned home after the death of their mother and subsequent burial in her village. She was *"really pained*" by the death and *"was still in pain"* at the time the interview was conducted. PPL6LM claimed that if she went "*deep in thought about it (death)"* it *"stresses"* her and she sometimes thought of *"committing bad things."* She also sometimes *"wished I (she) were dead.*" When asked how she had resolved this, she responded that a friend had talked to her. The bereaved girl "*cried a lot*" as *"it was hurting"* when her mother died. However, a friend at home comforted her and she felt better. She also asserted that there was "*slight change"* now but she still endured "*a lot of pain."*

Another distressing situation arose when they went back home from her mother's village. She went to live with one elder sister whilst her younger sister was taken in by another married sister. However, the sisters *"chased"* them away from their homes and they ended staying at their parents' home just the two of them. They experienced challenges as they "*did not have money for the grinding meal and no money for fees."* When they got the opportunity, they went to their brother in Harare as they used a church bus for transport. She asserted that their *"sister in law was not happy about it and is always shouting*" at them, albeit their *"brother does not know about it".*

The bereavement affected her because "*she spent a whole term out of school*" when her mother was ill and only resumed learning after her death. At the time of the interview, she was now happy as she was now in a better school. She transferred from a *"rural day school to this school* (urban government school)." She also claimed that *"life is hard"* as their brother *"does not buy us (them) items but buys for the wife's relatives"* yet they know that their *"brother has a lot of money but is told by his wife not to buy*" anything for them. She now looks up to "*God's grace*" for a *"good life"* so that she can *"look after"* her mother's children.

5.1.13 Introduction to participant PPL7LM

Participant PPL7LM is an 18 year old male form 6 learner at school LM. At school, he is a prefect. He is a member of the Seventh Day Adventist. His rural home area is in the Midlands region. They speak Shona at home though their home area has a mixture of both Shona and Ndebele speakers. At the time of the interview, his mother had been dead for six months and hence he was staying with his father and two siblings, an elder brother and a younger sister. His elder sister was married when the interview took place. He is the third child in a family of four.

5.1.13.1 Textural and Structural description of PPL7LM's experience of parents' bereavement

His mother began to "*lose weight in January"* and they just attributed it to *"stress, hunger and suffering due to the economic hardship.*" He related that in November of the same year, his aunt (mother's elder sister) took his mother away on the pretext of getting better treatment for her. She did this when his father was out on official duty. His mother and aunt had different fathers but the same mother. When his grandparents died in the 1990s, this aunt claimed she had built the house they lived in and thus was hers. This "*debate*" was resolved because his *"mother's father had left a will"* that named his mother and brother as the heirs. The issue resurfaced when his aunt had taken his mother away. He was distressed when his aunt proclaimed that if she took away their mother and she died no one would live in the house. After that, his mother's "*condition became worse"* and his mother *"then passed away due to serious illness."*

After his mother's death he started *"playing some of my (his) mother's roles*", such as washing dishes and sweeping the house. His mother's death affected his studies as he no longer had time for studying and even contemplated dropping out of school because his father "*is a drunkard."* Before his mother's death, she was the one who scrounged for his school fees. Apart from this, he was *"afraid"* of his aunts and uncles who wanted to take over ownership of his mother's house and wanted them to *"move away.*" This worried him as his mother had not written a will and the issue of the inheritance of the house kept on resurfacing with some claiming *"the house was for the children*" but other relatives arguing on the contrary.

According to PPL7LM the death "*really affected"* him a lot because when his father got paid he gave the money to him to run the house and to *"make sure that everyone gets food."* As a result when the money was inadequate *"studying will be a problem."* He *"missed*" his mother who used to *"cook, wash, buy clothes"* for them and do other motherly duties. PPL7LM indicated that *"playing the role of a mother when you are a student is such a hard time,"* especially for him who was preparing for his final examinations. He wondered how he would "*overcome this problem"* as his sisters and brothers were not responsible enough to run the house; hence, he had "*to play the role"* at the expense of his education.

Apart from the pain he endured when his mother died, he had to contend with his younger sister in form 2 who was "*emotional and always crying"* for their mother. Their father is an alcoholic and gave most of the money to PPL7LM and *"when he wants money for beer or anything he asks"* from him. He had to budget for food, his sister's books and needs, toiletries, bus fare and everything needed at home. This affected him as he sometimes got "*to school late trying to look for bus fare.*" He always opted to give his sister *"bus fare and money because she always says she wishes mom were alive."* This meant that he did *"not go to school on some days*." He claimed it gave him *"stress.*" However, he said he always "*tries to balance*" his work with his *"other duties."*

When his mother passed away, he *"talked"* to his church members and they buried her as he was the only SDA family member as his father was not a church member. His mother's father came from Mozambique, thus, her relatives *"did the cultural things"* in addition to the church service. He did not take part in the cultural rituals as he was a Christian, hence, did not know what transpired.

5.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF COUNSELLORS

Brief background information of counsellors is presented below. However, unlike the children's background information, theirs excludes textural and structural descriptions. This exclusion of textural and structural descriptions of counsellors is deliberate and deemed fit as their role is to give their version of how bereaved learners experience bereavement. Their responses will, however, be used to support the themes.

5.2.1 Introducing participant C1M

C1M is a 42 year old female school counsellor. She holds a Certificate in Education and has been a teacher for the past 18 years (1992 - 2010). C1M has been at the school for 8 years (2002 - 2010). Currently, she is a Justice for Children Trust Coordinator and has no professional qualifications. Her school counselling experience is 5 years (2005 - 2010).

5.2.2 Introducing participant C2M

C2M is between 40 - 45 years old. She holds a Graduate Certificate in Education in Systemic Family Therapy from CONNECT Institute of Counselling. CONNECT is one of the renowned institutes in Zimbabwe that trains general and child counsellors. She has been a teacher for the past 18 years. C2M has been in the school for the past 13 years and has been a counsellor for 7 years.

5.2.3 Introducing participant C1LM

C1LM is a female counsellor whose age range is 40 - 50 years. She holds a Graduate Certificate in Education and has 21 years experience as a teacher and 18 years as a counsellor.

5.2.4 Introducing participant C2LM

C2LM's age range is 60 – 65. She acquired a BSc Honours in counselling from the University of Zimbabwe. Her teaching experience spans over 4 decades as she has 40 years experience. She has 21 years in the school and 20 years as a counsellor.

5.2.5 Summary on Counsellors

5.2.5.1 Gender of school counsellors

A school counsellor's role is to offer support to children in different and sometimes difficult circumstances so as to alleviate their plight. All four school counsellors interviewed in the

two targeted schools were female. If gender of a participant has a bearing on how an individual conducts counselling, female school counsellors, can be regarded more accommodative, motherly and responsive to their clients. This can be equated to the African family context where the mother is regarded as more approachable than the father. However, it could have just been a coincidence that the sampled schools have female counsellors.

5.2.5.2 Professional qualifications of the counsellors

Data reveals that the interviewed counsellors have basic teaching qualifications such as Graduate Certificate in Education and Certificate in Education. Two of the counsellors also have professional counselling qualifications; one has a Bachelor of Science Honours in Counselling and the other one holds a Certificate in Systemic Family Therapy-CONNECT. These counselling qualifications are highly regarded in terms of basic counselling skills. In the counselling qualifications mentioned above, counsellors in training have bereavement counselling as a component of their course. This can have implications on the type of service offered by the trainee counsellor on completion of the course. However, there are other factors such as experience that can impact on counsellors' service delivery. This can also have a bearing on the experiences of the bereaved learners' in relation to both their bereavement and the support rendered at school. The experience in counselling of the school counsellors will be discussed next.

5.2.5.3 Experience in Counselling of school counsellors

The counsellors were asked to indicate their school counselling experiences as this would provide the researcher with insights into the counselling practices in schools. Finding out how the counsellors operate is crucial in determining the bereaved learners' school counselling experiences. The data reveal that the respondents are very experienced teachers as shown in their responses below:

> I have been a teacher for the past eighteen years (1992-2010) I have been at School M for the past eight years (2002-2010). **(C1M)**
>
> Total number of years as a teacher: 18years**.** Total no of years in the school: 13 years. **(C2M)**
>
> 21 years as a teacher. **(C1LM)**
>
> 40 years as a teacher. **(C2LM)**

The teachers' experiences range from eighteen to forty years and give the impression that the teachers have been exposed to a lot of situations pertaining to how learners experience their bereavement.

In response to the question on experiences as counsellors, all four teachers claimed to have counselling experience. This is evidenced in their responses below:

> Currently, I am simply a justice for Children Trust Co-coordinator, with no professional counselling qualifications (2005-2010) (5years of counselling). **(C1M)**
>
> My total number of years as counsellor: 7 years. **(C2M)**
>
> I have 18 years experience in total as a counsellor. **(CILM)**
>
> I have 20 years experience as a counsellor. **(C2LM)**

Although C1M has no professional qualifications as a counsellor, she has been a school counsellor for five years. Being affiliated to the Justice for Children's Trust as a coordinator could imply that she was in-serviced in basic counselling. With such considerable experience in counselling, all respondents can reasonably be expected to have sufficient knowledge of the schools' counselling activities and practices.

Having presented textural and structural descriptions of participants in line with the steps I proposed to take in data analysis, a discussion of the themes follows below.

5.3 ANALYSIS OF THEMES EXPLICATED FROM THE TEXTURAL AND STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTIONS

Van Heerden (2000:126) organised themes in her phenomenological research using the terms **'*eigenwelt'* (**private world of self and significant others; **self**)***; 'mitwelt'*** (public interaction one has with others and society in general; ***self and others***)***; 'umwelt'*** (natural world with biological dimension; ***self and objects***)***; 'uberwelt'*** *(*person's connection with the abstract and absolute aspects such as attitudes, beliefs and ideologies; ***ideologies***)***;*** and ***self and time.*** These ideas are consistent with those of Van den Berg and Spinelli cited in Van der Mescht (2004). Yet, when one closely analyses the inherent meanings in these German terms, they can be equated to physical, psychological, sociological and philosophical dimensions or experiences. For the sake of being reader friendly and to avoid jargon, the main themes have been organised in the following dimensions; **physical, psychological, sociological, philosophical and educational experiences.** This would

help “control” the data and make it more meaningful as the key issue in phenomenological research is to establish meanings of and from experiences (Laverty, 2006). Supporting subthemes were identified from the data and are discussed under each major theme as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Showing themes and sub-themes on bereavement experiences of secondary school learners extracted from descriptions

MAIN THEMES	SUBTHEMES
PSYCHOLOGICAL	**Corroborating what is in the literature:** Pain /hurt; Shock and disbelief; anger; withdrawal from activities; confusion; sadness; fear; guilt; envy; strong aggressive feelings; experiences of spiritual nature; experience of suicidal ideation; PTSD; yearning for the deceased parent; need for security; avoidance; anticipatory grief; complicated grief; disenfranchised grief; ambivalent grief; **New themes emerging from the data** difficulty in accessing/extracting psychological experiences from children.
PHYSICAL	**Corroborating what is in the literature:** Crying; bodily aches & pains; depression; loss of appetite; lack of energy & fatigue; substance abuse; sleep disturbances; dreams and nightmares **New themes emerging from the data** Seeing apparition of the deceased mother’s face in the book
SOCIOLOGICAL	**Corroborating what is in the literature:** Relationship with deceased parent before death; family support; peer support; relocating; experience as head of household; issues of inheritance; experience with step parents; domestic responsibility; economic hardships; experience of church involvement; rites and rituals; body viewing; throwing soil into the grave; visiting a traditional healer; ferrying the deceased to the village; **New themes emerging from the data** relatives possessed and appeasing spirits; child abuse; gender issues. Family relationships/ feuds; being chased from home; role of extended family; running away from home.
PHILOSOPHICAL	**Corroborating what is in the literature:** Concept of death/understanding death; meaning of bereavement experience; New themes emerging from the data new philosophy to life; new work ethics.
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES	**Corroborating what is in the literature**: Problems encountered by bereaved learners; school counselling services; **New themes emerging from the data** reporting the bereavement at school; counselling support; perceived benefits of counselling; challenges faced by counsellors in implementing counselling; suggestion for improvement in counselling provision.

Although some of the themes in Table 5.1 that emerged from the data corroborate what is in the literature, some novel themes also emerged.

5.3.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES

When children were asked about their bereavement experiences, the data indicated a plethora of psychological experiences. These intra-conflicts are reactions that occur within a bereaved individual due to the loss of a loved one, in this instance, a parent. The different cases are discussed below:

5.3.1.1 Anger

Anger after the death of a loved one sometimes breeds pathological grief. After the death of their parents, some children expressed that they felt angry towards different people in their lives. For instance, PPL2LM indicated that he was angry at his uncles and stepmother as noted when he sadly yet vehemently remarked: *"I am still angry …I am especially angry with my uncles and stepmother"* (PPL2LM). His anger was quite deep. He exuded animosity towards his relatives that indicated that his anger can only be appeased through revenge and was only waiting for some opportune time to carry it out. This scenario is not healthy and warrants intervention, hence the researcher's talk with one of the school counsellors. During a follow up session the child seemed to have resolved to ignore his step mother, however, he still wanted to challenge his uncles over distribution of their parents' property (cited in Section 5.2.4.8 below).

PPL4LM's statement cited below also indicated that she was angry and blamed everyone for the death of her father: *"I was frustrated, angry and blamed everyone for the death of my father."* (PPL4LM)

Her anger was directed to family members who had failed to recognise that she was capable of handling the stress of seeing her father in distress. She attributed the anger she felt after her father's death to the fact that she was not granted the opportunity to bid her father farewell as she felt people regarded her as a child, whilst she claimed that she was old enough to understand death. At nineteen, she regarded herself an adult which seems not to have been observed by family members who, by their action of denying her access to her dying parent, considered her a child. If this angry child is left to bottle in the anger it

can have devastating effect on psychological health and thus there is need for the bereaved children to be assisted to verbalise their anger.

5.3.1.2 Shock and disbelief

The interviewed children expressed that they experienced shock coupled with disbelief upon hearing of the death of their parents. This was an immediate reaction to the news of the death of their parents. PPL2M's statement indicates this when he states:

> To me it came as a shock because I did not know such a thing could happen to them. I was in shock! I did not believe it…I was shocked, I could not believe it. I can describe it as the most shocking period of my life. **(PPL2M)**

The shock and disbelief could have stemmed from the fact that he lost both parents in a single incident, a car accident. This traumatic event could be unbelievable to one so young. It could also have been exacerbated by the suddenness of the deaths. He actually terms the period, *"the most shocking period of my life."* This event could have left a great dent in his young life which calls for intervention and postvention measures to be taken by caregivers at home and at school.

PPL4LM also buttresses this point on feelings of shock and disbelief in the following words, *"…I was shocked and could not believe that he had gone forever and would not be seeing him.…"* Learner PPL5LM also expressed the same sentiments, "*When my mother died I cried and was in shock"* (PPL5LM).

The feelings of shock appear to be a prevalent feature in the experiences of bereaved children when they are informed of their parents' death (*cf*. *Chapter 2).* Thus, the bereaved children might remain in denial of the parents' death and this is harmful as it stalls the grieving process. The onus is upon caregivers and school personnel to identify these experiences and assist the bereaved child to face the reality of the death.

5.3.1.3 Withdrawal from activities

When relating their bereavement experiences, some participants revealed that they sometimes became withdrawn and enjoyed their own company. An example is that of PPL2LM who said, "*I sometimes stayed in isolation- recalling why it happened..." PPL3M* also indicated she sometimes had "quiet times." Both terms "isolation" and 'quiet times" cited by the bereaved learners indicate that the children withdrew from active involvement

with other children and their surroundings. PPL4LM clearly indicated that she was *"different, withdrawn not very energetic, quiet*" after her father's death. The school counsellors interviewed buttressed these feelings.

In response to the question on how they identified bereaved learners in their schools, the counsellors revealed that some children became withdrawn and sad after the death of their parents. C2LM confirmed this when she said, *"Some become withdrawn and sad. Others… some become attention seekers...*" This might mean there is a continuum in the responses from being withdrawn to being attention seekers and bereaved pupils will be within that category. C1LM also suggested that bereaved children can be easily identified by their aloofness, loss of interest in activities such as sports, music or group activities. Another respondent, C2M also confirmed that bereaved children are sometimes identified by their lack of participation. These responses confirm that bereaved children portray withdrawal tendencies. This could be a tell tale sign of inward bound grief that is not expressed explicitly but kept within. It connotes a pathological response to loss as the child has not sought external assistance as she or he manoeuvres her or his way through bereavement.

5.3.1.4 Confusion

Some children exhibited confusion upon hearing that their parents were dead. PPL6M suggested that he was very confused and did not know what he wanted to do. The following statement by this respondent reveals this,

> … I cried, I just wanted to run away to some place… I don't know where. I did not know what I wanted to do…. **(PPL6M)**

The death of his parent rendered him helpless and confused forcing him to cry and think of running away but could not find solace in that idea as he did not know where to go. He was baffled by what was happening around him and could not fathom out what he wanted to do. PPL2LM also exhibited that he had confusion as a result of his father's death. He asked himself a lot of rhetoric questions and said, "*…you end up confused".* This might mean that death made him to get confused as he had no answers to what was happening around him.

5.3.1.5 Sadness

Interview responses from interviews and life narratives revealed that the participants were overwhelmed by sadness after the death of their parents. This was evidenced in the following responses:

> I still feel sad, unhappy and hurt a lot. **(PPL2LM)**
>
> Sometimes I still feel sad...if someone makes me cross I feel sad. .I still feel sad but trying to accept the fact that he is no longer among us..**. (PPL4LM)**
>
> I still feel sad and very unhappy when I see other children with their parents. **(PPL1LM)**

For PPL2LM, using synonyms to describe his sadness could endorse the magnitude of the sadness he had after the death of his father. These bereaved children seem to reveal that their experiences of sadness are sometimes triggered by what they experienced around them. The respondents seem to show that their sadness whose onset was after their parents' death had not changed irrespective of the passage of time. If no intervention or postvention occurs, the child would be in danger of depression or posttraumatic stress disorder.

5.3.1.6 Denial

The initial reaction for some participants after hearing that their parents had died was denial. They did not understand that the death was real. PPL4LM echo these sentiments in her words below: "*I was shocked and could not believe that he had gone forever and would not be seeing him. After his burial that is when I realized he had gone for good"* **(**PPL4LM)

As the interview progressed her statements indicated that she was initially in denial and that she really could not believe that her father was dead as she felt that maybe her grandfather might have judged wrongly. These feelings of denial are also suggested in the following words by PPL1M: *"At first I cried. I couldn't believe it!"* (PPL1M)

The bereaved children in some instances faked denial as a way of protecting other family members they felt were emotionally weaker than themselves. For instance, PPL3M pretended to be strong for her sibling and grandmother's sake. This is expressed in the following: "*I was not ok but tried to make myself strong because of my little sister and my grandmother*." (PPL3M)

PPL2LM also purports that his brother was in denial for his (PPL2LM) sake as he felt his brother was hurting but feigned to be in control. This is summarised in the following caption:

> My brother tried not to show his grief but I guess he was grieving too but did not want me to see his pain… I suppose he wanted to protect me so that I feel there is a stronger person there for me. **(PPL2LM)**

He felt his brother was guarding him from pain caused by the bereavement due to the loss of their parent and the pain due to the brother's sadness. This could imply that bereaved children can go into denial to protect others and the self from pain caused by the loss. However, sometimes those they are shielding from pain can guess why the situation is so (PPL2LM) and can actually be pained by it.

5.3.1.7 Fear

As part of the children's responses to what they experienced following the deaths of their parents, some participants claimed to have experienced fear. The 'fears' cited by and large included fear of the unknown: fear of not knowing where subsistence will come from post parent's bereavement, fear of problems of securing school fees. These sentiments can be deciphered from the following captions: "*…I was worrying about the future, my fees, about my mother…who will look after her…"* (PPL6M)

Another participant reflected fear since she did not know where clothing would come from and also worried about how their new caregiver would react towards them. This is shown in the following statements:

> I was distressed because I felt there was no one to buy clothes for me…I realized there was no one to take care of me because I did not know whether my grandmother was going to be cruel to us… **(PPL5LM)**

PPL5LM's remarks could be a pointer at what she values in life at her tender age. Her fears seemed to be revolving around the material things: clothes and care. This could explain why she gave away her clothes when her grandmother suggested that she used to be proud when her mother was alive. This could have been a way of buying love from her grandmother so that she would not be cruel to her. Her fears were however arrayed when she was taken in by her uncle and aunt. Fear can be linked to guilt and other psychological consequences. Guilt will be discussed next.

5.3.1.8 Guilt

Guilt is often derived from the psychological questioning that children often have upon experiencing mystical issues, such as death. The feelings of guilt were exposed in the interview with PPL2LM. He claimed to have felt guilty that his father had died. He posited that, *"I felt guilty that my dad died. Even when body viewing was done- I could see the anger on his face. I did not want to look at him*" (PPL2LM). This could have been a result of the many issues that surrounded this child's existence. He had so many unresolved issues when his father died. These include, among others, that he ran away from home to his maternal aunt's home, the dilemma of not knowing which side to take, his father's or the maternal relations'; he seemed to have unresolved grief after the mother's death as the father brought in a callous intruder into their home when he had trusted him and remained at home while his brother went to join his maternal relatives; his beer binges with his college friends; his fallout with his elder brother whom he felt had betrayed their father when he moved to the maternal aunt's house and his unresolved issues with his father who died a few days after he had run away from home (Data set 2 & Life Narrative). All these burdened his young mind as he had been keeping this to himself. He may have felt that somehow he caused the death of the father by thinking ill of him.

5.3.1.9 Envy

Bereaved children in some instances unknowingly disclosed that they were envious of children with surviving parents. An example is PPL1M who stated: *"I cry a lot when I see people with their mothers I feel hurt"* (PPL1M).

This could be an indication of how bereaved children envy those who still have parents and secretly wish their own dead parents were still around. Bereaved children through their own loss seem to reveal how privileged children whose parents are alive are.

5.3.1.10 Hurt/pain

Some bereaved children expressed that they experienced a lot of pain when they received news of their parents' deaths. For some respondents the pain was present because they related better with the deceased parent and were not accorded the chance to bid farewell to them as in the case of PPL4LM. She had this to say, *"…it was painful…because he was the only person I could talk to. What pained me is that I did not bid him farewell*". According

to PPL4LM, had she been able to see her father before he died the intensity of the pain she felt would have been reduced.

For other respondents, the pain seemed to be persistent as is shown in the statements below:

> When the nurse phoned my sister to tell her that mother had died I was extremely devastated and up to now I am still in great pain…
>
> The feelings are still the same. I am still in great pain. It is still like that (Hesitant) I am in pain. Still the same pain (deep sigh). **(PPL5M)**
>
> The death of my mother really pained me. Up to now I am still in pain. **(PPL6LM)**

Both respondents suggested the pain had not subsided. When grief is not showing signs of reprieve it could imply that the bereaved children are in danger of having complicated grief or prolonged grief disorder. This could be tell-tale signs that the children are in dire need of bereavement counselling.

5.3.1.11 Strong aggressive feelings

From the responses of some of the bereaved children, it was evident that some of them presented strong aggressive feelings, such a hate and vengeance towards some relatives post death of their parents. Examples are cited below:

> I am looking for people to help to help us reclaim our property… there is this thing that appears to be pushing me to want to bother my mother's relatives to help us revenge and claim our property. Now there is hatred between me and dad's relatives. We no longer talk- some are policeman so I feel they would intervene with the course of justice. **(PPL2LM)**
>
> Ma'am, I suspect my uncle has a hand in it because he visited us and then dad got sick. I have heard he is a bad guy. When I grow up I will talk to him… **(PPL6M)**

PPL2LM suggests he wants to revenge against his uncles and step-mother for taking his father's company. He actually needs help to do that. From his statement he believed some supernatural force was behind his stance when he said, *"there is this thing that appears to be pushing me to want to bother my mother's relatives to help us revenge and claim our property"*. 'This thing' could mean a drive that is external and not controlled by the child.

Whereas PPL2LM wants to revenge because of the property he claimed was wrongfully taken from them by their uncles, PPL6M wanted to revenge against his uncle whom he insinuated had bewitched his father and caused his death. Both respondents seem to bring

out superstition as a common element in their analysis of events after the death of their parents. PPL2LM's superstition came out when he referred to the thing pushing him to act against his uncles and PPL6M's appeared when he implied that his uncle bewitched his father. However, for PPL1LM a different form of anticipated vengeance will be meted on his maternal uncle if he tries to swindle him of his property as he will report the matter to authorities and take him to court.

5.3.1.12 Experiences of Spiritual nature

Some bereaved children interviewed revealed that they had experiences of a spiritual nature. This was evident by the way they questioned what was happening to them, quizzing God about their circumstances and wishing they were dead. The following excepts reveal this:

> …recalling why it happened, what wrong I have done…Asking myself why our parents were taken… **(PPL2LM)**
>
> Sometimes I feel sad – I asked why him, want to cry. **(PPL4LM)**
>
> …Now my mother and I keep asking God why my father died. **(PPL6M)**

Even though some of them did not categorically state that they were asking God for answers (PPL4LM), from the responses above, it would appear that the bereaved adolescents wanted answers to their plight from some Supreme Being or source.

The spiritualism is also evident when the bereaved people seek God for solutions to their problems. Both the bereaved learners and the people around them seemed to be dependent upon God for answers and for guidance. For instance it is indicated below that:

> My aunt told me not to cry because it was not my mother's wish to die but it was God's will…
>
> Things have changed …the feelings are no longer the same. I prayed to God to help me not to think about my parents' death. **(PPL5LM)**
>
> Mother passed away in my presence. She prayed and said, "I am now leaving my children. There is nothing I can do. God is the one who created us."… **(PPL1LM)**
>
> We have to continue with our lives. God did it for a reason to take our mother. **(PPL1M)**

From the above statements, it would appear these bereaved children are of the conviction that God's will cannot be questioned, is final and that He has justification for His actions. Both the dying and the bereaved children sought guidance from God.

When individuals resign themselves to God's will it means they would have searched for answers from the natural world resources and failed to find them. Due to the painful experiences one learner expressed a wish for death. This will be discussed next.

5.3.1.13 Experiences of Suicidal ideation

Suicidal ideation implies that an individual feels that death is the solution to one's problems. When relating her ordeal after the death of her mother who was her surviving parent, learner PPL6LM claimed:

> The death of my mother really pained me. Up to now I am still in pain. If I go deep in thought about it…mmm…it stresses me and sometimes I think of committing bad things…sometimes wished I were dead. **(PPL6LM)**

The learner, due to life stresses, sometimes had experiences of suicidal ideation. She claimed the pain she endured post the death of her mother made her contemplate committing "bad things" which from the statement that followed could imply suicide. She hinted that, "*…sometimes wished I were dead.*" The researcher talked to the girl outside the interview and felt she seemed to have resolved her issue of suicidal ideation with the help of her pastor's wife and a friend. However, the researcher took this issue further and advised the school counsellors to assist the bereaved children in schools by talking to them as she felt further interventions needed to be taken for all bereaved learners as well others who might be harbouring that notion.

5.3.1.14 Post traumatic stress disorder

After an event such as the death of a parent, a bereaved individual can be traumatised. Traumatic grief occurs after the death of a significant other and includes grief that intrudes into the victim's consciousness (*cf. Chapter 2*). A parent is a significant other and thus his or her death can have adverse results. From the interview and life narratives, it can be deciphered that some respondents suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. For example, PPL5LM and PPL2LM actually revealed that the deaths had struck them hard and was intruding into their conscience. PPL5LM saw her mother in the book and PPL2LM saw that his father was angry with him while he (the father) was in a coffin. These are examples of how one can be traumatised by a significant other's death. They are tied

together with other grief consequences, such as, guilt and fear discussed in Section 5.2.1.8 above.

5.3.1.15 Yearning for the bereaved

In relating their experiences, some bereaved children indicated that they missed their deceased parents and wished they were alive for various reasons. In PPL2M's case, he wished the parents were alive when he sang at church and he strongly felt overwhelmed upon realising that they were not there to witness the event and cried. He said, *"I felt lonely. I wished they were there. I thought if only they were there …"* (PPL2M)

He further stated that he felt something was missing from his life. This indicates deep yearning for their presence.

The deep sense of nostalgia was also evident in PPL4M's words when he states: *"…I now meet a lot of challenges and wish my father was around…I feel if, my father was alive I would not be in this kind of trouble.."*

From the interviews and the life narratives it was evident that the bereaved children were reminiscing over their past when the parents were alive. For instance, PPL2LM and PPL5LM suggest: "*Before (father married a second wife) our home was full of love and we got everything we needed" (*PPL2LM).

PPL2LM's grief seems to have begun before both parents died. It started when his father married a second wife. He wished he could turn the clock to the time before the parents died when they had a happy home. This yearning for the past was buttressed by PPL5LM too who claimed that, *"When mother was alive we had a happy home. We were poor and would beg from others but we were content and happy"* (PPL5LM).

According to PPL5LM, despite their poverty they were quite content with their way of life when their mother was alive. These children are musing over the deaths of their parents and feel that albeit the challenges they were facing when the parents were alive they wish they were present. They feel they have lost some valuable providers of abundant love.

5.3.1.16 Need for security

From the responses given by the learners during interviews and life narratives, some of the children interviewed showed that they had need for security in various spheres of their lives. Some bereaved learners indicated that when they were told about their parent's death they got worried about their financial and social security. For example some respondents said,

> I was distressed because I felt there was no one to buy clothes for me…. I cried because I realized there was no one to take care of me I did not know whether my grandmother was going to be cruel to us. **(PPL5LM)**

> I was worrying about the future, my fees, about my mother…who will look after her… **(PPL6M)**

> At first I was worried about who is gonna take care of me but now have aunties taking care of me. **(PPL2M)**

From the responses above, it would appear that the children needed security in terms of basic resources, such as fees, being cared for and about the welfare of other family members. For example, PPL6M worried about his mother's welfare. However, PPL2M's worries seemed to have been defrayed as he was taken in by caring aunties. These worries and fears, as portrayed above, symbolise that bereaved learners have primary and secondary needs which need to be satisfied if they are to shelve their fears so as to learn effectively.

5.3.1.17 Avoidance

In response to questions regarding their experiences after the deaths of their parents, some children indicated that they were avoiding being reminded about their deceased parents. For example, PPL5M suggests that:

> When I think about my mother I feel like crying. I then just decide not to think about her. I just divert my thoughts from such issues. I just divert my thoughts from mother's death. For instance, I try to do something that pleases me. For example, at home I watch tv, at school I join my peers and talk about other issues and forget. **(PPL5M)**

The data above reveal that avoidance, as opposed to restoration, could be a defence mechanism employed by bereaved children as a buffer for them not to feel pain caused by the death of their parents. According to PPL5M, not thinking about his mother and diverting his attention to other issues such as watching television and joining his friends is a bulwark

that cushions him from the harsh realities of his situation. However, this only gives him temporary reprieve. What children such as PPL5M need is more than "temporary reprieve", they need to be assisted to "confront" their situation (*cf. Chapter 2)*

5.3.1.18 Anticipatory grief

Anticipatory grief implies that the grieving children began the grief process before the death of their parents, whilst in anticipation of the death of the parents (*cf. Chapter 2*). Respondents who experienced anticipatory grief in this study observed the parents' deteriorating and failing health prior to their death. For instance, PPL5M actually verbalised that he was very sad when his mother was sick. He said:

> My mother had a stroke. For a whole year she could not walk …When she left home (for hospital) she had stopped talking and could not see. It made me very unhappy. **(PPL5M)**

Another respondent who suffered anticipatory grief claimed;

> His illness and subsequent death really pained me. I was very distressed. He was very thin and could not talk. He was ill and helpless. **(PPL4M)**

For PPL4M having to watch her father "helpless" caused her much distress. This occurred prior to her father's death and hence constituted anticipatory grief. However, for PPL4M anticipatory grief did not only end with the father's passing away as she said her mother was bedridden at the time she was interviewed. When she was asked how the bereavement experience had affected her, she divulged that she now had to look after her bedridden mother with the help of her sister and she bent her head towards her left shoulder an indication that the situation was rather too heavy for her to carry. This again portrays that she is grieving for her ailing mother whom she sees as potentially going to die. This was revealed when she was asked about a futuristic orientation towards life, she said, "…so that I can take care of my younger siblings (pause) and to look after mama." The pause could have signified that she was not sure of her mother's presence by the time she would be ready to support her.

PPL1LM also experienced anticipatory grief. He related that his mother's final words to him really agonised him. He quoted her as having said: *"…I am now leaving my children. There is nothing I can do. God is the one who created us"* (PPL1LM).

All the above scenarios have one thing in common that the children who witnessed their parents' illness were emotionally affected somehow. What prompted the emotional responses could be different but the outcome seems to be emotional distress before the parents succumbed to death.

5.3.1.19 Complicated grief

One of the psychological consequences of bereavement is complicated grief. It occurs when the normal grief and the loss process appear stuck and symptoms continue unresolved for some months and the bereaved children have difficulty in functioning normally (*cf. Chapter 2).* Although the sampled children interviewed had lost parents in the last year, some children's reactions to the bereavement were bordering towards complicated grief. For example, PPL2LM's bitterness had not gone away more than six months after his father's death. He still felt deeply betrayed and had problems functioning normally. He could not study, could not concentrate.

PPL2LM's grief could be linked to dysfunctional grieving as he resorted to some maladaptive forms of coping with bereavement when he resorted to alcohol abuse (cf. Section 5.3.2.6). PPL5LM appeared to have experienced complicated grief as she claimed to have seen her mother in the pages of the book she was reading. This shows preoccupation with the bereaved mother and also stagnation and the inability to move on due to grieving. She knew the mother was dead and buried but still saw her appearing inside the book. Seeing an apparition of her mother in a book could have a link with what her aunt had insinuated. The bereaved girl had been told that if she became distressed by the mother's death she would die too and thus could have been haunted and traumatised by the idea that the mother would come back and actually expected to see her. Complicated grief, as the name implies, could retard the grieving adolescent's mental capability and thus calls for early intervention if diagnosed.

5.3.1.20 Disenfranchised grief

Disenfranchised grief is when one's heart is grieving but s/he cannot talk about or share the pain with others because it is considered unacceptable to others. It is when one is sad and miserable and the world does not think one should be, either because one is not entitled or because it is not worth it. It may be restricted by the "bereavement rules" imposed by

society or by one's culture (*cf. Chapter 2)*. A form of disenfranchised grief was evident in PPL5LM's case where her aunt tried to curtail her grieving. She alleged that, *"Another aunt (mom's sister) told us not to be distressed too much because if we do she (mom) will come back to take you and you will also die.*" This was tantamount to denigration of grieving. The aunt was actually blocking the child from following the normal process of grieving albeit using intimidation. This could actually cause more harm than good as it could mean the bereaved child would view the deceased mother as a monster and try to sever the ties with her. Resultantly, the child can develop serious emotional and behavioural problems (Kirwin and Hamrin, 2005).

5.3.1.21 Ambivalent grief

Ambivalent grief occurs when a bereaved person is haunted by the death of someone because they had scores to settle or they had unresolved conflict before the other person died (*cf. Chapter 2)*. Data gathered through interviews and life stories indicated that PPL2LM suffered ambivalent grief and was inundated with guilt after the death of his father. He described that he had run away from home and when his father was in the coffin he felt he was angry with him. This is buttressed by the following words: "*Even when doing body viewing I could see the anger on his face. He was definitely angry with me I could tell, I did not want to look at him"* **(PPL2LM).**

According to PPL2LM he felt he was somehow linked to his father's death as he had disobeyed him when he was alive and more so, that they had not talked about it during his life. The suddenness of his father's death in an accident seemed to have compounded his plight.

5.3.1.22 Main Findings

From the above discussion on psychological experiences of bereaved children, the major issues that seemed to emerge are that bereavement results in intra-personal conflict within an individual (the self) as the bereaved person is inundated by a plethora of emotional reactions. This internal conflict has some of its attributes as pain and bewilderment and leaves residual scars on survivors. The bereaved learner is confronted by inner turmoil which overwhelms him/her with trauma and throws him/her in a quandary, wondering how to resolve the profound experience. It also emerged from the study that most children

interviewed could not verbalise their inner pain. However, some fared better when they wrote their experiences on paper as if to indicate that there was less human intrusion into their consciences. Data also revealed that at times the bereaved adolescent resorted to some defence mechanisms and coping strategies that may be unpalatable, such as, trying to forget about the bereavement or postpone grieving or evade grieving(PPL6M,PPL5LM); suicidal ideation (PPL6LM), locking oneself in the bedroom (PPL6M) and alcohol abuse (PPL2LM) in a bid to alleviate their pain. The data also revealed that psychological experiences seem to be universal, though with variations, and cuts across the gender divide or cultural divide as all the bereaved children experienced grief in one form or the other.

5.3.2 PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES

Bereaved children also present physical reactions towards death of loved ones. Different physical experiences of bereaved children are discussed below. The theme 'Crying' will be discussed first.

5.3.2.1 Crying

In response to the question on their experiences of their bereavement following their parents' deaths, many of the children interviewed divulged that they cried a lot. The reasons proffered to justify why they cried are however diverse. Some cried due to pain for having lost someone dear to them. For example, PPL1M said, "…*at first I cried. I couldn't believe it. But later I overcame the situation but I was still crying."* From the above caption, PPL1M expressed that she cried because she was overwhelmed by the knowledge that her mother was no more and could not come to terms with it. However, there seems to be some contradiction in the statement; "How could she have overcome the situation while she still cried?" Her words could imply that her denial of her mother's death was finally over and she had fully accepted and was acknowledging that her mother was dead, yet she still cried from the pain of that knowledge. She further averred that her feelings were still the same as when she first learnt about her mother's passing away and now (a month after her mother's death) she still cries a lot. During the interview participant PPL1M broke down and cried, as a result the interview had to be stopped and was rescheduled for a more convenient time. She was provided with a tissue by the researcher and reassured that it was normal to cry. This was in line with the ethics of research of vulnerable children (*cf. Chapter 4*). The

period between the time of death and the interview was very short and hence it was understandable that she should still be crying. Talking about her mother's death could have been a trigger that opened a raw wound. Counsellors and teachers need awareness on how to deal with bereaved children as what they might say to these young ones may trigger some memories of deceased parents.

On the other hand, PPL2M suggested that initially he could not stop crying but now (six months post- death of both parents) he cries only when he thinks of his parents. For instance, he cited one special occasion when he cried after singing at church and it dawned on him that his parents were not there to hear him sing and support his efforts. Crying could have been a way of releasing the agony resulting from the realisation of the parents' absence.

Amongst the many reactions they claimed to have had after learning of their parents' death, PPL6M, PPL6M and PPL3LM hinted that they cried due to the pain of losing their parents. Each of them had this to say:

> Her death was a painful experience for me. When she died I cried a lot. It was hurting. **(PPL6M)**
>
> When I heard my father was dead, It really pained me…I cried. **(PPL6M)**
>
> I was really in pain. I was crying very much… **(PPL3LM)**

The children cited above had one thing in common; crying because of pain resulting from their loss. They each expressed that their 'crying' resulted from the pain they endured from the bereavement experiences.

A different dimension for crying was presented by PPL5LM who said she only cried after her mother's burial. She suggested that she cried upon realising that there would be no one to provide her with her needs. This is confirmed by the following message;

> When she was buried that is when I cried. I cried because I realised there was no one to take care of me…. **(PPL5LM)**

The reason she gives for crying might be different from the ones given by other children but what seems evident is that bereaved children cry after the dawning of the realisation that their parents are truly dead.

5.3.2.2 Depression

Children who are depressed may feel hopeless, guilty, angry, have changes in sleeping habits and appetite, withdraw from family, friends and things that they used to enjoy; show a significant drop in school performance; avoid school or social activities; have vague physical complaints like headache or belly ache; and have difficulty concentrating and making decisions (DiMaria, 2011). These characteristic features of depression were evident in a number of bereaved respondents. For instance, guilt was evident in PPL2LM (*cf. Section 5.2.1.8*); PPL2LM and PPL6M expressed feelings of anger over their family members (*cf. Section* 5.2.1.1); some bereaved learners, such as, PPL3LM and PPL6M experienced a drop in their school grades (*cf. Section 5.6);* PPL4LM experienced headaches; PPL3LM also experienced tummy ache; some respondents, such as PPL7LM, PPL3M, PPL6LM, C1M and PPL4LM had problems concentrating in their school work (*cf. Section 5.6*); counsellors C1M, C1LM, C2LM reiterated that the bereaved children also withdraw from family and avoid school and social activities (Data Sets 3 & 4). It would appear depression results in unhealthy consequences that curtail their progress in school and calls for swift action on the part of carers.

5.3.2.3 Bodily aches and pains

Data gathered through interviews and life narratives revealed that children experienced somatic reactions. Some experienced bodily aches and pains such as stomach and abdominal pains. For instance, PPL3LM suggests, "*…I had tummy ache and did not want to eat."* This somatic reaction could have been a result of the psychological pain she endured after the death of her parent. School counsellors and teachers in general need to be vigilant and identify such symptoms.

Another participant purported to have experienced excruciating headaches. This was revealed by PPL4LM who cited the following;

> …I always had headaches…
>
> I still have headaches but only when someone hurts me, for example, at home, if I am alone and feel lonely the headache recurs and persists for two days then disappears. **(PPL4LM)**

According to PPL4LM headaches were a frequent occurrence soon after the death of her father because of emotional turmoil which she described as, *"I lost courage, sense of*

humour, I was frustrated, angry……" However, at the time of the study the headache only occurred when triggered by external stimuli, such as, when someone hurt her or if she felt lonely and reverted her thoughts to the bereavement. The longest duration of the headache, which she claimed to have had, was 'two days' and this was a cause for concern as she reported that it persisted for that duration then disappeared on its own without clear intervention.

5.3.2.4 Loss of appetite

Participants were asked to respond to the question: "How did you react immediately after learning of your parent's death?" The following responses to the question were given with regards appetite:

> I couldn't eat…after 2 days that is when I started eating. **(PPL2M)**
>
> I was really in pain … I could not eat, neither could I sleep. I was continuously thinking about her… and did not want to eat. It finally disappeared on its own. **(PPL3M)**

For PPL2M, he only ate after two days. He was in shock resulting from the sudden loss of both parents who had perished in a car accident. These deaths seemed to have frozen his activities. PPL3LM also cited that she could not eat as she kept on thinking about her mother. This was a psychosomatic reaction as it seems to be a relationship between the mental activity – thinking about her mother and the loss of appetite. From the responses above, it would appear that some participants reacted to the deaths of their parents, by among others, having loss of their appetite. This rejection of food can be associated with emotional pain and can symbolise solidarity with the departed member who is no longer partaking food. If it goes unchecked it may have detrimental effect on the bereaved child's physical and mental health.

5.3.2.5 Lack of energy and fatigue/exhaustion

Respondent PPL6M also experienced extreme tiredness after the death of his father. He revealed experiencing the following, "I also used to feel weak always soon after the death. A lot of exhaustion." This exhaustion could have been caused by many other reactions to the death, such as, mental activity, crying, running not knowing where to go as alluded above and the general intensity of emotions surrounding the bereavement.

5.3.2.6 Substance abuse

Some children experienced behavioural challenges as a result of the bereavement of their parents. Adolescents, such as, PPL2LM and PPL3LM encountered behavioural challenges cited below:

> When my mother died I was transferred to Speciss College where I joined a group of friends and started drinking beer. We would buy beer and drink it before going home and when I got home would just sleep. My father was also drinking and spoiling me by giving me a lot of money. (Sighing) You are the first person I am telling this. This was because of my stepmother. **(PPL2LM)**

From the statement above, it can be deciphered that PPL2LM exhibited self-destructive tendencies. Alcohol consumption at a tender age may impact negatively on one's school work. This was an embarrassing patch in his life and according to him; the researcher was the first person outside the family he had told this as he had confessed the misdemeanour to his elder brother. The young teenager seemed to have found "solace" from drinking beer. It was a way of running away from his stepmother's atrocities.

5.3.2.7 Sleep disturbances

Bereavement sometimes affects one's sleep pattern. PPL3M was affected by her mother's death so much that she could not sleep, among the many other reactions. She claimed that, "*…I could not eat neither could I sleep"* (PPL3LM). This could imply that her mental health was jeopardised. If one does not sleep it could mean that her physical body would not rest and, more so, her brain did not rest too. Prolonged lack of sleep is detrimental to one's health, especially in young children such as herself.

5.3.2.8 Dreams

In response to questions seeking respondents to furnish the researcher with data on their experiences some participants revealed that they dreamt about their deceased parents. The following is what was revealed:

> I was worrying about the future…I used to dream about him asking me to go to him so that we would leave together to where he stays. Sometimes I would have nightmares of my dad chasing after me. I would relate the nightmare to my mother and we would pray.
>
> … Now things have changed, I no longer dream about him as I used to. I now dream seeing his picture…. **(PPL6M)**

> When she passed away I always dreamt about her during the days immediately after her death.
>
> …I also used to dream of her. Now it has stopped. Stopped around April. **(PPL3LM)**

By dreaming about their parents it could imply that both learners missed their deceased parents and subconsciously sought to reconnect with them. PPL6M intimates that he had nightmares about his deceased father and this could be a sign that he had unresolved issues pertaining to his father's death, such as, his suspicion that the uncle had a hand in his father's death. The nightmares could also reveal how the deaths of their parents can emotionally affect the bereaved children. Even in their sleep they were disturbed by thoughts of their deceased parents.

5.3.2.9 Main findings

From the study it also emerged that children express their grief towards the loss of their parents through physical means such as crying, losing appetite and nightmares. However, not all children experience the same physical consequences. It was also revealed that these physical expressions of grief due to parental death are an expression of deeper underlying psychological consequences or interior turmoil. The physical expressions were consciously or subconsciously manifested; for instance, crying could be done consciously and dreams come as subconscious reactions to the bereavement.

5.3.3 SOCIOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES OF BEREAVED LEARNERS

5.3.3.1 Relationship with the dead parent(s) prior to the death

Data collected during interviews revealed that most children claimed they had cordial relationships with their parents before they died. They revealed their attachment to their deceased parents. This is shown in the following individual responses:

> We were very close, very close. I told her everything that I knew (crying, so pause. Gave her tissue) **(PPL1M)**
>
> With my mother we were very very close. We were really always happy. We had a good…friendship. **(PPL6LM)**
>
> I was quite close to her. I talked to her when I had a problem. **(PPL3M)**

> The relationship was good- that good. With dad we would go out to watch movies and to have braai. It was a boys' stuff. Sometimes we would go out with mum. We would sometimes go for shopping. **(PPL2M)**
>
> We loved each other. I loved her and she loved me. **(PPLILM)**
>
> With mother we were very happy. We talked about many things and laughed a lot. **(PPL3LM)**
>
> My father was very quiet but talked a bit. **(PPL4LM)**
>
> When my mother was alive, we had a happy home. We were poor and would beg from others but we were content and happy. **(PPL5LM)**
>
> We were very good friends. We were very close. My mother was closer to me than to all the other children. **(PPL7LM)**

From the above, it would appear that the bereaved children were generally close to their parents. The closeness could be said to have been qualified in different forms. In summary, some participants indicated they were "very very close", others "very close, very close." The respondents proffer the following as justification for how close they were to the deceased parents: they talked about anything and held no secrets with their mothers, especially; they loved each other; they were happy and laughed a lot; one said they had a happy home despite being poor; they talked when they had problems; they went for shopping and to have braais. The children described being 'close' to their parents using their simple language. However, this closeness is "attachment" as highlighted in Chapter 2 and will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

It would also appear that some respondents had reservations about the relationship that existed between them and their now deceased parents. Evidence to these sentiments is revealed in the words below:

> We were good friends but as you would expect of a father and daughter. We had misunderstandings sometimes. But there was no problem; (pause) he wanted the best out of me. We resolved our issues through dialogue. **(PPL4M)**
>
> My mother was my good friend. We would talk about anything. Dad was good …(pause) before he married my 23 year old stepmother (she is 23 now and has a 5 year old son). Before, our home was full of love and we got everything we needed. When mother died her relatives and my father had conflict and I ended up staying with father and my brother with my mother's relatives. **(PPL2LM)**

Both PPL4M and PPL2LM claimed that their deceased parents were their friends and had a cordial relationship. However, the former qualified the type of friendship "… but as you would expect of a father and daughter". It would seem the child was being rational at taking

life as “round” and spiced with both positive and negative things as she categorically stated that she had conflicts with her father but they resolved these amicably. She also expressed that her father wanted the best for her.

In contrast, though PPL2LM enjoyed the same cordial relationship with his parents, the infiltration of an external force, his stepmother, changed the tone of the relationship with his father. This sudden turn of events, marked by the pause in his narration above, marked an end to an era of family love and happiness. He seemed to be still harbouring bitterness towards his father whom he felt had betrayed the family by marrying a second wife. He actually claimed that he felt his father was angry with him even while he lay dead in the coffin. This claim could have resulted from the bitterness towards his late father and his relatives that was still deeply rooted in him. Bitterness can be detrimental to the bereaved child’s psychological health and needs to be nipped whilst in the bud before it destroys the individual.

Other children seemed to be guarding themselves from the pain, as they showed little if no close attachment to their deceased parents. Two examples are given below:

> She was ok. We used to get along very well….My dad passed away in 1995. He had cancer and I did not know him well. **(PPL5M)**
>
> We did not have any quarrels. **(PPL6M)**

The sentiments above reflect detachment from the parents. The children seemed to be hiding their real emotions and did not want to “sell much” by giving details. PPL5M said his mother was okay and PPL6M claimed they did not have quarrels. Both statements reflect a degree of non-committal. It could imply the children (both male) were not comfortable in showing their true emotions towards their deceased mothers.

5.3.3.2 Family support

In relating their bereavement experiences, it was also evident that there was interaction with family members, both nuclear and extended. Some bereaved learners indicated that they had good relationships with remaining nuclear and extended family members. Good relations with family members were portrayed by PPL2LM with regard to his aunt (mother’s elder sister), her family and his brother. He confided that,

> My aunt and her children always ensure that I am happy. My brother in the UK always phones me to check on me, to encourage me to be good, to remind me to go to school and to always take my school work seriously. **(PPL2LM)**

It seems that various members of the family played a role in ensuring stability in his tumultuous life. Other children also seemed to enjoy support and good relations with their family members. For instance, some bereaved learners claimed that relatives talked to them as presented in the following explanations:

> I talk to uncle (my mother's youngest brother). We are good friends. We agreed to tell each other the truth. **(PPL1LM)**

> My aunt (my father's sister) talked to me and told me that death happens in life and I have just to accept it. **(PPL3LM)**

Bereaved children need to be comforted by people they trust, such as family members. From the data, it emerged that some family members comforted the grieving adolescents. The following statements below attest to that:

> My other family members comforted me. My mother told me that my father's death should actually strengthen me. **(PPL4LM)**

> My father helped. He helped us, he comforted us. (still crying) we are 4 and I am the last born, 3 boys and I am the only girl. They (brothers) comforted me saying it happens in life. We have to continue with our lives. God did it for a reason to take our mother. **(PPL1M)**

> All family members are doing fine…they comforted me. We talked and comforted each other. **(PPL6M)**

There are issues that seem to come out from the data above. These are: that comforting a bereaved child involves talking to them and strengthening them, it also involves reasoning together and finding some common understanding of the situation and that even the bereaved child has a role to play in consoling other family members.

Other relatives assured bereaved learners of continued support. This was revealed in PPL5LM's statement:

> My aunt (the one whose husband died in South Africa told me not to cry because it was not my mother's wish to die and leave us but it was God's will. She told us if we encounter problems we should go to tell her at house. We have not because she stays far away in Borrowdale.…

> Another aunt (mom's sister) told us not to be distressed too much because if we do, she (mom) will come back to take you and you also die.**(PPL5LM)**

> If I needed anything I should tell her…

> No I have not yet told her what I need; I do not need anything at the moment. **(PPL3LM)**

It may be a noble idea to assure bereaved children of continued support, however, failure to fulfil this by the people concerned may jeopardise the speedy adjustment of these bereaved learners.

The researcher also unravelled that bereaved children cherished the support of the family members who kept them company and entertained them. To affirm this, one of the respondents made the following statement: *"They helped me by going to church with me, going to see friends. Surprisingly my sister used to fail but she now passes" (PPL2M).*

PPL2M seemed to reckon that the experience of being in the company of his cousins eased his grief burden. This could be the reason why his sister was now passing.

From the data, it also emerged that bereaved adolescents treasure words of encouragement offered by other family members. This was revealed in the caption that follows: "They (relatives) encouraged me that life goes on" (PPL3M).

Another form of family support that emerged from the data was that of provision of school fees and subsistence support for any other requirements such as food and hospital bills. This dimension was brought out in the following disclosure:

> My aunt in the UK pays our fees. My aunt and uncle bought 2 Kombis to assist us. Money generated through the Kombis is supposed to help us. One Kombi is working the other not. That is what is sustaining us. However, in my mother's family they were four, 2 brothers and two sisters. One brother is late so at the moment my aunt is fending for a big family. She has her children in the UK, her brother's and us (her sister's children). It is quite heavy on her...it is tough on her. **(PPL4M)**

> My siblings care for me. I am now staying with them and they are paying my fees. We did not relocate we are still staying at the same house where we stayed with mother. They keep on telling me not to worry much about our mother's death and not to think about it.

> My brother is a kombi driver and does not stay at home much. **(PPL5M)**

From the revelations above, it can be deciphered that family members play a pivotal role in ensuring that the bereaved learners are well cared for. This is a reflection of how nuclear and extended family members support each other in the African context.

However, some elements of strained relations among family members were evident in some research participants' responses. Respondents PPL6LM and PPL4M had this to say:

> My sister and dad had conflict because she was impregnated by her boyfriend. My dad and his younger brother had followed her to where she had eloped and thrashed her. So, she did not want to come back home before our father died. She was very affected by the death as she was away from home when he died.
>
> We were not able to assist each other as siblings because we were all very hurt by his death so none of us had energy to comfort anyone. My younger sister was the most affected because up to now she keeps on saying that she wants to go to daddy. **(PPL4M)**
>
> My elder sisters were actually cruel to us. We were always chased away from home for petty issues. When we came to Harare my brother told us to stay with his family at his home, but my sister in-law was not happy about it and is always shouting at us. My brother does not know about it. **(PPL6LM)**

PPL4M's claim that the siblings failed to comfort each other after their father died is an sad situation as these members of the nuclear family are expected to give one another maximum support. PPL1LM also had strained relations with members of his father's family to the extent that he says, "…at the moment I am afraid of telling them that my mother passed away for fear that they will come for more property…" He also had strained relations with his brothers who he accused of pilfering and claimed he cannot stay with them. Allied to this, he had strained relations with his mother's elder brother whom he claims to be clamouring for his dead parents' property. Details are discussed in Section… on inheritance issues.

PPL2LM is another victim of family members' malice. He claimed that their relatives took everything from them and were refusing to pay fees for him. Again, details of this family feud will be furnished in Section 5.3.3.6 on inheritance. This bereaved child also claimed that his mother's relatives had conflict with his father over the death of his mother as reflected in the following statement: "My mother's death was surrounded by controversy and her family blamed my father for her death." If the people around the bereaved child are feuding the child is thrown into a dilemma not knowing who to turn to for support. This type of experience is detrimental for progressive grieving. It is not only family support that matters to bereaved learners but also peer support which will be discussed in the next section.

5.3.3.3 Peer Support

Apart from family support, some bereaved children enjoyed peer support. This was confirmed in the following statements:

> My friend is the one who made me happy by buying me things such as food and small presents. **(PPL3LM)**
>
> In my old school, friends asked me about my bereavement and I told them. **(PPL5LM)**
>
> My friend informed teachers why I was away from school… I interact with my friends. I got support from my schoolmates. **(PPL4LM)**
>
> They (my classmates) contributed and donated money to support me. They came for the funeral service. I felt very happy for the caring and support. I felt very happy that there were people helping me and supporting me…My friend informed the teachers about my mother's death. **(PPL1M)**
>
> I did tell my friends. My friends comforted me. **(PPL2M)**

From the statements above, it is apparent that the bereaved adolescents received various forms of peer support but the bottom line is that they seemed to appreciate the support tremendously. Whereas PPL3LM's friends provided her with food and small presents, PPL4LM's friends informed the school about her bereavement and PPL5LM "asked" her about her bereavement (which could imply listening to her narrating the events about her mother's death). For PPL1M the friends' monetary contributions and their presence at the funeral was an invaluable contribution that made her "very happy." This could imply that when children are bereaved they value any kind of support from their friends. Relocation and carting of bereaved will be tackled next.

5.3.3.4 Relocation and Carting of bereaved children

Bereavement due to loss of parents resulted in some children being uprooted from their homes and carted to go and live with relatives elsewhere. Respondents, such as, PPL2LM PPL4LM, PPL5LM, PPL6LM and PPL2M are cases in point. Circumstances and reasons behind their relocation are varied. PPL4LM and PPL5LM now stay with relatives in Harare having moved from their rural homes. For PPL2M the case was different as he cited that, "Our grandmothers discussed and arranged that someone rent our house and that we move to our aunt's house." Bereaved children, such as PPL2LM and PPL6LM actually

decided to relocate on their own volition, however, being driven by unbearable conditions at home. Their narrations below bear testimony to this:

> …I ran away from home because of my stepmother…. she said she wanted to stay with us but as you know it is hard to look after someone else's child. I ran away to maiguru's (aunt)… (PPL2LM)
> I was very distressed by my sister. When we went home, I stayed with one sister and the other one took my younger sister in …but…mmm. my sisters chased us away and we ended up staying at our parents' home- just the two of us… we then decided to go to our brother in Harare. I had joined the ZCC church so when the members from Harare came to our place with their bus we grabbed the opportunity and asked for a lift to Harare. That is how we ended up here. **(PPL6LM)**

The two respondents quoted above, have one thing in common: they made the decision to move away from home in order to escape from terrible conditions. However, their decisions differ in that PPL2LM escaped without seeking permission from those in authority at home and on the other hand, PPL6LM had no one to seek permission from, as she was the head of the household. It was also evident from the data that some double orphans (PPL6LM, PPL5LM. PPL2LM, PPL2M except for PPL1LM and PPL5M) moved from their original homes to live with relatives.

5.3.3.5 Experience as head of household

Some children assume the role of head of household when parents are incapacitated due to death or other causes. For instance, respondent PPL7LM revealed that he was literally heading their household in a way. Although the father was still alive, he was incapacitated by alcohol abuse.

> Now I have a problem with my sister who is in form 2. She is emotional and always crying for our mother. My father drinks a lot. He is an alcoholic. When he gets his money on pay day, he gives most of the money to me. When he wants money for beer and anything he asks from me. I have to budget for food, my sister's books and her other needs, toiletries, my bus fare and everything needed in the home… **(PPL7LM)**

The above narration reveals that apart from just being burdened with taking care of the household, he now has to take care of the emotional needs of his sister. At 18, he may be young for that but has to do it anyhow. The respondent's experience could imply that he is being groomed to be a responsible family man as he practically oversaw the running of the home. However, this appears to have been at the expense of his core duties as a child and learner as portrayed in Section 5.2.4.9. There is bound to be role redefinition for the child to fit into the added roles. The father, accepting his failures, surrendered his salary to the

adolescent. In a way, the father may actually be given credit for realising his shortcomings due to alcohol consumption and relinquishing his fatherly duties to the sober teenage son; however, for the son, this can be an overburdening responsibility.

PPL7LM's experience renders him to be classified as head of household (pseudo as it may be) as he has virtually assumed the role of running his father's household albeit neither him not working nor earning a salary.

PPL6LM also had a brief stint as a head of household when she was left to fend for her younger sister at their rural homestead. She claimed:

> When we went back home (from their mother's home), …but mmm… my sisters chased us away from their homes and we ended up staying at our parents' home- just the two of us. We did not have money for the grinding meal and no money for fees... **(PPL6LM)**

In both cases, it is evident that being a head of household comes with added responsibility for the bereaved child. For PPL6LM, the task was insurmountable until she decided to seek assistance from the brother in Harare.

Another case of a child head of household was revealed by PPL1LM's responses shown below:

> …I have to do business before I come to school…. I have to since we need to eat and dad trained me about the business. Uncle does not know much, he came from the rural areas/village…you see. I bought a cellphone for him too.

PPL1LM qualifies to be called a child breadwinner as he is the sole provider for the family members' upkeep through the selling of haulage trucks spare parts. Despite the fact that he is in form 3 and is fifteen, he is taking care of his twenty four year old uncle and his wife, and, above all, trying to raise his own school fees. The researcher returned to PPL1LM's school twice for further clarification; and, in both cases, the child was absent due to non-payment of school fees. He was reported to have missed his mid-year examinations. One wonders what the school as an institution is doing to alleviate the plight of the orphaned children who are failing to pay school fees. A response to this question can be obtained from some counsellors' responses. C1M and C2M revealed that their greatest challenge was not being able to source funding for bereaved children. This was revealed in the following remarks by two counsellors;

> The fear of failing to reach out to them financially cripples feelings of identifying with them. That is, whenever I am counselling them, the greatest obstacle is failure to gratify them in a way as far as solving their material needs. The children need to be financially cushioned and not to be only "God –empowered," so to speak. **(C1M)**
>
> My inability to source income to alleviate the financial burdens of pupils- BEAM. This facility is not really accessible at secondary school level. **(C2M)**

The statements above are an indication that in school M, bereaved children did not receive financial assistance and thus had to carry the burden of sourcing for money to finance their education as Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) was out of the learners' reach. This experience could be a common feature in other schools and thus children are left to scrounge for school fees and other basic needs.

5.3.3.6 Issues of inheritance

In the Zimbabwean context, issues of inheritance are of prime importance after the death of a family member. Data collected through interviews and life narratives revealed that the deceased parents' property was distributed amicably in some cases but in others, significant wrangles were noted. In PPL1M's case, the property had not been distributed by the time of the interview, which was approximately three weeks after the death of the mother. This could have been due to the fact that the funeral was state assisted and relatives could not convene for distribution of property amidst the hullabaloo often associated with big state funerals. Amicable distribution of the deceased parents' property was evident in the following responses by PPL5M, PPL6M, PPL2M, PPL3LM, PPL4LM, PPL5LM and PPL6LM:

> Her clothes were distributed to relatives by her brother's daughter. I was given some of my mother's skirts too. **(PPL3LM)**
>
> My father's clothes were distributed/shared by his nephews to the close family members and the male children. **(PPL4LM)**
>
> Her clothes were shared amongst relatives but some not yet because they had been left in Harare … I heard they will be taken home for distribution in August... **(PPL5LM)**
>
> Our grandmothers discussed and arranged that someone rent our house. Some property was shared among mom's and father's relatives. The items that were shared were clothes, television, DVD and decoders. The house is still ours… **(PPL2M)**
>
> ...His clothes were shared amongst the close relatives by dad's cousin/uncle (sekuru). We (Mother and us children) were assisting them with whatever

> information we had about the clothing items. All the other property was not distributed, only clothes were given away. **(PPL6M)**

Of significance, from the data above, is the unity that seemed to be portrayed in the distribution of the deceased parents' property. Relatives, such as nieces and nephews, distribute the items to other close family members including the deceased person's children. From the above, clothing items and movable property seem to be the main items that were disbursed to surviving family members. Gender bias in the way the deceased parent's property was shared was noted in PPL4LM's case. She insinuated that:

> Girls did not get anything and we only stay at my late father's farm. That is our inheritance. Girls could not get anything because we are a big family so the property was not adequate/enough to go round for everyone. **(PPL4LM)**

It would appear that the respondent had accepted her predicament and resigned herself in the knowledge that boys were the rightful heirs to her father's property. It could be that she was socialised to think that way -that boys have more rights to their father's property than girls.

Another interesting dimension that emerged was that it was not only clothes and other movable and immovable property that are inherited, but children could be inherited too. This was revealed in the following claim by PPL5LM:

> When the items were shared we were also given to one maternal aunt who is not married who stays in our mother's house. We do not stay there but sometimes go there during weekends.

In a way, the inheritance of children could be a way of ensuring that the bereaved children are put under the custody of an adult and are well cared for. In the data above, it was revealed that immovable property was sometimes left to the surviving immediate family members as revealed by the explanations of PPL4LM and PPL2M.

As alluded above, inheritance issues are sometimes full of controversies as revealed in the excerpts below. The issues that are highlighted will be discussed beneath the remarks, as each of the responses is loaded with various faces of inheritance controversy. From the data gathered from bereaved children, it was also revealed that the deceased's siblings grabbed their brother's movable property as evidenced in the statements below:

> … All his possessions were taken by his younger brothers, for instance, the car and all the items from work. We were only given the house. They said these

things belonged to their brother. Furthermore, they said my parents' marriage was not registered; there was no marriage certificate so they were the rightful heirs to their brother's wealth. **(PPL4M)**

Inheritance- my father's mother who stays in Malawi, his sisters and brothers took away most of the property after my father's death. At the moment I am afraid of telling them that my mother passed away for fear that they will come for more property. We had to go to court to resolve the inheritance issues… the house is in my name. I had a step-sister (father's daughter from another relationship) who passed away when she was in Grade 6. I have two elder half- brothers, but they are thieves- one cannot live with them. Before mother died, grandfather surrendered them to their father in Mutare. Mum divorced their father before marrying my father. One of them stole some engine bearings. One is 24, married and has a child. The other one is 19 and still single. **(PPL1LM)**

... My father had not written a will so the property was taken by his brothers and they gave my stepmother the house. She is already married to one of my uncles who was not married. She was inherited when we had a memorial service in May, a month after our father's death. My uncles said she was very young and needed to be taken care of. Her current husband is 24, younger than my brother. My elder uncle who is an accountant took over my dad's shares in the company-my dad had two laboratories. When I went to talk to my uncles about school fees they told me to go back to my aunt's place as I had deserted them. **(PPL2LM)**

The sharing of my father's property did not please me. His brothers grabbed the property leaving us with nothing claiming that we ran away from home. **(PPL2LM)**

Because my mother did not write a will, there were problems with inheritance. My mother had a house left for her by her parents when they died. Mum owned the house ... She had step-brothers and sisters who were clamouring for the house left to my mum and brother. There was a will then-my grandparents had written a will. **(PPL7LM, Data set 2)**

My aunt (my mother's sister) and my mother had the same mother but with different fathers. When my mother's father and my mother's mother died, my aunt started to claim my grandfather's house. She said she was the owner of the house because she had built it and that she was entitled to the house as she was older than my mother. The debate ended upon realising that grandfather had a will. All these quarrels occurred back in the 1990s when we were very young. The same issue resurfaced when my mother was sick and had been taken by her elder sister. What can you say when you hear someone saying "If your mother does not return from where I am taking her, no one will stay in this house…?" **(PPL7LM)**

The data above reveal that the siblings of deceased persons confiscated movable and immovable property ranging from a car, items from work (PPL4M), wife, shares from the laboratories, laboratories (PPL2LM). It is apparent that reasons for confiscating property were that PPL4M's parents did not have a marriage certificate; hence, the property belonged to the deceased's siblings. On the other hand, PPL2LM's uncles took everything

away from him and his brother with the pretext that they had moved away from their paternal home to join their maternal relatives and to give the stepmother the family house. To PPL2LM's dismay, the stepmother was incidentally married off to another uncle barely a month after the father's death. This could have been a way of keeping the house within the family. The experience of the sharing of the family property was done unjustly, according to PPL2LM. He posited that; "The sharing of my father's property did not please me. His brothers grabbed the property leaving us with nothing claiming that we ran away from home." PPL2LM was grieving but at the same time had to live with the unfair treatment he got from his relatives. According to him, this was an unresolved as he suggested that he was looking for ways of contesting the unfair distribution.

For PPL1LM, the father's brothers and sisters from Malawi "took away most of the property after my father's death." Their inheritance issues had to be settled in court. After his mother's death, he was even afraid of telling them that his mother was dead for fear that they would come to fetch more. However, this was not his only worry because after his mother's death, his uncle (mother's elder brother) also came to collect the papers for the house so that it could be transferred to a younger uncle with whom he was now staying. At this point, it would be essential to point out that PPL1LM phoned the interviewer to furnish her with details of what transpired between him and his uncle:

> My eldest uncle came to fetch the papers for the house and said he wanted the house to be in my younger uncle L's name. Uncle L is the last born in my mother's family. He said my father had not paid *lobola* in full and he died before the cottage was completely built, this belongs to him. What does it mean? He now wants to enrich his younger brother, the one recently got married. Now, I will lie to him and tell him that the house papers are needed at school so that I am registered as an orphan. If that fails I will take further steps/actions. I once talked about this with one old lady I am used to, she advised me to wait and see what his intentions were. **(PPL1LM)**

Respondent PPL1LM felt cheated by his uncle whose reasons for taking the papers appeared to be furtive to the child as it meant he would be robbed of his inheritance. The uncle claimed that his father had not settled his *lobola* with them and had died before the cottage was complete; hence, the mother's relatives claimed the rightful owners of their sister's estate. Experience seemed to have taught him a lesson as he suggested that if the ploy he wanted to use against his uncle failed, he would resort to other means. These 'means' could be taking the judiciary route as they once did to fight his father's relatives. These bereavement experiences that are rife with controversies and family disputes are

unhealthy to a child especially one who had lost his mother two months prior to the telephonic interview.

Absence of a will was also viewed as an issue that caused family discord that affected the bereaved children. This was cited by PPL2LM and PPL7LM. PPL2LM claimed that, "... My father had not written a will so the property was taken by his brothers and they gave my stepmother the house." Lack of a will was also highlighted by PPL7LM who made the remarked that: "Because my mother did not write a will there were problems with inheritance." The will could have guided the relatives on the sharing of the deceased's estate as attested by PPL7LM who claimed that his grandparents had written a will that gave his deceased mother the house that was now being contested by his mother's siblings. He contended that: "There was a will then-my grandparents had written a will."

5.3.3.7 Experiences with step-parents

After the death of their parents, some bereaved children had different encounters with step-parents. Of special note were PPL3LM and PPL2LM whose step-parents were incidentallystep-mothers in both cases. Respondent PPL3LM revealed that she had a cordial relationship with her step-mother as stated in the narration below:

> … My father married another wife who has two children of her own. Things changed when I first saw her because she showed me love and bought me dresses. By then we were not staying with her. We stated living together after some time. When I achieved 27 units (in grade seven) my father wanted me to repeat, my mother refused and looked for a place for me at this school and got it. **(PPL3LM, Life narrative)**

PPL3LM seemed quite content with the healthy relationship that existed between herself and her step-mother. She appeared well groomed and this could probably authenticate her allegations.

In contrast, PPL2LM suggested that he had an unpleasant experience while staying under the same roof with his stepmother. In the interview, he alleged that:

> I am still angry and hurt. I am especially angry with my uncles and step-mother. I don't see a day when I can sit down with my stepmother at the same table – to eat and talk happily…she hurt me. I go to see her but not her…I do not even greet her….. My elder brother and I agreed to be close to our young step-brother but not her. I ran away from home because of my step-mother. **(PPL2LM)**

This statement includes the adolescent's swearing to never befriend his step-mother. That means the child was hurt, not physically but emotionally. The experience with the step-mother left an internal wound that was still bleeding and seemed unforgivable. Internal wounds take time to heal. The hostility that existed between PPL2LM and his step-mother was also shown in his life narrative. He revealed the following:

> …something I had least expected happened, my step-mother together with her son moved into our house. Not only was I dismayed by this action, but I also saw it as an insult to my dead mother. Till then, I never knew life could be that difficult, under her various atrocities. **(PPL2LM, Life narrative)**

According to PPL2LM, his step-mother really hurt him with "her various atrocitities." To cap it all, his father brought in this woman whom he (PPL2LM) felt was a traitor to stay at their family home. This was abhorrent in the face of this bereaved child. It led him to doubt his father's sincerity in his attachment with his family. Before the mother's death, he never had complications as he alleges that:

> Before the death of my parents, I was living a respectful life in GN. I had everything a boy could ever wish for. Our home was abundantly filled with love and we had all the quality time we needed with our parents." **(PPL2LM, Life narrative)**

However, this was taken away from him by the death of his mother and what could also be taken as the death of their father's love for his family as he claimed that, "My father all of a sudden turned into a monster" (PPL22LM, life narrative). This was after he took in a second wife. Above all, he felt that bringing in the step-mother to stay at their family home was "an insult" to his dead mother. In his eyes, his father had sinned against not only his elder brother and himself, but also against his mother. When the researcher sought clarification on the "various atrocities" the adolescent just shrugged and said "I just have to ignore her" (PPL2LM). Probably the child was hurt and did not want to discuss it any time soon. However, bottling emotions can be hazardous to the child's mental health. Furthermore, this bereaved child claimed to be "still angry and hurt" by his uncles and step-mother. These bad bereavement experiences seem to be emblazoned in PPL2LM's mind and he holds a deep grudge against the step-mother. This could imply that he is stuck and is not moving on with his grief process. There might be danger of pathological grief (*cf. Chapter 2)*. His situation might even need a counsellor's intervention for him to let go of the deep hurt he holds towards the step-mother, his uncles and the deceased father.

5.3.3.8 Domestic responsibility

Bereaved children sometimes find themselves taking upon added roles after the death of their parents. For instance, PPL4M and her sister found themselves having to care for their ailing mother. This is confirmed by the following words: **"…**but now we have to look after mama. My sister and I take turns to look after our mother" (PPL4M); this is a mammoth task for a sixteen year old girl and even worse for her younger sister. They have to juggle school demands and domestic chores.

Some bereaved children indicated that they did laundry and washing of dishes. For instance, PPL5LM suggested that: "For example, if someone gives me lots of clothes to wash, I think of my parents' death and wish they were alive." The phrase "Lots of clothes to wash" indicates that the work may be too heavy for a 14 year old girl. PPL3M also indicated that she washed dishes at her granny's house. The most striking experience was that of the adolescent boy who claimed:

> After my mother's death I began playing some of my mother's roles. I could wash dishes, sweep the floor etc… I have to see to it that everyone at home has eaten…Playing the role of a mother when you are a student is such a hard time. **(PPL7LM)**

Despite the fact that he is male, he has taken over what he terms as his "mother's roles." He claims that these roles are taking a toll on his study time and are actually depressing him as the finances are often limited. According to him, this is further compounded by his sisters and brother who are not well organised.

5.3.3.9 Economic hardships

Economic hardships were identified as some of the prevalent challenges that were experienced by bereaved children following the deaths of their parents. These economic challenges were exposed in the following:

> I now have problems with school fees. We are five and four of us need school fees; as a result we are always sent home to collect school fees… my mother was in hospital and was discharged last Friday. She bought some medicines but could not afford the other drugs not found in the hospital…. **(PPL4M)**
>
> Granny pays the bills … It is hard on granny to pay fees. **(PPL3M)**
>
> Usually when there is no money I cannot study. **(PPL7LM)**

> … We did not have any money for the grinding meal and no money for fees…. **(PPL6LM)**

All the respondents cited above seemed to concur that lack of money complicated their situation and caused them a lot of stress, especially with school fees. PPL7LM's statement that, "Usually when there is no money I cannot study," seems to sum up the plight of these bereaved children - that lack of money definitely affects productivity on the school front. They would need to first satisfy their basic needs and then focus on school as a secondary need.

5.3.3.10 Experiences of mourning

Some children indicated that church services were held during their parents' funerals/burials. For instance, PPL1M, PPL3M, PPL1LM, PPL4M and PPL6M suggested that many people came to their houses and there were church services. There are however, some who indicated that they had church funerals and emphasised that there was nothing traditional about the whole experience of burial. This was reflected in the following statements:

> There was a church service. Lots of people came to our house….
>
> There was nothing traditional. We had a pastor that preached. **(PPL3M)**
>
> This was a church thing with no cultural thing. **(PPL2M)**
>
> My mother was of the Apostolic sect Madzibaba so there was singing and praying and no traditional stuff. **(PPL5M)**
>
> Because he was a Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), church members came, sang and prayed. Because he was an SDA church member, SDAs do not involve themselves in cultural things, they just bury their dead. "No nyaradzo, no guva." **(PPL4M)**

The above statements purport that these people did not mix various religious beliefs - Christianity and traditional rituals. There were, however, some who experienced a mixture of both beliefs, such as, PPL4LM and PPL7LM. Despite the latter being a Seventh Day Adventist, he was thrown into a situation in which he had to compromise his beliefs. Below are PPL4LM and PPL7LM's remarks regarding the mixing of traditional and Christian rituals:

> I am a member of the SDA church. I am the only one who attends. I talked to the church members and they came to bury my mother. Mom came from Mozambique so her relatives did the cultural things. There was an old man who

> was close to my grandparents who did the traditional things. I did not attend that part because as a Seventh Day Adventist we are not allowed to do that. My father is a war vet does not go to church. **(PPL7LM)**
>
> We had a church service after they had been to the traditional doctor to find out about the cause of death. **(PPL4LM)**

In a way, both children were not involved in the traditional rituals. PPL7LM suggested that he did not attend the ceremonies relating to what he termed "cultural things" because of his religious affiliations. Being a Seventh Day Adventist, he was not allowed to take part in those traditional rites; more so, he had asked the church members to come to bury his mother. His participation in the rituals would imply that he was selling out and acting contrary to his Christian values. In PPL4LM's case, the Methodist church service only took place after the elders had been to see a traditional doctor to establish the cause of death. He refers to those who went to consult the doctor as "they" implying that he was not part of the delegation. Participation in the traditional rituals appears to be selective and a prerogative of adults. Children do not enjoy this experience; as a result, they may even not be consulted or appraised of the goings on. As a result, this bereavement experience may remain a mystery for children.

Of special note was PPL2LM who intimated that his father's funeral church service was conducted by elders who were not ordained priests because he was no longer affiliated to any church after he got married to his second wife and started drinking beer. He intimated that:

> There were many people crying and talking about him. There was a church service held by some elders… He had not been going to church after marrying a second wife and resorting to beer drinking, so one elder conducted the service. **(PPL2LM)**

The father's falling out of grace was regarded by the son as somewhat degrading as he paused when he was talking about it. When talking about the numbers that attended his father's funeral, he appeared confident only to falter before explaining why he was buried by elders and not ordained clergy. This experience could be tied to his earlier pronouncement that his father became a "monster" after marrying a second wife. By implication, the villain was the step-mother.

5.3.3.11 Public or private mourning

Mourning in the contemporary society can be viewed as public or private, depending on the deceased's status in society. The data gathered portrayed these variations. For instance, bereaved learner PPL1M's mother was a soldier and also a Liberation War Veteran. Due to her status as both soldier and Liberation War Veteran, provincial hero status was bestowed upon her and she was buried with full military honour. This is revealed in PPL1M's words that,

> …she was a soldier so the Commando did it, conducted the funeral…there were many people. There was Gun Salute because she was declared a Provincial hero. She was a war veteran… **(PPL1M)**

PPL1M's words could be a reflection of how society has changed in terms of its views of mourning and bereavement. More so, for PPL1M to experience her mother being bestowed hero status could have affected how she viewed bereavement. She claimed that she was proud of her mother. However, this type of mourning may sometimes delay the bereaved child from the onset of grieving and mourning for the dead parent while she accords other members of society to do it.

5.3.3.12 Rites and rituals

5.3.3.12.1 Body viewing

According to the respondents, body viewing was a common practice during their parents' funerals. Some responses to the question: "How did you mourn the death(s)?" reveal this:

> Everyone did body viewing. Rituals still to be done. (**PPL1M)**
>
> Body viewing was done by all. I also went for body viewing. **(PPL3M)**
>
> We did body viewing. **(PPL4M)**
>
> There was body viewing done by everyone willing to do… **(PPL6M)**
>
> We did body viewing; all the people present who were willing did it. **(PPL2LM)**
>
> We had body viewing at home not at the graveside. **(PPL5LM)**

It would appear that body viewing was done by everyone who wished. Children who wished to do it were also granted the privilege. PPL5M revealed in the following statement that body viewing was done to bid farewell to the deceased person:

> There was body viewing. … The body was taken out and body viewing was done… Body viewing is done so that one sees the dead person for the last time. **(PPL5M)**

In agreement, PPL2M also revealed that,

> There was body viewing. We were also allowed to do the body viewing to say our goodbyes to our parents. The church choir sang and there was bible reading. Mom was buried first. **(PPL2M)**

However, for PPL3LM, this ritual did not seem significant as evidenced in her response, "All the people there did body viewing… mmm…I do not know why we did it" (PPL3LM). She did not seem to fathom what the ritual symbolised. This could be a pointer to how children are regarded as passive consumers of unexplained practices.

5.3.3.12.2 Throwing soil into the grave

Participants divulged that another ritual that was observed during the burial of their parents was the throwing of soil into the grave as evidenced in the following statement:

> The body was carried to the family graveyard. Close relatives were asked to "throw" soil onto the body before it was covered with soil ... I am not sure why it is done. **(PPL5M)**

It is apparent from the above statement by PPL5M that the respondent was not aware why this seemingly common ritual was conducted.

5.3.3.12.3 Visiting a traditional healer

Some of the interviewed bereaved children claimed that after the death of their parents, the family members went to consult traditional healers to find out the causes of their relatives' death. Responses below portray some of these respondents' sentiments:

> Because of suddenness of death the people at home –the grandparents went out to "kunovhunzira"(ask the traditional healer about the cause of the death). Sekurus and vanambuyas announced what they found out from the traditional medicine man to our adult close relatives…
>
> When he passed away the family gathered together to make contributions - money to buy clothes for the deceased and a coffin and for other expenses. We had a church service after they had been to the traditional doctor to find out about

> the cause of death. The closest family members gathered for feedback from the traditional doctor…
>
> The elders went to a traditional healer to "ask" how it happened and who had caused it before burial. **(PPL4LM)**
>
> When we came back from our rural home after my father's burial, we went to consult a certain woman about who had caused my father's death. She said that my father was killed by his elder brother... **(PPL6M)**

According to both PPL4LM and PPL6M, a traditional healer was consulted so that the cause of death could be exposed. This included the one who had caused the death and how it had happened. PPL6M divulge who the perpetrator was, whilst PPL4LM was cautious and only revealed that close family members were informed about what the traditional healer said. Whereas in PPL4LM's case, only elders went to consult the healer, PPL6M insinuates that he was also part of the contingent that visited "a certain woman." This could be the reason why he felt that the woman's revelation was not classified information and could be revealed to the researcher.

5.3.3.12.4 Ferrying the deceased to the rural village

In response to the question on how culture influenced their bereavement experiences, some respondents indicated that their deceased parents' corpses were ferried to their rural homes for burial as is typical in some African cultures, whereby one's remains are interred together with those of their forefathers. Examples are shown below:

> My mother was ferried to our rural home in Wedza. **(PPL5M)**
>
> We mourned my father in Harare and then went to Sanyathi for the burial. **(PPL2LM)**

Some parents' corpses were taken to their rural homes as the deceased indicated their preference before they died. PPL4M's father is one such case. She indicated that,

> We mourned at our house. My father had indicated that he wanted to be buried at our rural home (Gutu). He was buried there - no.. oh ..no sorry. What happened is that his body was ferried there but the people in Gutu were adamant that he should not be buried there. I am not sure why, (pause) but some said he was not their blood relative implying that grandfather was not his biological father. We had to bring him back to Harare. We buried him at Warren Hills.

The deceased had explicitly expressed his wish to be buried in his rural home, which apparently was not but his step-father's. This situation could be stressful for the survivors, especially the children who might not be aware of their genealogy. It was also expensive to

ferry a corpse to and fro, considering that the wife of the deceased was not well and needed money for medication and that the deceased's four children needed school fees (Data set 1).

5.3.3.12.5 Appeasing spirits

Another aspect of culture that was unravelled in the interviews was the issue of appeasing the spirit of the dead. According to PPL5LM, when her mother died, the elders went to a traditional healer to seek assistance in appeasing her mother's spirit that was tormenting her aunt. The spirit demanded to be given back a dress that had been stolen. This issue is supported by PPL5LM's words below:

> When my mother died, the elders went to a traditional doctor to find out about the mystery surrounding her death. Her spirit was tormenting my aunt (her younger sister). She (mom) was saying she wanted her dress that was stolen. My aunt would be possessed by mom and talk about the dress. They went to one sekuru (witchdoctor) who told them that the dress was taken by a relative. They went to another where they were told to buy a dress to appease the spirit. I am not sure of the other details. The spirit said she needed a memorial service this was done in April 2010. She possessed her mother too and they had to do some rituals at the graveside - *vazokomba guva*. I do not know what was happening. Children were allowed at the graveside during burial even when the rituals were done. **(PPL5LM)**

It is evident from the above statement that the bereaved child was witness to her aunt and grandmother being possessed by her mother's spirit. This experience could have an everlasting effect on the child as she battles to understand how her dead mother could be talking through another person. The involvement of the traditional healers could imply that the issue was too complex for the ordinary person to solve; hence, needed the expertise of someone who also operates in the spiritual realm. The avenging spirit needed to be appeased to prevent further disturbances as it had already manifested itself through two family members.

As highlighted by PPL5LM, the process followed to appease the spirit was dictated by the deceased and with the assistance of a traditional healer as is common in the African culture. The family was ordered to buy a dress; normally, these demands are uncontested as relatives would be afraid to challenge the spirit that can strike unexpectedly. PPL5LM also brings in another form of appeasing the spirit - that of holding a memorial service for the deceased that was done in April 2010, approximately five months after her mother's bereavement. She claimed that rituals were performed at the graveside and she terms this

as “vakakomba guva” (literal translation meaning they surrounded the grave, meaning bringing back the spirit/soul of the deceased), however, this involves chanting to the spirit, singing, clapping, pouring of beer and snuff, dancing and taking the spirit of the deceased person home so that it can protect the survivors (Shona Registers Vol.3 & 4). This traditional ritual varies within families and clans; and, for this respondent, she claimed not to have the finer details of what transpired. In contrast, most children interviewed revealed that they did not conduct any traditional or cultural rituals; instead, they had church services (see Data set 1 and 2). Child abuse will be discussed next.

5.3.3.13 Child abuse

The study, through interviews and life narratives, also unravelled cases of child abuse that were perpetrated on the bereaved learners by caregivers. Cases of verbal abuse were cited in the following statements by PPL3M and PPL6LM:

> ... I feel low when granny starts shouting… **(PPL3M)**

> When we came to Harare, my brother told us to stay with his family at his home, but my sister-in-law was not happy about it and is always shouting at us. My brother does not know it. **(PPL6LM)**

Some cases of physical abuse were also insinuated in the bereaved children’s responses. Below are some examples:

> …for example, if someone gives me lots of clothes to wash, I think about my parents’ death and wish they were alive. **(PPL5LM)**

> I was very distressed by my sister. When we went back home, I stayed with one sister and the other one took my younger sister in…but mmm… my sisters chased us away from their homes and we ended up staying at our parents’ home- just the two of us… My elder sisters were actually cruel to us. We were always chased away for petty issues. **(PPL6LM)**

The statements above indicate that some bereaved children are subjected to torture of varied nature by their caregivers. For example, PPL5LM was subjected to heavy laundry and PPL6LM and her sister were treated as outcasts by their own flesh and blood. These abuses can cause a lot of mental stress which can impact negatively on the bereaved child’s grief process; consequently, the child’s school work will be also adversely affected. The abuses may thus have negative ripple effect.

5.3.3.14 Gender issues in bereavement

Gender issues always surface in many spheres of one's life and bereavement experiences are no exception. Data gathered through interviews and life narratives reflected that some bereaved girls had domestic responsibilities after the death of their parents, especially their mothers. For instance, PPL3M, PPL6LM, PPL4M and PPL5LM had various domestic roles after their mothers died, as portrayed in Section 5.2.4.10. However, some bereaved boys such as PPL7LM and PPL1LM also took up domestic chores. PPL7LM claimed to have performed his mother's duties of cooking, providing food for all family members and cleaning the house. PPL1LM stated that:

> …It is now different. When I needed something I would get it from my mother. Now it is different. They had a company. If I need food now I am responsible. I have to prepare my own food. I have to source it too. **(PPL1LM)**

For some males, these chores are insurmountable; however, these children had no choice. It means PPL1LM was now sourcing food and preparing it for himself. Previously, these chores were his mother's, but now after her death he adopted them. Sometimes the young ones fail to balance between household chores and school work and end up deteriorating. They may need guidance in balancing their roles so that there will not be any role conflict.

Data also revealed that some of the male respondents reacted to their bereavement experiences with anger. For example, PPL2LM and PPL6M were both angry with their uncles. They both exuded some strong emotions for the wrongs done to them by these relatives. Both indicated a willingness to revenge for these wrongs (*cf. Section 5.2.1.1)*.

5.3.3.15 Main findings

The data presented above on sociological experiences of bereavement reveal that bereaved children are more forthcoming pertaining to information about social consequences of their bereavement that include the relationship of the self with the other than they are on psychological issues. It was also revealed that the type of attachment the child had with the other people in his or her social milieu determined how the child experienced bereavement. This is revealed in the family relations portrayed in the data. The spatial context in which the child existed also had a role to play in what the child experienced after the death of a parent or parents, for example, relocating. This context made each child's case to be unique as each case bore different social and emotional

effects. In essence, context and the bereavement experience are inextricably interwoven in relation to one's lived experience. It also emerged from the data that bereavement brings about change of routine and role redefinition that transcends gender lines in the life of the bereaved child as some children became heads of households due to their bereavement (PPL7LM) and had to do the "mother's roles". The study also revealed that children enjoyed support or lack of support from the "others" around them such as family, peers and teachers. It also was divulged from the data that bereavement heralded secondary losses. Gender issues were also evidenced, for instance in PPL4LM's case, where property was shared only amongst male offspring. The belief in life after death was also revealed in the study as some children such as PPL1M and PPL5LM scribbled a message to their dead mothers and claimed to have seen their mothers in the books respectively. Traditional African beliefs of consulting traditional healers to ascertain the cause of death and appeasing of spirits were also experienced by bereaved children. The influence of Christianity was also evidenced in the study as the deceased parents were buried by church organisations irrespective of their non-attendance at church (PPL2LM; PPL7LM). Above all, it was unravelled that children need psychosocial support from people around them in order to traverse through bereavement hurdles.

5.3.4 PHILOSOPHICAL EXPERIENCES

5.3.4.1 Concept of death/ understanding of death

Another revelation by some orphaned respondents was that age was a factor to be considered when looking at bereavement experiences. Some of these respondents lost a parent whilst they were still young. PPL1LM confided that, "My mother's death pained me….When my father died it did not affect me much because I was young." He attributes his limited intensity of pain after his father's death to young age. This was buttressed by PPL5LM who intimated that, "My father passed away in 2003. I can't remember much about this… I was very young." This participant claims not to recollect her experiences of bereavement after the father's death due to age. It would appear that the respondents cited above had one thing in common: being bereaved of a father whilst young and not being overly attached to the deceased. This could be because they lost their fathers; as a result, their mothers were there to protect and care for them.

From the responses of bereaved children, it was revealed that death is final. For instance, PPL4LM and PPL4M suggested that,

> …I was shocked and could not believe that he had gone forever and would not be seeing him. After his burial that is when I realised he had gone for good. **(PPL4LM)**
>
> I have now realised that he is really, really, truly dead. **(PPL4M)**

One respondent suggested that the father "had gone for good" and the other one said her father was "really, really, truly dead." By implication, these two respondents reflect that death was final and signifies permanent separation from the deceased parents.

The data gathered by the researcher also revealed that the younger participants viewed their loss of a parent in terms of loss of material things. For instance, one of the bereaved adolescents highlighted that, "It means losing someone who was looking after you. Yes, someone who was looking after me…" (PPL5M). This statement sounds egocentric and concerned with the individual child. The child seemed worried about her immediate needs. This could hinder the child's progress in school as she would be preoccupied with worry about her bereavement.

5.3.4.2 Meaning of bereavement experiences - new philosophy

Phenomenological rigour requires that the interviewees provide information on meanings derived from their experiences (*cf. Chapter 4*). In this study, the meanings were sought through the fohllowing question: "You have been through this bereavement experience, what does it mean to you?" Various "meanings" were proffered by the bereaved adolescents. Some children hinted that they were now focusing on their future. For instance, some respondents intimated that:

> I am now focusing on the future. **(PPL1LM)**
>
> Specifically, life is not the same. God has His own plans. I think I am gonna be a well behaved man having a good life. **(PPL2M)**
>
> I have accepted my predicament and say that is life. I want to become a pilot so that I help my mother and sister. **(PPL6M)**

The respondents cited above seem to have one thing in common: the resolution of looking into the future and not dwelling on the past. It could be that all have accepted their predicament and see no point in reminiscing about the past. The school counsellors need

to be conscious of these resolute positions in order to assist the learners to stay focused, at the same time giving them space to grieve for their dead parents. In other instances, bereaved learners can give decisive words such as the ones stated above as a façade whilst their hearts are bleeding inside. Again, counsellors would need to probe so as to be aware of the learners' real position.

Some bereaved learners suggested that after experiencing the bereavement, they resolved to work hard in school and not to take life casually. The following responses attest to that:

> It has taught me that life changes. It is up to me now to work hard in school and pass and have a bright future. **(PPL2LM)**
>
> I realise my father is gone…I have to live with it and I have to work hard so that I achieve what my father wished for me. **(PPL4LM)**
>
> (With her head balancing on her left hand) This experience has taught me to be serious with my school work so that I can take care of my younger siblings (pause) and to look after mama. I need to look after her; for instance, my mother was in hospital and was discharged last Friday. She bought some medicines but could not afford the other drugs not found in the hospital. My aunt in the UK is not working at the moment so the husband is the one actually helping us. **(PPL4M)**
>
> It taught me that life is not a joke and something to waste. Before, I did not take life seriously. Now I just want to be into my work. The pastor said he would come to talk to us but is still to see us. **(PPL3M)**

All the above responses illustrate one common element of the bereaved children's eagerness to work harder at school so that they transform their lives for the better. For instance, PPL2M who lost both parents was hoping for a "bright future" after working hard. Some respondents such as PPL4M intend to work harder so that they can be breadwinners in their families and take care of their parents and siblings. PPL4LM also indicated she wished to work harder at school so as to fulfil her father's desires.

For some, it means accepting their situation as it is and continuing to live their life. They seem to have resigned and placed their fate into the hands of God. This was evident in PPL5LM, PPL6LM and PPL1M's allegations below:

> This experience has taught me that it is not only me who has lost parents. There are some very young children. If I continuously think about my bereavement … How about younger children? What I aim for is to do any job God grants me. **(PPL5LM)**
>
> It means that we all have our time to live and our time to die. I have to just live my life. Just to continue to live my life. **(PPL1M)**

> I now look up to God's grace so that I have a good life so that I can look after my mother's children. **(PPL6LM)**
>
> I have accepted my predicament and say that is life. I want to become a pilot so that I can help my mother and sister. **(PPL6M)**

PPL5LM claimed that she no longer wanted to dwell on the past and whine because she has realised there are younger orphans than herself but just has to focus on what God has in store for her. The same applies to PPL6LM who also was now counting on God to assist her to have a "good life" so that she can help her siblings. PPL1M seemed to have decided to take one day at a time and live her life until she dies as she had realised life was finite. This child's mother had died three weeks prior to the interview and was still trying to accept the reality of her mother's death, hence the resigned attitude. PPL3LM did not respond to this question even after the researcher had rephrased it. Her silence was taken to reflect that this might have been too abstract for her age or she viewed her situation as quite bleak and lacked any hope for a better future

5.3.4.3 Main findings

From an ideological perspective, the study revealed that adolescent learners are aware of the finality and irreversibility of death (PPL4M; PPL4LM) and that the perception the self has of death may be dependent on age (PPL1LM; PPL5LM). It also emerged that bereavement is instrumental in the creation of new orientations and paradigms towards life as many of the bereaved learners highlighted their new perspectives to life post death of their parents which were as a result of reflection of the evolution of their lives. These signified change in the mental mapping of the lives of the children and this evidenced reflectivity on the part of the bereaved learners. Bereavement, thus, makes one reflective as it meant they had reflected upon their experiences of bereavement and came up with future oriented resolutions. The change also signifies the concept of temporality (self and time) as the bereaved learner's trajectory shifts from one point to the other, marked by the past, present and future. The children had to accept their predicament (being bereaved and the experiences thereof) in order for them to be future oriented. Data also revealed that for some children, God's divine intervention was needed to salvage them from the doldrums of unpalatable lives.

5.3.5 BEREAVED LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOLING

Research participants were asked to respond to the questions: "Did the mourning/grieving for your parent(s)' death affect you at school? How did it affect you? Describe in some detail how it affected you. Give examples of what happened." Some children claimed that the death of their parents did not affect their school work. This is shown in the captions below:

> So far, there is no change in my school work. They (my classmates) contributed and donated money to support me. They came for the funeral service. I felt very happy for the caring and support. I felt very happy that there were people helping me and supporting me. So far nothing has changed at school. I am still brilliant. **(PPL1M)**

> There was no change. No change at all. **(PPL5M)**

The children cited above felt there was no change in how they performed. This could indicate that due to the recency of the death, there is still no omprovement in the attitude toward the parent(s)' death. For instance, the interview was done three weeks after PPL1M's mother's death.

For some children, the death of their parents served as a motivator for them to work harder so as to accomplish what the dead parents wished for them. This was portrayed in the following sentiments by PPL2M, "No it gave me hope. It gave me a lot of courage to work harder."

Some of the interviewed learners indicated that the deaths of their parents affected their level of concentration within varying degrees and with varied effects. For instance,

> Not really that bad - a little bit hard concentrating. It is hard on granny to pay fees. **(PPL3M)**

> My father's death definitely affected me. I failed at school… I only passed 2 subjects. I am now a bit better at school. After the death I was away for only 3 days, however when I was at school I lacked concentration due to worry. ….Now……am concentrating. **(PPL6M)**

> This affected my school work...last year when I was in grade seven I would not concentrate and was very forgetful…. I would not concentrate in my school work as I continuously thought about her as a result I had 27 units. **(PPL3LM)**

> When I came back to school I was depressed and lacked the will to continue with my schoolwork. It felt as if part of me was also dead. I came back to school late. I had headaches so could not concentrate much in class. I wanted to cry. I was different, withdrawn not very energetic quiet ….because I was grieving. **(PPL4LM)**
>
> The death of my mother affected my studies. I could not concentrate in my studies. I even contemplated dropping out of school because my father is a drunkard and before my mother died she was the one who used to provide school fees. I was also afraid of my aunts and uncles because they wanted to snatch mother's house from us... this affects me because sometimes I get to school late trying to look for bus fare. **(PPL7LM)**
>
> …I even thought of dropping out of school because my father is a drunkard…Playing the role of a mother when you are a student is such a hard thing. Now I am about to write my final exams, so how can I overcome this problem? ... My education is really being affected by this situation. **(PPL7LM's Life narrative)**

PPL3M hinted that it was "a little bit hard concentrating." The reason could be that she was worrying about how her grandmother would raise school fees as implicated in the statement: "It is hard on granny to pay fees". According to the data above, for PPL6M and PPL3LM, the inability to concentrate resulted in their dismal performance at school. The former only passed two subjects while the later attained 27 units and the best result one can attain is 4 units, which implying that she was below the expected mark. PPL4LM also indicated that she lacked the will to work hard at school. Evidently, the death of a parent affects one mentally and obstructs one from concentrating. PPL7LM seemed to have a mammoth task at hand of looking after a family and that affected his concentration to the extent that he contemplated dropping out of school.

The death of a parent creates a heavy burden on the caregivers as they have to scrounge for school fees and other basic needs. PPL4M suggested that,

> The death of my father affected my school work. I now have problems with school fees. We are five and four of us need school fees as a result we are always sent home to collect school fees. Sometimes money comes from our aunt (my mother's younger sister) in the UK.
>
> I used to be very good in class but now deteriorating because I am always absent. I used to be at a boarding school where we had ample time to study – we really would study but now we have to look after mama. My sister and I take turns to look after our mother.
>
> When father was there, he would urge us to study - he would say "you should read and read," therefore, I was very good. **(PPL4M)**

Apart from overburdening caregivers, PPL4M brings in one dimension that is now lacking in her life: her father's words of encouragement that urged them to study harder. She claims

that her work has deteriorated probably due to lack of encouragement, compounded by her movement from a boarding school to a day school and notwithstanding the added burden of looking after her ailing mother.

Similarly, PPL1LM also suggested that the death of his parents affected his school attendance. He complained of late coming as he had to do business before he got to school. In conjunction to that, he also claimed to be breeching some school rules. This is evidenced in the following statement:

> I always come to school late because I have to do business before I come to school. I keep a cellphone and bring it to school so that customers can phone me. I know it is illegal but I have to since we need to eat and my dad trained me about the business. Uncle does not know much he came from the rural areas/village …you see. I bought a cellphone for him too. **(PPL1LM)**

Apart from the above, the researcher also discovered that the respondent failed to write his mid-year examinations due to non-payment of school fees. All these developments can have negative repercussions on a learner.

Revelation of absenteeism from school were also divulged by some respondents.

> Yes the death of my mother affected me. When I tried to read a book at home, I would see her face in the book and then I would stop looking at the book and stop reading. I have never been absent at my current school but when I was at my mother's rural home I was always absent so that I could help my grandmother because she is old and is a weakling. I would write to school to tell them that I will not be attending school. Now I am ok because I am always at school. **(PPL5LM)**

Like PPL4M, PPL5LM claimed that she was always absent from school at her former school to take care of her old, ailing grandmother. One can imagine the chores the young girl had to do. At least, she informed the school about her absenteeism, and, as she claimed, the school was in the village where she lived, hence, everyone knew about her predicament (Data set 1).

Another key issue that was unravelled through interviews and life narratives was the experience of being transferred from one's school. PPL4M and PPL5LM were transferred from their former schools as is indicated in their statements. Similarly, PPL2LM was transferred from his present school to a private college and back as is highlighted in his narration below:

> I was transferred from Speciss College back to my present school because my aunt could not afford the high fees. When my mother died I was transferred to

> Speciss College where I joined a group of friends and started drinking beer. We would buy beer and drink it before going home and when I got home would just sleep. My father was also drinking and spoiling me by giving me a lot of money. (Sighing) You are the first person I am telling this. This was because of my step-mother. She had said she wanted to stay with us but as you know, it is hard to look after someone else's child. I ran away to maiguru's (aunt's) and my father stopped paying fees for us. My aunt could not afford the fees so had to come back to my former school and three weeks later my dad died in a car accident. No one at home knew about my drinking – I confessed to my brother after our father's death. He advised me to go back to church. I have done that and I no longer drink**. (PPL2LM)**

From the above, it is evident that the death of a parent causes an upheaval to the probably normal school life of the bereaved learners. For instance PPL2LM had to indulge in unruly behaviour after being transferred from one school to the other.

However, not all children encounter problems when they transfer from their previous schools as highlighted by the statement below:

> It affected me a lot because I spent a whole term out of school but now I am happy because I am back in school. I transferred from my rural day school to this school. **(PPL6LM)**

The learner appears to have actually settled well in her new school after staying out of school for a term.

5.3.5.1 Main findings

The study established that bereavement due to parental loss affected the learners in the following panoply of ways:

- Although some learners professed no change in their performance after the death of their parents, some indicated that their performance was negatively affected (PPL6M; PPL3LM), with lack of concentration being the militating factor.
- Bereavement also resulted in children being transferred from one school to the other (PPL5LM; PPL4M; PPL2LM).
- Due to the loss of their parents through death, some learners dropped out of school, whilst others contemplated dropping out of school due to the challenges related to bereavement.

- It was also disclosed that some learners endured hardships in securing school fees and money for other subsidiary resources relating to school attendance.

- Absenteeism and late coming were also featured as major challenges encountered by bereaved learners after the deaths of their parents.

5.3.6 SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICES

5.3.6.1 Reporting the bereavement at school

To establish their experience on the reporting mechanisms in their school, the bereaved children responded to the following question: “Did you inform your teachers/school counsellors about your parent(s) death?” A myriad of responses on the reporting channels of their bereavement were given. For some, friends played a pivotal role in informing the school as expressed by the responses below:

> The school was told by my friends**. (PPLILM)**
>
> In my old school, my friends asked me about my bereavement and I told them. The teachers knew because in the village, there are few people and they got to know about the death early. **(PPL5LM)**
>
> My friend informed the teachers about my mother’s death. **(PPL1M)**
>
> My friend told my classmates. **(PPL5M)**
>
> I did tell my friends. **(PPL2M)**

Another set of respondents claimed that the school only knew about their bereavement when the researcher got to the school to collect data for the current research. This is evidenced by the following statements:

> I did not tell the teachers. Ma’am (senior woman) asked about us when you had come. (**PPL2M)**
>
> The teachers did not know until the senior woman came to ask for children who lost their parents. **(PPL5M)**
>
> The school only got to know about the deaths last week when the deputy head announced that she wanted to talk to children who had lost their parents in the last year. (**PPL2LM)**
>
> …At this current school, other learners and teachers did not know about my mother’s death. I got no help. They only got to know about it when the deputy head came to our classroom last week to identify the students who had lost parents. **(PPL3LM)**

It was also reported that relatives played a role in informing the school about the bereavements as in the case of respondent PPL3M who said, *"I think granny told the school."*

In another case, the school got to know about the bereavement through the village grapevine as in PPL5LM's case. She hinted that, "*The teachers knew because in the village there are few people and they got to know about the death early".*

One respondent indicated that she was not sure how the teachers knew about her parent's death as was indicated by PPL3LM who suggested that, "*…I never told the teachers there… but I don't know how they got to know about it."*

PPL4M pointed out that she had informed the school about her bereavement as portrayed in the following statement, "Yes, I informed my form teachers of my former school about my father's death when I wanted a transfer letter." It is apparent that she just informed the teachers on her way out of the school as she needed to proffer a justification for a transfer so that she could get a letter to help her secure a place at another school.

5.3.6.1.1 Main findings

The above revelations by different respondents may be an indication that there is no clear cut policy in the two schools visited on the reporting of bereavements. This might have a bearing on the counselling that is rendered or not rendered to orphans in the schools

5.3.6.2 Counselling support received/not received at school

Some bereaved children who were interviewed, received support at school from peers and teachers. This is confirmed by PPL4M, PPL4LM and PPL6M's statements;

> …The teachers talked to me. They were helpful. They told me that life goes on and this changed my perspective to life. **(PPL4LM)**
>
> …I was counselled and told that these things happen in life and that an individual can improve his or her life through education. **(PPL4M)**
>
> After the death of my father, I told my class teacher why I had been absent…. that my father had died. The teachers said things will be ok after a while. **(PPL6M)**

The respondents cited above seem to have been strengthened by the teachers' support. It appears they were both "told" what to do by the teachers.

A sizable number of respondents claimed that no counselling support was rendered to them at school. The following sentiments were aired by some respondents:

> …Hmm… teachers did nothing. There has been no counselling so far. **(PPL1M)**

> The deputy head stays in the same area but heard after the funeral, no support. I never got any counselling. **(PPL3M)**
>
> I did not get any help from the school. My friends only conveyed their condolences. **(PPL5M)**
>
> The teachers said things will be ok after a while. I have had no counselling by a school counsellor. **(PPL6M)**
>
> I did not get counselling at school. **(PPL2LM)**
>
> I never got any assistance at my previous school… **(PPL3LM)**
>
> In my old school ... There was no counselling there. **(PPL5LM)**

As illustrated above, the bereaved children claimed that they had no counselling experience at school.

5.3.6.2.1 Main findings

The children's claims that they did not get any counselling could be an indication that children did not understand what the term counselling meant. This could imply that both the bereaved children and non-bereaved children are given a similar treatment at school. However, a bereaved child such as PPL6M suggested that the teachers had talked to him, but he may not have regarded the teachers' messages as counselling.

5.3.6.3 Perceived benefits of counselling

Although most children claimed not to have been counselled at school, some seemed to have a hazy knowledge of the benefit of bereavement counselling and at the same time appear to be sceptical about it. The responses below attest to that:

> It was going to help in some way? I am not sure. **(PPL1M)**
>
> …. I think if I had got counselling it would have helped. **(PPL6M)**
>
> If I had got it maybe I would not have gone to beer drinking after my mother's death. I thought my friends were helping me to forget about the sad death. **(PPL2LM)**
>
> Had counselling been done, it would have helped me in encouraging me not to think about the death, otherwise it might end up boring. **(PPL5LM)**

From the above sentiments, one could decipher skepticism as all four participants were not definitive about the benefit they would have derived from bereavement counselling. They remained tentative by using terms such as, “I am not sure, I think, maybe.” This could be a pointer that children are not only ignorant of what counselling entails, but are not exposed to it.

In contrast, participant PPL4LM seemed to have benefitted from the bereavement counselling she received; as a result; she seemed quite content. After the teachers talked to her, which presumably implied bereavement counselling, she experienced some relief and stated that,

> I am always happy at school. I interact with my friends. I got a lot of support from my schoolmates… From the time I felt teachers and my friends were on my side, I got my strength back and started working hard again. **(PPL4LM)**

This could imply that counselling brings about a convivial atmosphere that nurtures a sound mental health that is conducive for learning was attained after receiving bereavement counselling.

Interesting facts on how children experienced bereavement counselling at school also emerged from teachers/counsellors’ responses. The information seemed to contradict the earlier reports by children in section 5.3.6 of this document; that they did not experience any counselling after the deaths of their parents. The school counsellors claimed that they indeed counselled bereaved learners of different ages. This was confirmed by their responses to the question, “What age group of learners in this school have you had to counsel because of the death of their parents?” Their responses were as follows:

> I have counselled 12-15, 16-18 years. **(C1LM)**
>
> I have counselled12 -20 years. **(C2LM)**
>
> I have been counselling the 13-18 years. **(C1M)**
>
> I counselled 7-18 years. **(C2M)**

These responses reveal that the counsellors claimed to have counselled bereaved children who incidentally could be others not in the sample. This case could reflect the segregatory nature of the counselling in the two schools.

5.3.6.3.1 Main findings

The revelations by the bereaved learners and school counsellors could imply that there is a gap between what the schools claimed to offer and the reality of what constitutes bereaved learners' experiences of school counselling. This borders around the idea that counselling practice may not be well spelt out in the schools under study.

5.3.6.4 Problems experienced by bereaved children

Bereaved children encountered considerable emotional, physical and social problems. Data revealed that bereaved children sometimes fail to adjust after the bereavement and have no choice in decisions made about them. C1LM indicated the following:

> The pupils find it difficult to adjust to their predicament. Pupils have no choice in decisions made about them... they are abused in several ways and in most cases there are no immediate solutions to these problems. **CILM**

Children were also said to be encountering problems of abuse. They were being abused by relatives. The following statements bear testimony to this:

> A pupil was being sexually abused by a guardian who happened to be the only close relative to the pupil. The aunt whose husband was the abuser/perpetrator defended her husband. The pupil is HIV positive and on medication. The matter was referred to Justice for Children but no immediate solution was found **C1LM**.

> A girl orphan staying with an aunt, was made to wake up around 3 in the morning to do all the housework before going to school, also do the nappies for aunt's granddaughter, comes to school without eating, goes back home to find people have already eaten and that nothing had been left for her, prepares supper but cannot dish out food for herself, aunt then later dishes out a small portion for her. Babamukuru (aunt's husband) claims she is wife number two therefore could sleep with her…

> Child labour-child made to do all housework/chores before coming to school, yet even when, guardian has got her/his children, they will be doing nothing or not much. Sexual-uncles proposing to sleep with the child **C2M**.

The two respondents quoted above brought out painful cases of abuse perpetrated against already injured children. The first one is like giving one a death sentence. By infecting the child who is already struggling emotionally the abuser is rubberstamping that the child must suffer more both emotionally and physically. Counsellors find it hard to deal with children who have been abused and sometimes breakdown instead of helping the child. The second child cited by C2M was being abused both physically by having to do chores before she

went to school, and emotionally, by being subjected to physical torture which then translates to mental torture as the child struggles to find answers to the abuse as the aunt's husband insinuated that she was his wife. If teachers and counsellors are not aware of these abused children's plight, the children will perpetually endure pain.

The counsellors also cited that children sometimes lost family breadwinners and have to contend with a grieving surviving parent who is failing to come to grips with her partner's death. For example, C2LM gave the following account:

> There have been lots of children involved in grieving. Lots of counselling was involved in the area. Some parents crying and pupils were affected by the parents. Some parents were also called for counselling because their grieving affected their children so much. Some pupils were counselled because they were now engaged in behavioural problems….A mother lost a husband who was a breadwinner and the children caught her crying all the time, so the children got so affected. I called the mother and recommended her to go for AIDS test. She did and she was found positive and was counselled and she is now living positively. **(C2LM)**

The account above reflects that school counselling interventions sometimes help both the bereaved child and the surviving parent; however, their situation needs to be identified first.

Some children were reported to have deteriorated in their school performance, for example, due to emotional, physical and social problems. This was well articulated in the following words by C1M:

> The problems range from emotional, physical to social. Emotionally, the children become withdrawn and reserved. They hardly participate freely and they find it very difficult to express themselves. They usually deteriorate in performance. Physically, they can be frail or hungry looking. Socially, they have a few friends and usually fail to raise the fees at school. Therefore, they are forced to drop out of school…One of the girls in the school lost both parents at a tender age. She started reasonably well in form one with a relative paying her fees. Later, due to economic hardships, she started losing weight and must have been an AIDS victim because of ceaseless illnesses. Finally, she dropped out of school due to lack of fees and total neglect from relatives. **(C1M)**

Some of the problems that were cited of being withdrawn and not participating were also given by PPL4LM, who claimed that after her father's death she became withdrawn and lacked interest in some activities (Data set 2). Being withdrawn is often accompanied by the child not sharing concerns with others and this may result in morbidity as the child will not be grieving normally. The sad story given by C1M seemed to confirm what the other counsellors had said. The problem of HIV and AIDS is rampant in school and it actually

puts an extra load of work on these counsellors as they counsel bereaved children as they will not only be confined to grief counselling but also other forms of counselling.

5.3.7 CHALLENGES FACED BY COUNSELLORS IN IMPLEMENTING COUNSELLING

All the four school counsellors interviewed indicated that they faced many challenges in counselling bereaved children. Some of the challenges highlighted include convincing pupils to persevere against the children's lack of basic subsistence materials such as food, uniforms and shelter (C2LM, Data set 3). She felt she would not be doing enough to counsel them emotionally when their other needs were not met. She also claimed to have other challenges, such as counselling abused bereaved children as caregiver are generally not forthcoming to assist them and solutions to their plight is generally limited. She claimed that:

> Yes, the knowledge and skills are there but in terms of crisis e.g. abuse, the solutions are rather limited. Pupils will not have alternative relatives to stay with or a home to move in quickly. Relatives refuse with documents e.g. death certificates of deceased parents for pupils to access help. **(C1LM)**

Abuse issues seem to be a common feature in counselling of the bereaved children as was mentioned by the counsellors, however, no child mentioned it. C2LM also indicated that she sometimes had challenges in counselling abused bereaved children (girls) as they will be abused by caregivers. The following were her words:

> I feel I can counsel the girls but sometimes it is very difficult when girls have been raped by breadwinners because everybody in the family turns against them. There are several pupils whose parents or guardians say that they were raped and were in a worse predicament than themselves (pupils).
>
> The process of reporting is rather slow because some of the cases ought to go through psychological services. **(C2LM)**

According to C2LM, counselling abused girls who will be abused by the family breadwinner puts both the counsellor and the child in a dilemma because if the case is reported, all the other members who depend on the breadwinner would be in against her as they feel she would have betrayed the whole family and she would be subjected to more torture over and above her other bereavement experiences. The counsellor too would be in a dilemma because it is mandatory that all abuses should be reported.

Data also indicated that the counsellors had concern and some fear over their shortcomings in terms of providing counselling to children who have lost their parents. For example C1M and C2M indicated that:

> Sometimes, otherwise, I am usually generally at a loss because these children would like to receive every day attention, day to day affection. Of course, the words of comfort release their stress. What they really hunger for is permanent (everlasting) affection. Above all, society should sympathise with them by helping them financially.
>
> The fear of failing to reach at eh to them financially cripples feelings of identifying with them. That is, whenever I am counselling them, the greatest obstacle is failure to gratify them in a way as far as solving their material needs. The children need to be financially cushioned and not to be only "God-empowered," so to speak. **(C1M)**
>
> My inability to source income to alleviate the financial burdens of pupils- BEAM. This facility is not really accessible at secondary school level. **(C2M)**

These two seem to have phobia that they might fail to help the bereaved children. They can talk to them and encourage them but they feel it is more than counselling that these children need; they need money and unconditional love that cannot be obtained from strangers. This could imply that the role of the counsellors should go beyond mere talk but to include other facets that would make the bereaved child emotionally, socially, physically and mentally healthy. The support given by government, BEAM, is not helping the secondary school learners who are the concern for this current research.

Another issue raised in the interview was lack of support by counsellor's colleagues at school. C2LM indicated that:

> Lack of support from colleagues. One actually arguing that giving too much support emotionally and otherwise would worsen the plight of these orphans and that they would have to stand up and face their own struggles. **(C2LM)**

It appears that the counsellor saw a contradiction in the way counselling should be done and what colleagues viewed as counselling. One colleague actually advocated for the counsellor not showing too much emotional support. It could have been that the other colleague intended to say there should not be too much attachment that inhibits normal functioning and encourages too much dependency.

5.3.7.1 Main findings

The data above reflect that there is lack of synchronisation in the delivery of services in the two schools visited as the counsellors did not enjoy support from colleagues; there was lack of financial resources and this constrained service delivery; there was lack of confidence in dealing with these children; and, there was lack of individualised attention due to shortage of time for more one to one meets and dealing with sensitive issues that did not enjoy prompt or positive response.

5.3.8 Analyses of syllabi

In both schools, there was no Guidance and Counselling slot on the school official timetables. This could imply that the schools did not value it in such a way that it could not be included, or that the teachers included aspects of counselling as part of their daily pedagogy or alternatively that the timetable was overloaded with examinable subjects. The secondary school Guidance and Counselling syllabi analysed did not have any section relating to orphans and there was not much clarity on counselling.

Notwithstanding the value of counselling training offered in private institutions and universities, the life skills syllabus for initial teacher trainees in one secondary school teachers' training college (not named for ethical reasons) indicated a single objective in relation to counselling. Objective 3.2 stated "students should be able … to apply appropriate counselling skills in the home, school and community." The objective stated above seems to be broad and lacking in focus. It would be viewed as a goal or aim not an objective as it may be regarded not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound). It might be difficult for the student teachers to gain skills to counsel students with lecturers following this type of objective as different lecturers may interpret it differently.

To achieve this objective the following content on counselling was given:

- Types of counselling
- Counselling process and techniques
- Ethics in counselling

- Stress and burnout
- Counselling referral systems

Under the heading **Topical Issues**, was the subheading *Orphans and other Vulnerable Children.*

These topics shown above are again broad and as it appears, do not specify the content and the types of counselling referred to and leaves this content to the subjective discretion of the lecturers. Lecturers would select content according to their expertise. Of significance in this data is the non-mention of bereavement counselling. One would be forced to play the guessing game on whether teachers in training were taught how to counsel bereaved children. This could imply that teachers in initial teacher's training may not be well grounded in issues relating to school bereavement counselling.

5.3.9 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN COUNSELLING PROVISION

The counsellors proffered varied responses to the question: "When you think of ranges of needs of the learners who lose their parents, what would you say needs to be done to improve the counselling that you offer here at school?" Some of the respondents claimed that more counsellors should be trained. The following statements reveal this:

> The training of more counsellors in the school and also the change in attitude by teachers towards counselling. A timetable for counselling should be made and the rooms and teachers for counselling be readily available. **(CI LM)**
>
> All or the majority of the teachers must become counsellors in order to handle orphans with the right attitude. **(C2M)**

Other suggestions that come out from both respondents cited above are that teachers need to change their attitudes towards counselling in order to assist bereaved learners. This could be because the subject of Guidance and Counselling is not timetabled in schools and is not examinable. Another issue, thus mentioned above, is the timetabling of Guidance and Counselling and provision of suitable rooms for counselling that would provide confidential settings conducive for proper consultations.

One counsellor even proposed providing counselling services for caregivers so that they can be able to provide love and attention to the bereaved children. C2LM stated that:

> The pupils need love and attention which is not easy to get from strangers that is why pupils end up teaming up with guys or women in relationships. I suppose the guardians should be counselled or the pupils should be put in homes. **(C2 LM)**

She further proffered that the children should be under placement care, such as, homes or orphanages so as to protect the children from getting into unholy alliances. She suggested that they got into these relationships to get the love and attention that will be lacking in their lives. Thus, institutionalising them would build a sense of belonging in them, albeit, the disadvantages that go with this sort of arrangement. C1M also concurred with this idea when he revealed that:

> There is need to set up more institutions to house the orphans that find themselves in a very difficult situations, especially if one finds himself/herself with nowhere to go after a rape or argument. **(C1M)**

The reason for institutionalising these children, according to C1M, would be to provide shelter to the homeless and the abused orphans. She also recommended that the school and the government should seek finances to help in the provision of counselling and in providing them with school fees. This was divulged in the following statement:

> The school should seek ways of raising funds that are set aside for these children so that they easily get counselled emotionally not worrying about their fees. As I have said before, what really counts is cushioning them financially, so that they do not drop out of school. Therefore, funds should be set aside for these vulnerable children.
>
> Government needs to source more money to help such children. **(C1M)**

The suggestions given for improved counselling in schools seem valuable and taking the best interest of the child on board. They are in tandem with the children's rights that emphasise on provisioning, best fit, participation and general programming.

5.3.9.1 Main findings

The main findings in this section were that teachers have a negative attitude towards counselling and thus counsellors suggested that they should change this negative attitude towards counselling. It was also found that most teachers in schools lacked counselling skills and hence the proposal for more counsellors to be trained. The study also established that guidance and counselling was not allocated time on the school timetable and that special private consultation rooms were not available in the selected schools. The study also established that although children needed psychological (emotional) support, they

needed socio-economic support for the emotional counselling to be effective and for them to be retained in school. It was also established that schools did not have mechanisms in place to lead in fundraising for the bereaved children and other vulnerable children.

Main findings of this study can be summarised as shown in Fig 5.1.

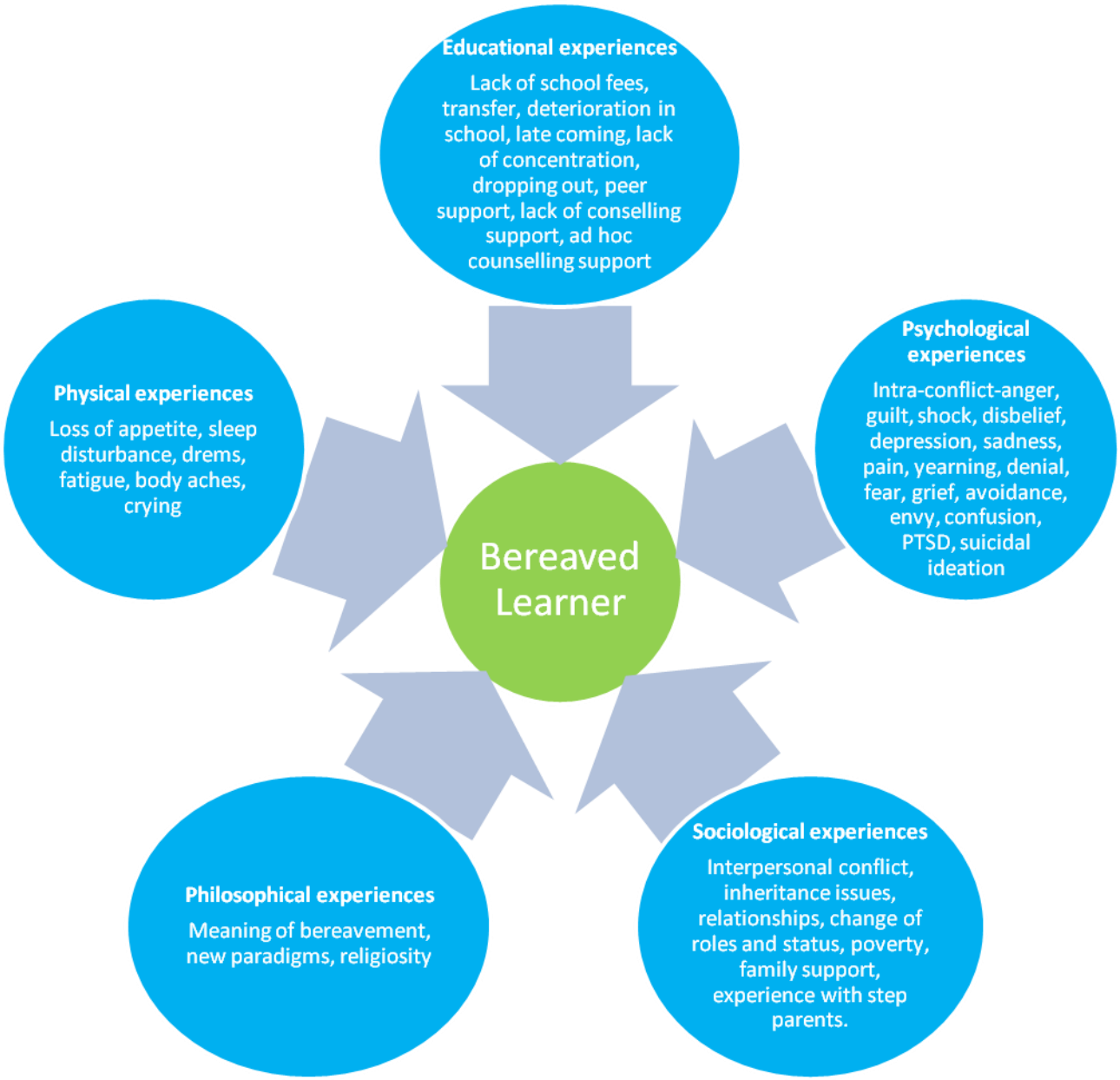

Figure 5.1: Summative model of the findings on bereavement experiences

5.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented and analysed issues pertaining to psychological, physical, sociological, philosophical experiences of bereavement post death of a parent and explicated a plethora of sub-themes that were also discussed in appropriate sections. From the data, it is evident that bereavement is a multi-layered phenomenon and hence the themes can be seen in layers. There are the obviously conspicuous experiences/themes, seen by the eye, such as crying, and those that are deeply embedded in the respondents, such as dreams and can be heard through their voices as they reflect what is in their conscience. However, there are other deeper layers that the reader and the researcher can still unravel in the quest to understand what it is like to be bereaved as a result of a parent's death. It is also evident that grief is universal to the bereaved learners although it is manifested in variant forms and that the relationship with others can be instrumental in alleviating the brokenness caused by bereavement. Bereavement experiences are fraught with intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. The experience of bereavement is complex, ambiguous, multifaceted and unpredictable as the child can experience more than one consequence at a time and thus demands multifarious coping strategies.

CHAPTER SIX:

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 focused on data presentation and analysis. The current chapter presents the discussion of the key findings of the study in relation to literature about children's bereavement and bereavement counselling issues. Implications for counselling are discussed.

6.1 UNDERSTANDING THE PHENOMENON OF BEREAVEMENT

It would be prudent to discuss the findings of the study in the light of the literature portrayed in Chapter 2. Universalism and particularism are discussed first.

6.1.1 Universalism versus particularism

Key in the understanding of bereavement experiences are the concepts of universalism versus particularism. In his exposé about culture, Rong (2005) suggests that ***particulars*** explain more about individual cultures, whereas ***universals*** detail more about whatever there is in the human mind that transcends the boundaries of individual cultures. The universalists cluster together people, experiences and issues to make general assumptions about them. In relation to bereavement, particulars would be more concerned with those experiences that are unique to individuals and universals would concern themselves more with experiences that are common to every bereaved child, albeit in child's unique way.

This study revealed that psychological experiences of bereavement were universal and cut across culture, age and gender for the respondents in this study. All the cases interviewed showed signs of being distressed by deaths of their parents. All children indicated that they cried when their parents died. Loss and grief are universal (Di Ciacco, 2008:26). In addition, Meade (2007) puts in a universalist perspective that various feelings associated with and manifestations of grief are the same or similar regardless of race, ethnicity, culture or religion. This assertion is in line with the ideas of Rosenblatt in Stroebe *et al.* (2008) who

subscribes to the notion that there are universals in bereavement, such as that in societies around the world people get upset over the death of someone close. The assertion is based on the positivist perspective and is in opposition to the postmodern view that looking for universals is rather retrogressive and gives a misinformed view about the nature of knowledge and makes the researcher to miss out on the unique details about each case (Stroebe *et al.*, 2008). It is these unique details that phenomenological studies seek to capture. The fact, however, is that the universals were evident in the data of the current study and were looked at in relation to each individual participant. For example, in relating their grief, all children highlighted that they were pained by the deaths of their parents (Data set I & 2)**.**

From a particularist view that accommodates variance, grief or bereavement experiences vary with culture, gender, age, religion and race (Dennis Klass Encyclopedia of Death and Dying). Particularism acknowledges diversity of thought and practice. Although the findings of this study do not reveal information relating to bereavement and race or age, they reflect those that are culture and gender related. For instance, data gathered on the cultural experiences of bereavement revealed that children experienced varied experiences in synchrony with their belief systems and as such children also experienced different bereavement rites and rituals despite the fact that the children were all adolescents. This affirms Rothaupt and Becker's (2007: 12) arguments that, "Rituals vary greatly from culture to culture and provide a window into how a group cares for those who mourn." For example, rituals of various kinds were experienced by bereaved children such as PPL5LM who experienced ancestral worship (cf. Chapter 5; Section 5.4.3; Section 5.2.11). Ancestral worship is prevalent in other cultures too such as in Japan where contact with the deceased is encouraged (Field in Stroebe *et al.*, 2008). The link with ancestors is deeply embedded in the Shona culture which suggests that a dead person's spirit joins the ancestors and oversees the welfare of the surviving relatives and hence should be consulted and appeased as and when it becomes necessary. The Encyclopedia of Death and Dying (2011:1) also attests to this, and argues that, "Death, although a dreaded event, is perceived as the beginning of a person's deeper relationship with all of creation, the complementing of life and the beginning of the communication between the visible and the invisible worlds." In this case, the dead person should be given a "correct" funeral, supported by a number of religious ceremonies. If this is not done, the deceased person

may become a wandering ghost and may cause danger to those who remain alive (Encyclopedia of Death and Dying, 2011). This need to give the deceased proper rituals was also uncovered in PPL5LM's mother's case (Data set 2). The family sought the help of traditional doctors to help settle the deceased's grievances. Literature also concurs with the idea of seeking external assistance in spiritual matters. Muir (2011) suggests that a diviner may be consulted to determine the cause of the death and to prescribe a ritual action and these are followed by ceremonies to settle the spirit and to mark the end of mourning. This was typified when after PPL5LM's mother possessed relatives they had to settle the issue through intervention of a diviner and rituals had to be performed (See Section 5.4.3). All this seems enmeshed in abstraction and one wonders if the school counsellors can understand it and be able to assist the bereaved learners ensnared in these issues.

Keeping in touch with the spirit of the deceased in a way is related to continuing bonds with the deceased as advocated by Klass, Silverman and Nickman (1996) (*cf.* Chapter 2). They can be equated in that they both attempt to keep the attachments alive; however, in the African context the spirit communicates sometimes directly to the bereaved and is feared and respected. However, according to Klass *et al.* (1996), the contact with the deceased is sometimes imaginary. This has a bearing on how the child who holds such beliefs should be counselled at school.

To emphasise the particularistic nature of bereavement, another cultural dimension found in the study was that of superstition. Superstition is prevalent in African cultures (Ukwendu, 2011). The study established that some children believed that their parents' deaths were not natural but had been caused by some people (PPL6M; PPL2LM; PPL7LM). Superstition tends to cloud one from seeing reality and makes one to be full of vengeance as was the case with PPL2LM (Data set 2). According to Park (2008:6), superstition is the belief in a higher power that makes things to happen independent of a physical cause. If this definition of Park were true to the African consciousness, no individual would suspect anybody of doing wrong to them since events would be attributed to a higher spiritual power and not other human beings. The deep and suspecting mind would, thus, question events, causes and effects and as a result a bereaved child would be no exception. To counsel a child whose orientation encompasses superstition, a counsellor would need to be conversant with the culture of the bereaved learner or be open to the child's interpretations of the bereavement.

Inheritance of the deceased's estate surfaced as a key sociological finding. Data showed that, among other things, children were inherited too. This revealed another dimension that children were inherited in family establishments where the extended family system was still operational. Unlike in some Western cultures, such as the United States of America, and other European countries where the extended family no longer has a place in favour of the nuclear family (Edlund & Rahman, 2004), in the African communities the extended family still exists and has a role of nurturing its family members (Gombe,1986). This was evidenced by the children who were taken in by their extended family members and felt comfortable in those set ups (Data set 1& 2; section 5.2; 5.4.3).

Unlike in Western cultures, wives are inherited too as revealed in Section 5.2.4.7. This confirms Drew *et al.'s* (1996) assertion that when a man dies his widow is inherited by one of the man's relatives, either formally or clandestinely, usually a brother. In their research, Drew *et al.* contend that the 44% of the widows in their research had had children after the deaths of the fathers of their other children. One would wonder whether the "new couple," the inheritor and the inherited gets tested for communicable diseases before consummating their union. They might be at risk of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs) and HIV and AIDS. For the bereaved adolescent who endures the union of a surviving parent and another spouse, so many questions would need to be answered, for instance, "Why this union so soon after the death? Is it to spite the bereaved children? Are they at risk of HIV and AIDS?" The bereaved child would be tormented by this alliance as was experienced by PPL2LM in this study (Data set 2). A counsellor would need to know the child's background if any useful counselling can take place.

Amicable distribution of the deceased parent's property was revealed in the data and was done by close relatives such as nephews and nieces. This is in line with the Shona customs (Gombe, 1986; Kabweza, Hatugari, Hamutyinei, Hove, 1979). However, data also revealed that "property-grabbing" as suggested by Drew *et al.* (1996:82) was rampant. The siblings of the deceased person grabbed property from the surviving spouse and children of their deceased relative and left them in dire straits. This finding was also confirmed by Drew *et al.* (1996) who observed that siblings inherited the deceased person's property but then neglect the implicit responsibility of caring for the surviving spouse and children. However, Rose (2008) tends to disagree with the use of the term "property-grabbing" as it has negative connotations and implies that property that is distributed within the extended

family set up is inappropriate. She actually posits that this sidesteps “complex issues related to customary property rights and legitimate patterns of property distribution” (Rose, 2008:4) and suggests the use of a neutral term “property appropriation” that does not imply that the distribution was inappropriate. This may be sound and appropriate to consider the customary rights of inheritance but from the data gathered from children in this study, no consideration was given to the children of the deceased’s welfare. To borrow a term from Justice for Children Trust/Legal Resources Foundation Consultation Workshop (2008:np) the children were actually “disinherited” by their extended family members and left to trudge on with life. In that respect, the researcher tends to be aligned to the use of “property-grabbing” and “property confiscations”. Interventions for these situations may not be directly school based but however, teachers, counsellors and members of the community in general should be conscientised of the available intervention options so as to assist the bereaved learners.

It also emerged from the data that maternal relatives felt obliged to grab the deceased person’s property where *lobola* had not been fully paid as was revealed by PPL1LM whose maternal relatives wanted to acquire his deceased mother’s property (Data set 2). Drew *et al.* (1996:83) attest to this when they suggest that, “Problems may arise if *lobola* is not fully paid to the maternal relatives. The maternal relatives may seize property in such situations.” Issues like this may cause the child to be perpetually worried about his inheritance and may impact negatively on his psychosocial well-being. This in turn might be detrimental to the child’s school work.

From the data, another finding was that property grabbing was also said to occur in the absence of a will (PPL2LM. PPL7LM). This assertion concurs with Rose’s (2008) findings, that when a deceased person dies before writing a will, relatives sometimes confiscate the property. She further asserts that, in the absence of a will, customary law, which varies between ethnic groups, is applied. The influential members of the bereaved family draw up an estate distribution plan which provides for all people looked after by the deceased. However, general law applied if a person had contracted a civil marriage. This leads to a third dimension of property grabbing that was revealed in the data. It was observed that in the absence of a marriage certificate, relatives grabbed the deceased’s property (PPL4M). This, again is in alignment with Rose’s (2008) assertion that the relatives of the bereaved male were often at liberty to confiscate the deceased person’s property with the pretext that

there was nothing binding them to surrender their kin's property to the 'wife.' For them, the two were not married and hence, the property belonged to them. Again, the bereaved male's children would be left to feel the pinch of orphanhood in poverty and having to survive on hand-downs as was the case with PPL4M and her siblings and an ailing mother (Data set 1). This situation renders the bereaved children beggars and negatively affects them psychologically, socially and in their schooling (Abebe & Aese, 2007; Cluver, Operario, Lane, & Kganakg (in press) in Young Carers Policy Briefs, 2011; Cluver, Orkin, Boyes, Gardner & Meinck (in press) in Young Carers Policy Briefs, 2011). If their situation goes unnoticed, pathological consequences may surface and the children's situation may become irredeemable as the children may drop out of school and ripple effect may compound their plight. The issues of inheritance discussed above, indicate the need for bereaved children to be protected by statutory instruments as well as providing them with information pertaining to their property rights.

Due to inheritance and other issues, relationships with family members experienced by bereaved children post death of parents were varied and unique. It was found that children's relationships with family members fell within a continuum from cordial to frosty family relationships. Sometimes the relationships swing from good to bad and sometimes hover in between within the range, as illustrated in fig 6.1.

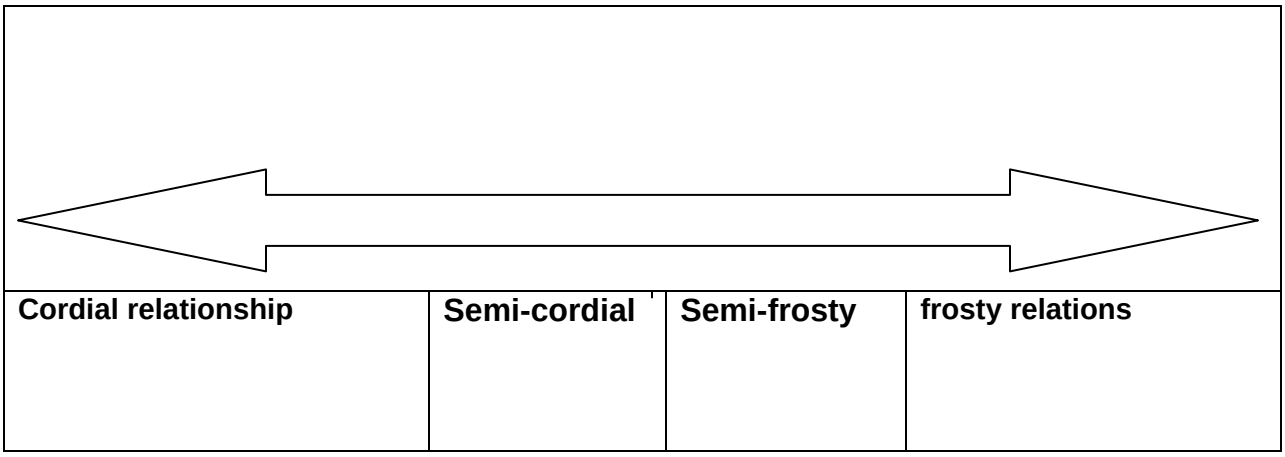

Figure 6.1: Illustration of a continuum of family relationships experienced by bereaved learners

The cordial relations seemed to exist within the nuclear families in most cases, save for extreme odd cases that were revealed of sisters who banished the younger sisters from their marital homes (Data set 2). One wonders what could have happened to warrant such

responses from siblings. Literature sourced seemed to have been silent on this score but highlighted sibling family feuds in cases of inheritance (Drew *et al.*, 1996). However, frosty relations were also evident in this study as children had sour relationships with their dead parents' relatives (PPL1LM; PPL2LM; PPL4M; PPL6M; PPL7LM) and their step-mothers. These relationships affect bereaved children psychologically and this implies that school counsellors need to be aware of these children's circumstances

From the above, it can be deciphered that whilst some cultural practices such as the carting of children to extended family members, work for the good of orphaned learners, others, however, exacerbate the plight of orphaned children. For example, the grabbing of the deceased's property by relatives leaves the bereaved children destitute. The discussion above on cultural issues points to the need to ensure inclusion of cultural factors in death and dying education (Joanna Briggs Institute, 2006); the need for a more relevant cultural model for death, dying and grief education (Dowdney, Wilson, Maughan, Allerton, Schofield, & Skuse, 1999) and also to the need for culturally aligned bereavement counselling. McCarthy (2006) advocates for more complex theoretical models that can incorporate cultural issues and psychosocial factors as these are inextricably interwoven.

Whereas intrapersonal relationships reveal universalism, interpersonal relationships signify particularism. The researcher subscribes to the notion of eclecticism which is a conceptual approach that "does not hold rigidly to a single paradigm or set of assumptions, but instead draws upon multiple theories, styles, ideas, life experiences or philosophies to gain complementary insights into a subject or applies different theories in particular cases" (Wikipedia, 2011:np). This approach grants the opportunity of enjoying the best of both paradigms and would infuse what appears to be best in universalism with that of particularism.

6.2.2 Gain and loss

It would be naive of me to just give a one-sided, skewed or lopsided opinion of loss because some gains are realised following the experiences of bereavement. The bereaved children gained new homes, family guardians, reflections into their lives, introspection and retrospection; new meanings, new resolves/resolutions and new responsibilities.

This study established that children experienced primary and secondary or derivative losses due to the death of their parents (cf. Chapter 2; section 2.2.3.2; section 2.7.1). On this issue, Holland (2001), Wolchik *et al.* (2008) and Gertler *et al.* (2004) contend that the initial loss leads to other losses. Scott (2007) calls these compound losses. The initial and primary loss, in this case, being the death of a parent or both parents and the secondary losses were, for example, the loss of a parent led the child to incur other losses such as, loss of emotional security (PPL1M); loss of financial security (PPL7LM; PPL4M; PPL3M; PPL1LM; PPL6LM), loss of source of subsistence (PPL1LM; PPL6LM), loss of carer (PPL1LM; PPL3LM), loss of a home (PPL2LM; PPL6LM)**,** loss of a confidante (PPL1M; PPL7LM), loss of advisor, loss of fathomed birthright (inheritance) (PPL2LM; PPl1LM; PPL4M), loss of guidance, loss of meaning, loss of childhood (PPL1LM; PPL4M; PPL7LM)**,** loss of family structure (PPL1LM; PPL4M; PPL7LM). Prompt intervention is needed for children experiencing situations portrayed here to avert pathological reactions by bereaved children.

However, gains are also realised through the bereavement experiences. The death of a significant other enables one to re-examine his or her existence and attempt to draw meaning from the bereavement experience (Newman & Newman, 2006; Stroebe *et al.*, 2001; see Chapter 3, section 3.10.4). In line with this, findings in this research were that children rediscovered themselves after the bereavement and all children interviewed proffered, in their own way, that they found some meaning of life from the bereavement of their parents. New ways of thinking were reflected by the children as the death seemed to mark some beginning of new insights into life (See section 5.4.4; Data sets 1 & 2). For instance, the children's experiences captured in interviews and life narratives, seemed to show the distinct phases in their lives; life before the death of their parents, which in most cases was rosy, the death events, where so much grief is felt, and life after the death, where most of the children seemed to have encountered a lot of challenges and some have made appraisals and reflections over their lives and pledged to work harder in school (PPL1M, PPL1LM, PPL4M, PPL4LM). New resolves and work ethics were evident in children's responses. This may be viewed as positive educational aspirations and counsellors need to capitalize on that to help motivate children to learn.

The new meanings and new philosophies proffered by some children touched on spirituality and religious beliefs as some left all to God as He was the author of their lives. This is in

agreement with Lichtenthal, Currier, Neimeyer and Keesee's (2010) findings. In their research on parental bereavement following the death of their child, they established that the parents who successfully found some understanding or meaning of their bereavement drew upon their religious faith. The researchers, Litchenthal *et al.* (2010), also posit that the new perspective to life the child gets after the bereavement of the parent could be enhanced when the child is guided and has support that helps in the formulation and management of the new philosophy. Stroebe *et al.* (2001) are of the same opinion as they perceive bereavement as a vehicle for personal and subsequent growth. In the same vein, Walter (1996) also suggests that bereavement is the construction of a long lasting biography integrating memory of the dead with the future. This was evident in the study as bereaved children reminisced about the past when the parents were alive and resignedly hoped for a better future in the absence of the parents but with God's help (Data sets 1 & 2). To sum this up, Frankl (1963) in Hogan and Schmidt (2002:617) posits that people can make sense of suffering and find meaning and purpose despite the horrendous loss. Their argument is in line with the Personal Growth Construct that is premised on the belief that "growth can emerge following difficult life events" (Hogan & Schmidt, 2002:617). Parental death is one such difficult life event that against all odds might bring about personal positive growth to certain individuals. It can thus be deduced from the discussion above that bereavement triggered philosophical and reflexive reactions on the part of the bereaved. Teachers and counsellors could take the cue and assist the bereaved children as suggested above by Litchenthal *et al.* (2010).

However, loss has also been attached to change. When there is bereavement, change becomes inevitable. The study found that role redefinition (role change) occurs after the death of a parent or parents. For instance, some children ended up looking after their parents and literally taking over the roles of parents as highlighted in Chapter 5 (see section 5.2.4; 5.2.13). This finding is not novel, and corroborates Rusakaniko *et al.* (2006) and Ross & Deverell's (2010) findings that some bereaved children were living in child-headed or adolescent headed households. Saito *et al.* (2007) also affirmed this but added another dimension that the child heads of homes were predominantly girls under 15. However, what can be said to be novel from the current research's findings is the issue that boy children can also be heads of households due to extenuating circumstances. For example, the seventeen year old boy (PPL7LM) who had to head the household (not

because he was the eldest or that there were no girl children in their home), but was due to parental incapacitation because of beer consumption (see section 5.2.13; Data set 2). This added to the male child's woes as he had to fit "mothering" the family into his daily routine as a griever and a student too, amongst his many roles. His adoption of the larger burden of domestic responsibility contradicts Whiteside & Barnett (2002) and Saito ***et al.'s*** (2007) assertion that girls carry a larger burden of domestic responsibility than their boy siblings. School counsellors and teachers need to have knowledge of such children so that they can assist them to adjust into their new roles.

6.2.3 Bereavement and attachment

The attachment theory as highlighted in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2 implies that people form bonds with significant others and loss or separation from them initiates a process of grief. It also suggests that the magnitude of the grief depends on how attached or close the individual was with the person of their loss. Findings of this study corroborate these assertions as all children in the study were grieving the loss of their parents whom they claimed to have been close to. Literature also revealed that children grieve more for their mothers (Yin-Lan, 2008). It could be said to have been the case for some of the children, for example, PPL7LM, PPL2LM. However, this cannot be conclusive as some of these children had lost both parents and the others had lost either the father or mother when they were interviewed. For example, in this study, a child, such as PPL2M whose parents died on the same day (Data set 1), expressed in words more emotional torture over the death of his father. It may, however, be misleading to conclude that the child was grieving more for his dead father as the child could have been avoiding (See Chapter 2; Section 2.4.1) mentioning his mother because it was even more painful to do so. As alluded in Chapter 2 Section 2.4.2, counsellors need to know the child's attachment style with the bereaved parent so as to give appropriate assistance. The study of boundaries of bereaved children would be apt to enable counsellors to know the children's relationships.

The attachment theory can be linked to Freud's Psychoanalytic theory as it also viewed attachment to the lost person. Emphasis of the Freudian theory was on pathological consequences and grief work was seen as severing the attachment to the dead person (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). However, this was in contrast to what surfaced from the data.

The data showed that the children were still clinging to the dead parents as reflected by PPL4LM who suggested that her father was still part of her (Data set 2) and PPL3M also claimed she felt her mother was somewhere and will appear some day (Data set 1). This leads to the need for continuing bonds with the deceased parent (Section 3.10.5; Brewer & Sparker, 2011; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007).

6.2.4 Bereavement support systems

The need for children's bereavement support cannot be overemphasised. Although there are macro-systems such as USAIDS, World Bank and Governments in programmes such as BEAM, supporting orphans and other vulnerable children, this study revealed only the role of the micro-systems such as, family, peers, teachers and church. In this study, for instance, both maternal and paternal grandparents and aunts played a major role in looking after the bereaved children. In African contexts, the extended family's role in caring for orphans is inexpendable. It provides a social safety net for bereaved children, supplies them with economic assistance and stability, provides them with homes, care and love, advises them and talks to them (Avert, 2011; Huber & Gould, 2011; Mushunje & Mafico, 2010; Nyambedha, 2001); Ross & Deverell, 2010). Likewise, in this study, bereaved children received the much cherished bereavement support from various quarters such as the nuclear and extended families. The school should also have structures in place to support bereaved learners so as to cushion them from the harsh realities of orphanhood.

The study established that peer support was invaluable to bereaved learners as the peers comforted them, reported their bereavement at school, gave them moral support and also provided for them materially (PPL5LM, PPL6LM, PPL1M). This is in line with ideas portrayed in previous research. Research shows that the presence of friends can be experienced as extremely supportive (Holland, 2001; Reed, 2007; Ribbens- McCarthy, 2006). Peer support is also linked to positive outcomes such as lower dropout rates, lower drug use, aggression and delinquency (Noppe & Noppe, 2004). However, researches by Monroe (1995), Metel and Barnes (2011) and Wilby (1998) in Ribbens- McCarthy (2006) note that peers also sometimes need help on how to cope with a friend's bereavement. For example, studies cited above noted that name calling and bullying is associated with peers

who have difficulties in understanding what was happening to their bereaved peers and sometimes not knowing what to say to them resulted in the bereaved learner feeling isolated. As such, these peers would need assistance in dealing with their bereaved friends. Metel and Barnes (2011) proffer peer group support as an alternative to be capitalised on by schools to assist the bereaved learner to talk to peers in the same predicament.

Peer support can also include peer counselling in which clients are given the opportunity to model after people of their age who reach out to them. Peer counselling has been seen to reduce feelings of isolation, anger and depression and provides the children a platform for divulging what is normally hidden from family and friends (Hamburg & Varehorst, 2010: Sisco, 1992). In this study, some bereaved children indicated that peers helped them during their time of distress. Although, peer counselling is widely used in other countries such as America, Botswana and Uganda, in Zimbabwe, there is a paucity of literature in this regard (Rutondoki, 2000 & UNESCO, 2000 in Chireshe, 2006).

This evidence on the significance of peers in children's bereavement implicates the school as a major context with abundance of peer resources and where the children spend most of their time (Ribbens-McCarthy, 2006). It would be apt for the school to provide the necessary bereavement support through peers for the grieving learner and the whole school community.

In this study, the church institution provided support to all bereaved learners by conducting the burial services for the deceased parents, even for the non-church goers such as PPL2LM's father. Religious support has been shown to be instrumental during bereavement (Stroebe & Stroebe, 2008) and was valued by bereaved children. For example, PPL3M indicated that she was still waiting for her pastor to come to their house to provide support. Some children also expressed that some teachers provided support by talking to them. However, as was found in the study, some teachers were not comfortable dealing with sensitive issues such as counselling bereaved children. This leads to a tentative assumption that counsellors could be ill equipped in training on how to counsel bereaved children.

6.3 SCHOOL BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING (DEBATES)

The idea put forth in Chapter 2 is that theories give researchers “lenses” through which to look at complicated social issues; it is apt to discuss this study’s findings in relation to the theories and models that seem to permeate this study. The theories were presented in Chapters 2 and 3 and served as guidelines used in dealing with bereaved children and to some extent predictors of what was to come in the research. The discussion that follows attempts to create debate on school bereavement counselling.

6.3.1 Western theories and models of bereavement counselling

De la Roy and Ipser (2004) and, Stead and Watson (2006) in Mpofu (2011:75) suggest that in African contexts, Western theories, concepts and methods originating from high-income countries, influence psychological science and practice, of which counselling psychology belongs. They argue that the use of Western theories and models in counselling has persisted over the years, despite African scholars’ disdain and querying about their applicability and relevance. Scholars have particularly argued that ways of knowing and knowledge production are highly biased and colonised by Western thought (Holdstick, 2000 and Nsamensang, 1995 in Mpofu, 2011) and preclude African ways. Muthukrishna and Sam in Mpofu (2011) also reveal that counsellors’ training is based on Western Models and thus they internalise and practise counselling with a Eurocentric bias that negates the African context. If this is so, then there is a gap created by this type of counselling practice. Therefore, there is the need for counselling models and theories specific to the diverse and fluid African context. However, there is no homogeneity in the African context (Holdstick, 2000 in Mpofu, 2011). This implies taking cognisance of individual contexts of bereaved children’s cases.

In this study, it was found that the oscillations described in the dual process model (see section 2.4.1) were evident in some bereaved children who by their disbelief, were in denial of the death and thus avoided pain, but when they acknowledged the death they were actually confronting reality (PPL4M; PPL4LM). As stated in section 2.4.1, loss orientation concentrates on the relationship the child had with the deceased and that reverberates to

the attachment theory as opposed to Freud's decarthexis explained in chapter 2. For example, when the children were reminiscing and ruminating about the past (PPL2LM; PPL2M; PPL1LM; PPL1M; PPL4LM) and yearning for the deceased (PPL3M), they were in the loss orientation mode. Since some children were still in the early stages of bereavement, loss orientation was predominant. Restoration implies that children are mastering tasks formerly done by the deceased, for example, household chores and caring for siblings (PPL7LM). The oscillation, which is alternation between loss and restoration (see Section 2.3.1) was however, not detectable in some cases as the children had recently lost their parents. A few glimpses of oscillation were revealed, for instance, in the case of PPL2LM (cf. Chapters 4 & 5) when he talked of the bitterness he felt and juxtaposed it with how his brother and cousins were making life comfortable for him (see Data set 2). According to Archer in Stroebe *et al.* (2008), oscillation between loss oriented and restoration focused coping are important for resolution of grief. The oscillations could imply that the pupil was in the process of resolving his grief despite the challenges he was encountering such as the guilt discussed in Section 5.2.8.

Like Rothaupt and Becker (2007), the researcher subscribes to the notion that the bereavement theories and models in literature are modelled with the Anglo American or Western culture in mind that looks at death from a clinical point of view where death is peered into from afar. Feifel (1959:xiv) in Rothaupt and Becker (2007) posits that "Western culture tries to avoid looking at death, and when faced with it, tends to run, hide, and seek refuge in group norms and actuarial statistics." This may not be the prescription for an African context where death is viewed from another more intimate perspective where many children are exposed to death rituals and rites, where the spirit of the dead fights its own battles, and where there is social enmeshment of extended family relations, spirituality, traditional doctors, God, the living and the dead. Thus, models of bereavement and bereavement counselling that are fashioned with the African social milieu in mind (Afro-centric) are long overdue. In this vein, when counselling bereaved children, counsellors need to consider the African collective lifestyle based on the moral philosophy of altruism and what Sofola (1973) in Makhale-Mahlangu (1996) calls African personalism and is in line with the proverb that says *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Zulu), *Motho ke motho kabatho ba bang* (Sotho), which means, "I am because we are". However, one should not forget the influence of globalisation and westernisation and the media.

The systemic theory of counselling (see Section 3.10.6) could be used as it captures the context of the griever; it is neutral and not aligned to any culture. Each child would be viewed as a unique individual within a unique culture and unique intra- and inter-relationships.

6.3.2 Children's experiences of bereavement counselling

Data sourced from children revealed that there were no formalised reporting structures in the schools as reporting the deaths of their parents was sometimes done by the bereaved child's friends. Sometimes, teachers stumbled on information about the children's bereavement because they lived in the same vicinity with the bereaved child; or at times, the school knew about it when the child sought financial assistance. For some, the deputy head or senior woman only got to know about it when she made an announcement that she wanted to talk to recently bereaved children after the researcher had been to the school (see section 5.4.6). The situation highlighted above is in direct contrast to what happens in some countries such as the United Kingdom, where bereavement reporting policies have been put in place in some schools (Holland, 2001; Ribbens McCarthy, 2006). This could be a pointer that formalised reporting structures should be put in place in school to help in the communication of bereavement information.

In agreement with literature, counselling provision in schools was seen to be patchy, *ad hoc* and demand led (Jenkins & Polat, 2006 in Fox & Butler, 2009; Rembe, 2006; Ribbens-McCarthy, 2006). It also emerged that most of the respondents did not receive any form of counselling at school and those who did receive bereavement counselling seemed to have a consensus that they were "told" what to do, what to feel and how to react by teachers (See section 5.4.6). Telling children how to react and what to feel post death of their parents is contrary to the principles of counselling where the counsellor should be there to help the children to make informed decisions in selecting what best suits them (CONNECT MODULE 1, 2004). This could be a signal that the teachers who made an attempt to counsel the bereaved children lacked the skills to tackle the exercise and were banking on their advisory role, rather than the counselling one where they should help the client to make informed choices.

6.3.3 Counsellor's views

Data also revealed that there were no policies on how to identify bereaved children in schools, despite the fact that all school counsellors interviewed had proffered some explanations on how they identified children with problems and painted a picture of destitution, deprivation, poor health and lacking in material things, among other morbid descriptions (See section 5.4.3). This, however, is in contrast to what some respondents in Mohangi's (2008) study on orphans' search for wellbeing posited. They posited that not all orphans appear destitute as there are other factors that need to be considered before concluding that the orphaned children are vulnerable. Some non-orphans may present the characteristics that are generally attributed to orphans, such as poverty, exhaustion, being heads of child headed families and thus, people need to be wary of claims that orphans are children deprived of material needs that reflect on their appearance as this could be deluding (Mohangi, 2008). It could then imply that there was a gap between rhetoric and reality. As there are no direct routes in grieving, with each child exhibiting unique manifestations of grief (cf. Chapter 2), it would be rather naïve for counsellors to purport that they could identify bereaved children using observations only as there are many intervening factors. This, points to the need for establishment of a school reporting policy so that every time bereavement occurs, not only to the learners, but to any member of the whole school community.

6.4 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING

Most challenges emerged in literature (cf. section 3.11) but the data show that there are extensions to it. Data revealed that some of the school counsellors interviewed though trained in counselling lacked confidence in handling sensitive issues such as bereavement. It could be due to lack of skills in handling emotionally charged learners. This is not a new phenomenon in literature. Holland (2001) indicated that although the issue of childhood bereavement was rated to be very high in the Hull and Humberside schools in the UK, some counsellors lacked skills to support bereaved children. This signalled a training gap in these schools and this scenario also signals the same gap in the training of counsellors in the schools in the current study as some counsellors indicated fear of counselling boys or learners with sensitive issues. What appears to be peculiar is the phobia shown by the

counsellors which can imply that bereaved children may be left to find their own means of dealing with their bereavement.

The counsellors also expressed that there was lack of support from colleagues. This need for support from colleagues was also emphasised by Tatar (2009) as it would make the job of the counsellor lighter. Other findings included lack of financial resources to assist orphaned children, lack of individualised attention due to shortage of time and space for more one to one confidential sessions, slow responses to reported abuse cases. There was no readily available research literature to support or refute these findings. However, Gwirayi (2011) in his study on child sexual abuse corroborates the finding on responses to reported abuse cases. He found that some reported abuse cases were unceremoniously dropped and the cases were dropped after clandestine deals between the police and perpetrators.

6.5 EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF BEREAVEMENT

This study revealed that the schooling of children bereaved of a parent or parents was generally affected in varying degrees and due to a plethora of reasons after the death of the parents. Lack of finances due to loss of the breadwinner translated to problems of sourcing school fees (Avert, 2011; Gundersen, Kelly, Jemison, 2006; Huber & Gould, 2011; Mushunje & Mafico, 2010 and Cluver *et al.,* in press; SAFAIDS, 2009; Tahir *et al.,* 2005;).

It emerged from the study that the bereaved learners experienced lack of concentration which resulted in a decline in school performance for some bereaved children, however, with some remaining unscathed (Dowdney, 2000; HIV/AIDS Education Assessment Team, 2001; Holland, 2001; Subbarao & Coury, 2004; Worden, 1996). For instance, Holland (2001) in his study found that 30% of bereaved children experienced loss of concentration or deterioration in schoolwork. Worden (1996) also found that 20% of parentally bereaved children in his study had problems with concentration at school four months after death and, 16% of these still had problems with concentration 12 months after the bereavement.

In the current study it was established that bereaved children sometimes drop out (PPL6LM; PPL4M) or contemplate dropping out (PPL7LM) of school as evidenced in previous research literature by Gilborn *et al.* (2006), Sengendo & Nambi *et al.* (1997),

Dewagtund and Connolly (2008) and SAFAIDS (2009). Literature also confirmed that the incidence of children dropping out of school was higher when a mother died than when a father died (Ruland *et al.*, 2005). However, in this study, both maternal and paternal orphans dropped out or contemplated doing so.

Related to dropping out of school is erratic school attendance or absenteeism and late coming to school. These findings were consistent with the findings in previous researches on orphans (Gunderssen, Kelly & Jemison, 2006; Maphosa *et al.,* 2007; Mpasi, 2004; Ngaru, 2011; Ritcher 2004, Tahir, 2005). Previous researches also cite absenteeism and temporarily dropping out to care for sick parents ailing due to HIV and AIDS as a bone of contention, especially for the girl child, (Huber & Gould, 2011; Ngaru, 2011). This was also established in the current study where PPL4M had to take turns with her younger sister so that they could take care of their ailing mother and was thus absent from school. Although it was not evident what the mother was suffering from, her father had died of an HIV and AIDS related illness.

Late coming was also found present in the bereaved children's experiences as shown in PPL1LM's case as he had to do business for his and his uncle's sustenance. However, literature seems silent on this aspect. These educational impacts render the children to need school bereavement counselling so as to be retained in schools.

6.6 NEED FOR A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This study established the sociological, psychological, philosophical, religious nature of bereavement consequences (see Chapter 5). This warrants a multi-sectoral/ multi-dimensional approach/ perspective/ multi-pronged approach to the intervention and postvention of which counselling bereaved children is one (Richter & Foster, 2005). For instance, culture is multi-dimensional and according to Constantine (2002:np), "Cultures are lenses through which all experiences and phenomena that concern individuals should be viewed." It is in this regard that bereavement counselling should be viewed from a multi-dimensional perspective in order to capture the challenges that the various children encounter by virtue of their being unique individuals in different circumstances.

6.7 TOWARDS A NEW MODEL OF SCHOOL COUNSELLING

An analysis of findings of this study presents a host of implications for best practice in bereavement school counselling. Best practice suggests that there is a particular technique, approach or method that when used with a particular target is more effective, reaches the goal and is more efficient than other techniques, approaches or methods (Altmaier, 2011). Findings of the study have the following implications for counsellors and other caregivers:

- School personnel and counsellors need to be conversant with the consequences of bereavement so that they can be able to assist bereaved children who present these negative or pathological symptoms of grief.
- Counsellors need to be conversant with the bereaved learner's genogram so as to establish the types of past and present attachments the child held. This argument points to the use of the systemic theory, among other theories, as it employs the genogram method.
- Counsellors should monitor the disruption of the social environment following the loss a loved one depending on the relationships and the deceased's role in the family, the family structure may change, so having continuity of bonds and social supports is important to the capacity of children to deal with bereavement….maintaining structure and disciplines creates a predictable environment and helps the child to feel safe and secure.
- Formalised reporting structures should be implemented in schools to help in the dissemination of bereavement information. This, points to the need for establishment of a school reporting policy every time bereavement occurs, not only to the learners, but to any member of the whole school community.
- Counselling should take into account the religious and cultural beliefs of the bereaved learners so as to be of assistance to the child and not hinder grief resolution. Counsellors need to understand cultural differences and salient cultural constructs in order to cater for the multicultural bereaved learners in the schools.
- Open communication about the actual loss, grief reactions, and emotional responses should be promoted. Often adults strive to "shield" and "protect" their children by

avoiding conversations about trauma. However, with accurate information, children will fill in the gaps and may blame themselves for the loss."

- The research seemed to suggest that schools do not have systems in place to react to the bereavement of their pupils (Holland, 2001) and teachers were not confident enough to support bereaved children. Holland (2001:36) observes that, "an irony is that, while schools and local authorities have disaster plans in place for events that are unlikely to happen, such as aircraft crashing onto the school, they may have nothing in place to react to the death of a parent." Instead of reactive counselling, proactive provisioning could include skilling staff in terms of loss awareness and how to respond to children after a loss and how to use the curriculum in a proactive way to prepare children for future loss.
- In line with the principle of child participation and to avoid tissue rejection the learners need to be involved in issues pertaining to their welfare at school hence they need representation in the crafting of the school policies through consultations on how they want the school to deal with their bereavement issues.
- Bereavement counselling needs to be included as a course component in initial teacher training to help teachers to acquire firm grounding in this aspect of counselling in their pre-service course. Refresher and in-service courses too need to be in place for staff.
- Findings of this study have implications to the school curriculum. If counselling provision should be both proactive and reactive, it needs to be anticipatory in approach and plan in readiness for incidentals. Thus, children should be conscientised on how they can report their bereavement and their friends' too. They need to be made aware of the general consequences of bereavement so that they may not be overwhelmed by their reactions.

These implications point to a greater need for a counselling model that can inform school personnel, parents, learners and school counselling practitioners in particular on prevention, intervention and postvention of bereaved learners. The proposed model is shown in **Fig 6.2** below.

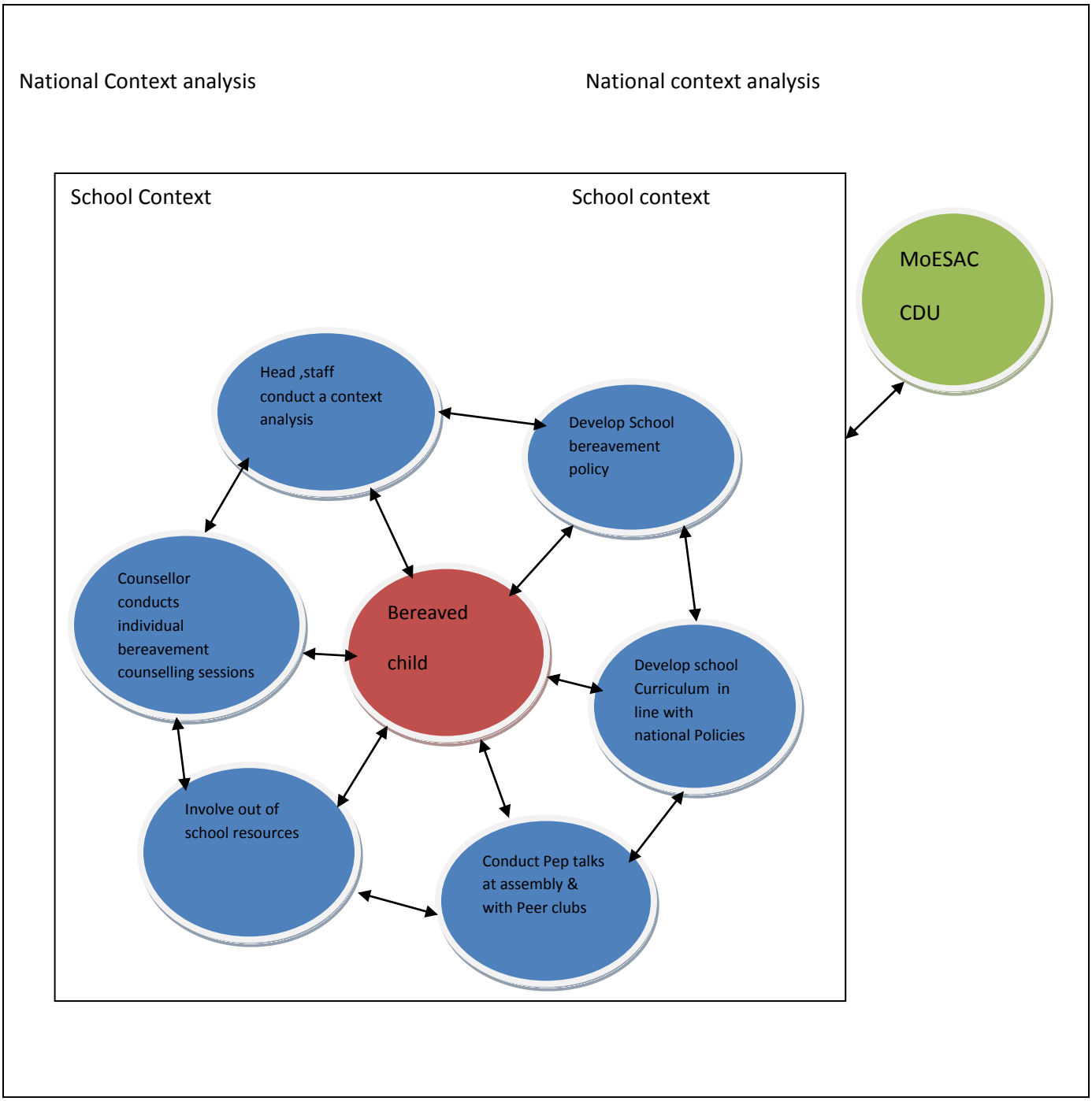

Figure 6.2: Proposed model for Prevention, intervention and postvention of bereaved secondary school age learners

Explanation of the model

The proposed model above adopts what the researcher has coined an "octopus approach," that is all encompassing, as it attempts to take into account measures that cater

for both proactive and reactive issues surrounding children's bereavement and how they can be helped to resolve their grief. The model is explained below:

Level 1: The head and school administration

With the help of other school administrators, the school head (principal) steers the school based counselling programme. They carry out a context analysis and craft a school bereavement policy in consultation with other stakeholders and in line with the national, regional and district guidance and counselling policies if available.

Level 2: **Contextual Analysis**

At this level, the school carries out both micro (school context) and macro (outside school context) context analyses, taking into account the National OVC Policy and any other available policies pertaining to orphans as well as Ministry of Education Sports Arts and Culture (MoESAC) and Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) counselling policy. Context analysis sets tone for development of bereavement policies.

Level 3: **School bereavement policy**

The school sets up school structures involving the head (principal), teachers, counsellors, parents and learners. They set up committees to take charge of various duties such as crafting the identification policy, reporting policy and record keeping policies. Skilling of staff, in servicing some on issues related to bereavement theory and practice.

Level 4: Counsellor

This involves the actual practice of counselling with the school counsellor in which one on one sessions (including generic discussions) in special counselling rooms are conducted. At this level there is confidential record keeping and retrieval for use in counselling learners. It also involves supporting and monitoring of the bereaved children.

Level 5: Curriculum

At this level, alternatives on how the school curriculum can cater for bereavement counselling are shown and selected. Bereavement counselling can be included across subjects as a special topic in Guidance and Counselling and as a subject, such as, Death Studies.

Level 6: Pep talks

This level involves pep talks (general discussions without reference to cases) with the school head at assembly, form teacher and Guidance and Counselling teacher in the classroom. The process involves building bridges to enhance children's initiatives such as, peer groups, children's clubs and involvement of children in planning, implementation and evaluation.

Level 7: Out of school resources

The school should be open to other social factors, such as, invited experts, parents, church groups, community leaders and Non Governmental Organisations. At the centre is the child and the counsellor needs to have information on the systems around the child, such as, family and relationships that ensued prior or post death of the parent, culture, religion and the story of the child that captures the child's own experiences.

6.8 CONCLUSION

This penultimate chapter presented the discussion of this study's findings in relation to literature. The key issues addressed are universalism and particularism, gain and loss, bereavement and attachment and bereavement support systems. In addition, theories and models of bereavement, school counselling and implications to counselling were also discussed in relation to the study's findings. This discussion culminated in the proposal of a model of best practice for counselling presented in Section 6.4. The next chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations

CHAPTER SEVEN:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the discussion of findings of the study in line with the sub-research questions posed in this study. This chapter gives a synopsis of the study by summarising the pertinent findings on each research question. In this chapter I also proffer recommendations in relation to research findings. This study's contribution to theory and practice are also given. Limitations of the study as well as the direction for future research are also tendered.

7.1 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of this study can be summarised under the following headings: Psychological experiences; Sociological experiences; Behavioural experiences; physiological experiences; Philosophical experiences, Educational experiences; School counselling experiences and Implications for best practice in school counselling.

7.1.1 Psychological experiences

7.1.1.1 The study found that children's psychological experiences of bereavement were unique to individual bereaved learners and that some bereavement experiences such as pain seemed to be universal and cut across the gender and cultural divides.

7.1.1.2 It also emerged that children had difficulties in expressing themselves verbally in relation to psychological consequences of bereavement in comparison to their more forthcoming attitude in their responses on sociological, economical or educational consequences of bereavement.

7.1.1.3 Unlike what is contained in stages theories and models of grief, psychological experiences seemed to have no definite pattern as the children seemed to experience varied responses and not in sequence as prescribed by Kluber-Ross (1969) and Worden (2002).

7.1.1.4 In line with the Dual Process Model of bereavement, it was also established that bereaved children resorted to avoidance as a defence mechanism or coping strategy in order to get temporary reprieve from grieving. Bereaved learners indicated that they avoided thinking about their deceased parents to avoid being hurt.

7.1.1.5 Experiences such as pain and anger could sometimes lead the bereaved child to nurse ideas of suicidal ideation and sometimes resulted in child grievers being stuck.

7.1.1.6 The study also revealed that bereaved children were all attached to their deceased parents with some indicating rumination of the attachment as they felt that their bereaved parents were still part of them. This seemed to reflect that the bonds with the deceased parents were still continuing as was reflected by Klass *et al.* (1996; Weinstein, 2008).

7.1.1.7 It was also evidenced from the study that children experienced a variety of grief experiences such as anticipatory grief, complicated grief, disenfranchised grief and ambivalent grief.

7.1.2 Sociological experiences

7.1.2.1 Key to the experiences of bereavement was the issue of culture as children had various experiences of culturally related issues such as, ancestral worship, ferrying the dead to the rural villages consulting diviners and superstition. However, it could be claimed that during bereavement, church support was evident as some bereaved learners experienced both the cultural and Christian religious practices.

7.1.2.2 Inheritance issues are mired with controversy and resulting in family feuds as it seems there is no single inheritance procedure followed. It includes inheritance of the deceased person's children, property, wives and results in relocation, secondary losses and socio-economic losses, bereavement support and role redefinition of the bereaved children.

7.1.2.3 From the study, experiences of property confiscation also emerged and were due to many and varied justifications. For instance, property was impounded

from the bereaved children by paternal relatives who believed that they were the rightful heirs of their bereaved relative's property since there was no will or marriage certificate. Sometimes the bereaved child's maternal relatives justified their property grabbing as the deceased had not paid *lobola* in full.

7.1.2.4 It was also found that children experienced profound socio-economic losses that came as a result of the death of a parent or parents. Parental death heralded many other losses in a ripple effect.

7.1.2.5 Gender issues also emerged from the study. Female children were in some instances discriminated in inheritance issues, and, male offspring inherit some of their dead parent's property whilst the girl child is side lined.

7.1.2.6 Death of a parent was observed as resulting in bereaved learners' role redefinition as they had to take up new and sometimes adult roles different from the normative ones they had before the death of their parents.

7.1.2.7 Another key sociological finding was that deceased parents were sometimes ferried to their rural homes for burial in line with the cultural belief that they need to be interred close to their other relatives so that they can settle together in the spiritual world of the family or clan's ancestors.

7.1.2.8 The study revealed that bereaved children depended on peers, relatives and teachers for bereavement support.

7.1.3 Philosophical experiences

7.1.3.1 The study established that new meanings to life emerged as a result of the death of a parent and their life trajectories seemed to be punctuated by the death event. The trajectory seemed to indicate three distinct phases: life before death, the death and life after death.

7.1.3.2 It was also evidenced that some bereaved adolescents valued God after the death of a parent. Some reflected a resigned acceptance and dependency on God's judgement and this seemed to help the learners.

7.1.4 Behavioural experiences

7.1.4.1 A key behavioural finding was that bereaved learners at times resorted to negative social behaviour such as substance abuse as a way of trying to cope with bereavement.

7.1.5 Physiological

7.1.5.1 Physical experiences of bereavement such as dreams, nightmares, sleep disturbances, stomach aches and headaches were common reactions to bereavement of parents especially immediately after the death of the parent.

7.1.6 Educational experiences

7.1.6.1 The study established that bereaved children at times lacked finances for school fees and other school related expenses, especially when the deceased parent was the breadwinner.

7.1.6.2 It was also found that children lacked concentration due to the bereavement of their parents, sometimes due to worry about the uncertainty of their future. This in some cases resulted in the bereaved children's decline in school performance.

7.1.6.3 Dropping out and contemplating dropping out were some of the findings that emerged from the study. Some children in the study temporarily dropped out or contemplated dropping out of school as a result of financial constraints or ailing parents having been relocated for care giving reasons.

7.1.6.4 The study also found that absenteeism and erratic attendance was rife in bereaved children's experiences of bereavement post death of their parents as they sometimes had to do other duties at home such as care giving of ailing surviving parents or because of lack of finances.

7.1.6.5 School transfers were seen as another experience of bereaved adolescents in secondary schools commonly featuring after the death of their parents.

7.1.7 School counselling experiences

7.1.7.1 There was mismatch in what children and counsellors said on counselling provision in schools. A key finding in this research was that both schools were similar in that counsellors insinuated that counselling of learners was in place and operational. However, learners painted another picture that seemed to point that there was little being done in these schools in terms of counselling. Hence, the suggestions proffered towards a model of counselling were a culmination of what the researcher sourced from literature, the counsellor's and the children's responses.

7.1.7.2 The study established that there seemed to be no clear reporting of bereavement cases, no identification of bereaved learners and no record keeping of bereaved cases policies in both schools. This was not conducive for counselling postvention.

7.1.7.3 It also emerged that counsellors sometimes lacked confidence in dealing with sensitive issues such as bereavement and thus needed in-servicing in this area of their operation.

7.1.7.4 The study also revealed that 10 learners out of 13 did not receive any form of bereavement counselling in the schools and those who got it claimed a teacher talked to them and told them how to react to their situation.

7.1.7.5 The study also found that counsellors lacked support from other teachers regarding school counselling.

7.2 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Bereaved secondary school learners suffer sociological, psychological, physical, behavioural, educational and philosophical bereavement experiences after the death of their parents. These consequences impact negatively on their education and results in erratic school attendance, lack of concentration, dropping out, absenteeism and transfers. It can also be concluded that the bereaved learners in the selected secondary schools do not get adequate bereavement counselling as the counsellors were not confident enough to conduct it and most children claimed that they did not get any form of school counselling. It can further be claimed that schools do not have laid down policies on bereavement

counselling. There is need for a multi-dimensional bereavement counselling model for school counselling.

7.3 THE POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF MY STUDY

7.3.1 The study though carried out on a small scale, provided insights into the experiences of bereaved learners from sociological, psychological, physical and philosophical perspectives as this informs the various stakeholders in education of the need to support the bereaved children. The proposed model of counselling bereaved children also informs the various stakeholders of insights into tackling and transforming counselling practice from being reaction-oriented to being proactive; as it takes into account the prevention of pathology, intervention and postvention strategies in school counselling. The model also serves as a pedestal as it creates a forum for further future debates in the area of counselling of bereaved children.

7.3.2 On methodology, the study revealed that children had difficulties in expressing their feelings through direct talk but fared better in written form. This presented methodological implications. Due to the limitation of verbalising the feelings, their written life stories can be utilised to augment the interview data so as to acquire fuller stories of the children.

7.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE METHODOLOGY USED

The study sought to establish and understand the bereavement experiences of learners following the death of a parent. An interpretivist approach was used in this study. The phenomenological case study design that was opted was relevant as it aimed to understand the experiences of individual bereaved participants. The subject of bereavement negatively impacts on respondents; thus, there is need to be cautious using methods that can enable the bereaved person to tell the life story in order to release tension because talking is regarded as therapeutic (CONNECT Module1 & 2). In depth interviewing was, thus, quite apt as it helped the respondents to express their suppressed emotions such as pain, anger, guilt and a host of other psychological consequences.

Bereaved experiences were seen to be peculiar to each individual, thus, the qualitative research which allows subjectivity and multiple truths was appropriate for this study. Multiple realities were found per case. Each case was bounded; hence each child's story of bereavement was presented according to the child's understanding of the phenomenon. Although the researcher cannot claim to have gone into the field without knowledge of bereavement issues, an attempt was made to bracket one's own preconceptions and take verbatim accounts of the bereaved children so as to bring out their own version of truth about the phenomenon of bereavement. The use of life narratives as a data collecting tool was of best fit, as some of the bereaved learners could express themselves better as the method is less intrusive than other methods. Some data not privy in interviews emerged in the written life narratives. Although the methodology used had flaws such as issues of generalisation, it managed to yield data that were instrumental in the proposal of a model of school bereavement counselling that can further be developed and used for ensuring best practice in counselling.

7.5 LIMITATIONS

Chapter 4 presented a number of methodological challenges encountered when carrying out this study. However, a summative revisit of the limitations is essential as the challenges so far presented are "part of a bigger challenge of representation in qualitative research" (Moyo, 2004:210). Each methodology has flaws, and the current study is not spared. For example, the use of a sample of recently bereaved children narrows the scope of experiences of learners as the onset of one's grief and the trajectory it follows is not uniform. For some, it might take years, but for others only hours after the death. Therefore, the findings of this study represent to a greater extent, the experiences of bereavement in the first trimester following the death of the parents and may not be generalised to cover long term experiences. This study, however, capitalised on the strengths of phenomenological case study research to gather the bereaved children's experiences of parental death.

Having presented the limitations, the recommendations are proffered below.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.6.1 Recommendations for further research

7.6.1.1 This study recommends that further study that involves use of rural cases as the challenges/ experiences of bereavement may be different from those of urban children as was glimpsed from the experiences/encounters PPL6LM and her sister had when she was in her rural home. Future research should be inclusive of these different settings.

7.6.1.2 The study recommends that in future research, learners whose parents died a long time back should be included so as to gain insight into their experiences. The current study was mainly concerned with recent deaths; yet, bereavement consequences are not static and can be experienced at different times in individual griever's life trajectories.

7.6.1.3 This study recommends that findings of this study be used as a foundation on which future bereavement counselling research can be based upon as there is a dearth of academic research on bereavement counselling.

7.6.1.4 Future research should also adopt a more encompassing thrust that includes policy makers, school heads, provincial Guidance and Counselling, parents and school psychological services in order to capture their varied views as these might assist in the crafting of efficacious counselling policies and programmes.

7.6.2 Recommendations for practice

7.6.2.1 Schools need to encourage open communication on bereavement of both staff and learners to remove the notion that death is a taboo subject.

7.6.2.2 There is need for school based counselling programmes to be clearly crafted and well synchronised and include learners, parents and staff for the benefit of the bereaved learners and to avoid what the researcher would refer as "a butterfly approach" (where one jumps from one place to another without showing any formalised or valuable assistance). There is need for

identification policies, reporting policies, setting up committees including all stakeholders, proper record keeping/ properly secure data base, confidentiality.

7.6.2.3 The study recommends that teachers, heads and counsellors be in-serviced and more thrust be put on equipping the teachers in initial training with the necessary skills to deal with bereaved children. Counselling practice in schools should be tailored with the knowledge of bereavement theory in mind and teachers and other school staff should be equipped with deeper understanding of how children react to bereavement.

7.6.2.4 There is need for the secondary school curriculum to take cognisance of the bereaved learner's dire need of bereavement support. Serious consideration should be given on inclusion of bereavement issues in curriculum. Inclusion can be in the form of time tabling of Guidance and Counselling, teaching loss awareness across curriculum, or death studies and death education. However, consultations with various stakeholders need to be done in this regard to ensure acceptance of the programme and avoid tissue rejection.

7.6.2.5 The study also recommends that there should be a free information flow in the school. Children, staff and parents and guardians need to be furnished with information on bereavement supportive organs within the school and in the community to help empower them and to reduce risk factors around them. They need to be made aware of referral option around them.

7.6.2.6 The study recommends that peer support be operationalised through children's clubs or peers groups as these may assist children to talk, verbalise their emotions and to participate in crafting bereavement policies as they have to participate in matters concerning them.

7.6.2.7 This study also recommended that there should be more collaboration between Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, Ministry of Social Work, Ministry of Education Arts and Culture, Non-Governmental Organisations, business community to try and fight with one accord the social ills brought by

bereavement of parents. It is thus, further recommended that schools adopt a multidimensional perspective of assisting bereaved learners in their care.

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APPENDIX A: Request to undertake Preliminary Research

Faculty of Education
School of Postgraduate Studies
28 Commissioner Street
East London
Phone: East London: 043704 7220/19

University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

27 May 2009

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re.: Permission To Undertake A Doctoral Research Study

This serves to inform you that Mrs Jenny Shumba, student number 200904214 is registered for the doctoral degree in Education, in the School of Postgraduate Studies, Faculty of Education.

As part of her studies, Mrs Jenny Shumba is required to conduct a research on an approved topic. The approved research is entitled: "*Learner bereavement experiences in parent Posthumousity: implications for guidance and counseling in secondary schools urban Zimbabwe*".

Mrs Jenny Shumba is soliciting information and seeking permission to undertake this study. Your assistance in this matter is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Dr Byron Brown
Study Supervisor
Ph. 043 704 7285
Email bbrown@ufh.ac.za

APPENDIX B: Request for collection of preliminary data

690 Reeler crescent
Parktown
Harare
12 May 2009

The Provincial Director
Harare Metropolitan Province
Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture

Re: REQUEST FOR DATA ON ORPHANS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM

My name is Jenny Shumba. I was a senior Lecturer at Morgan Zintec College up to March 2009. I have been recently admitted to a PhD programme at Fort Hare University in South Africa where I have just commenced my studies.

My research area is on the issue of Bereavement Counseling. Specifically, I wish to focus on **"Bereavement Experiences of Secondary School Students in Harare Metropolitan Province – Implications for Guidance and Counseling"**. I found this topic compelling, given the death prevalence among parents and guardians that leaves orphans to fend for themselves. I can see the findings of this study being of immense use to the school system in terms of designing responses. I can also see the findings being useful as advocacy tools for appeals for possible support for such students.

A recent discussion with my supervisor resulted in the advice to have a rough idea of enrolments in the concerned schools, together with statistics on the proportion of orphaned children. This will help me build a stronger justification for the research.

In view of the foregoing, I am requesting for information on the numbers of orphans in the secondary school system in Harare Metropolitan Province. If the data is not readily available, I seek your authority to collect this data in a small sample of schools that will inform on the proportion of orphan prevalence in the secondary school system.

I have requested my husband, Sibangani Shumba to collect this data on my behalf.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
12 MAY 2009
HARARE PROVINCE
P.O. Box CY 1354, Causeway

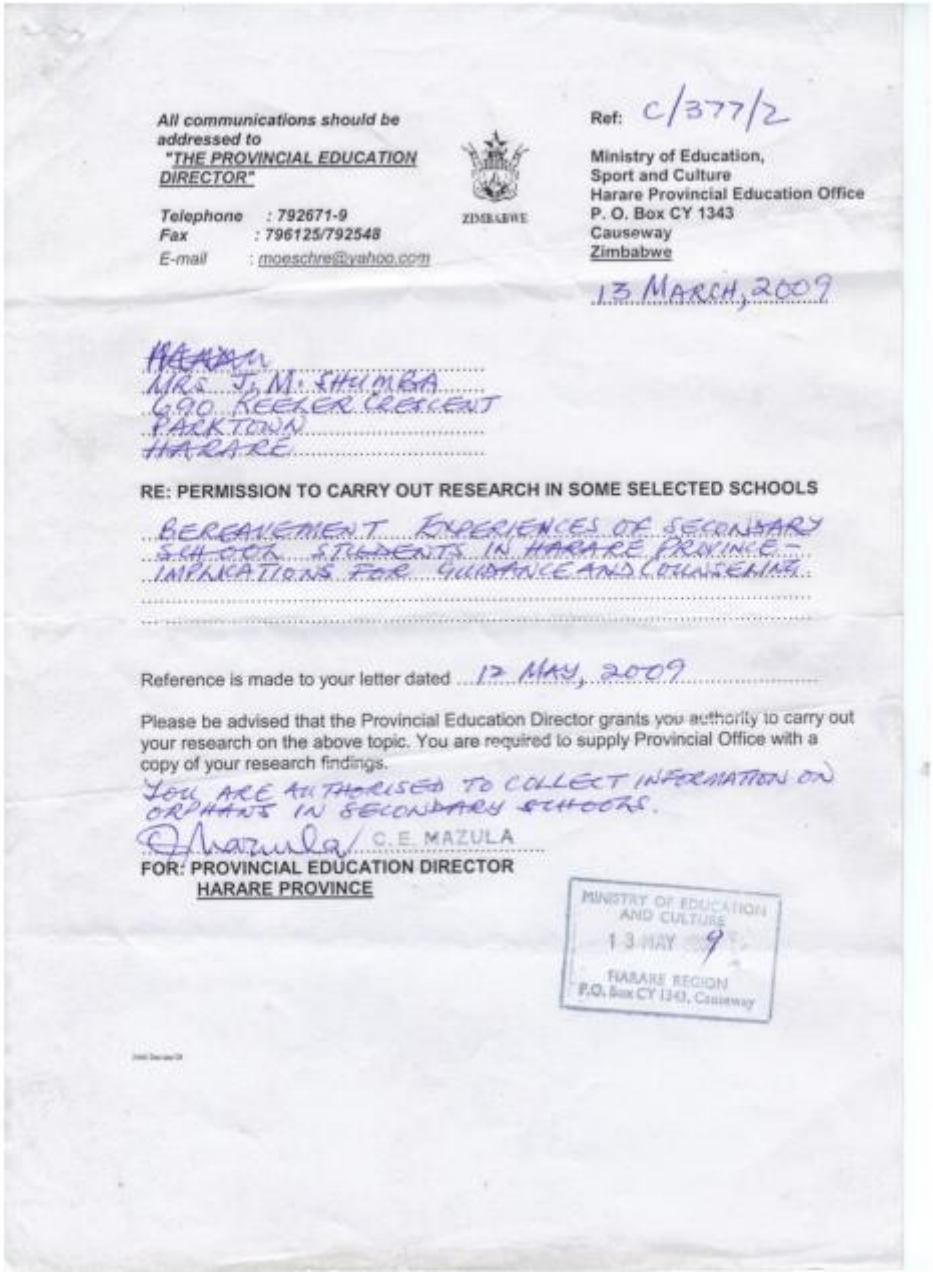
I thank you in advance for your cooperation

Yours Faithfully

JShumba

Jenny M Shumba

APPENDIX C: Authorisation letter to collect preliminary data



All communications should be addressed to "THE PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR"

Telephone : 792671-9
Fax : 796125/792548
E-mail : moeschre@yahoo.com

ZIMBABWE

Ref: C/377/2

Ministry of Education,
Sport and Culture
Harare Provincial Education Office
P. O. Box CY 1343
Causeway
Zimbabwe

13 MARCH, 2009

MRS J. M. SHUMBA
690 KEELER CRESCENT
PARKTOWN
HARARE

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN SOME SELECTED SCHOOLS

BEREAVEMENT EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN HARARE PROVINCE - IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING.

Reference is made to your letter dated 12 MAY, 2009

Please be advised that the Provincial Education Director grants you authority to carry out your research on the above topic. You are required to supply Provincial Office with a copy of your research findings.

YOU ARE AUTHORISED TO COLLECT INFORMATION ON ORPHANS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

C. E. MAZULA
FOR: PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR
HARARE PROVINCE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
13 MAY 2009
HARARE REGION
P.O. Box CY 1343, Causeway

APPENDIX D: Permission by MoESAC Head Office to carryout research

All communications should be addressed to "The Secretary for Education Sport and Culture"
Telephone: 734951/59 and 734971
Telegraphic address: "EDUCATION"
Fax: 794505

ZIMBABWE

Ref: C/426/3

Ministry of Education Sport, Arts and Culture
P.O Box CY 121
Causeway
Zimbabwe

- **Mrs Jenny Shumba**
- **University of Fort Hare**
- ----------

Re: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Reference is made to you application to carry out research in the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture institutions on:

Learner Bereavement Experiences of Parent Posthumosity: Implications for Guidance and Counselling in Secondary Schools of Urban Zimbabwe - - - - --

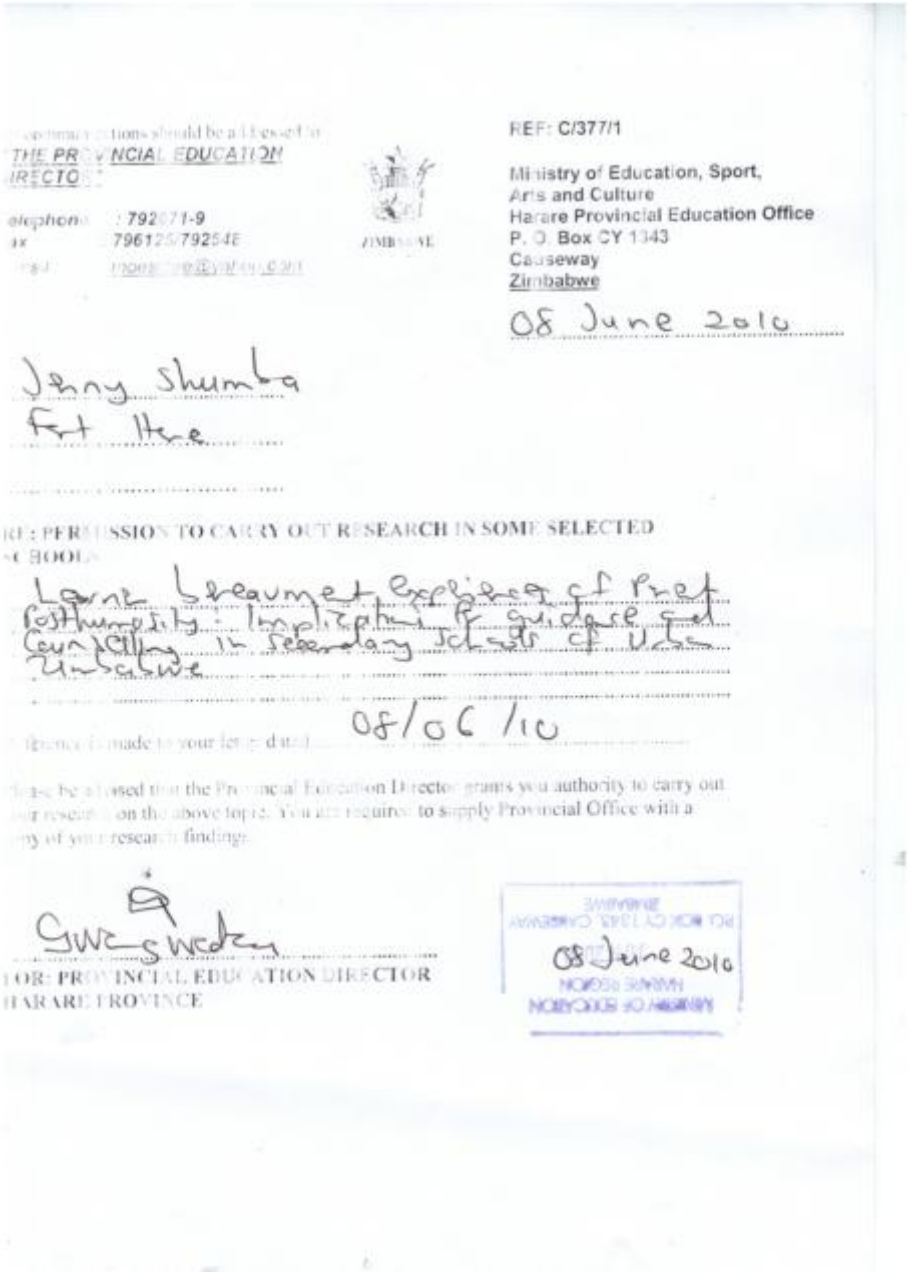
Permission is hereby granted. However you are required to liaise with the Provincial Education Director responsible for the schools from which you want to research.

You are also required to provide the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture with the final copy of your research since it is instrumental in the development of Education in Zimbabwe.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION SPORT AND CULTURE
08 JUN 2013
P.O. CY 121, CAUSEWAY ZIMBABWE

C. Mazonde
For: SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE

APPENDIX E: Permission by Harare Province to carryout research



REF: C/377/1

Ministry of Education, Sport,
Arts and Culture
Harare Provincial Education Office
P. O. Box CY 1343
Causeway
Zimbabwe

08 June 2010

Jenny Shumba
For Ithe

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN SOME SELECTED SCHOOLS

Learner bereavement experience of Post Posthumanity: Implications for guidance and Counselling in Secondary Schools of Use Zimbabwe

Reference is made to your letter dated 08/06/10

This is to be advised that the Provincial Education Director grants you authority to carry out your research on the above topic. You are required to supply Provincial Office with a copy of your research findings.

Gwenzwedzi

FOR: PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR
HARARE PROVINCE

08 June 2010

APPENDIX F: Permission by District office to conduct research

All communications should be addressed to "THE DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER"

Telephone:2922407

e-mail : hglendistrict @yahoo.com

ZIMBABWE

Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture
Highfield/Glen Norah District
P.O Box HD 270
Highfield
Zimbabwe

17 June 2010

The Head
Lord Malvern School
Waterfalls
HARARE

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A DOCTORATE RESEARCH STUDY MRS SHUMBA, J

Mrs Shumba is granted permission to carry out her research in our District at your School in particular.

Please accept her presence and endeavours in your premises.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,SPORT ARTS & CULTURE
HIGHFIELD GLEN NORAH DISTRICT
2010 -06- 16
P O BOX HD 270 HIGHFIELD HARARE

L.. Kwaramba
FOR : DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER
HIGHGLEN DISTRICT

APPENDIX H: Interview Schedule for bereaved children

ADOLESCENTS BEREAVEMENT EXPERIENCES
OF PARENT'S DEATH, STUDY 2010

COVER LETTER

Dear participant,

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand learner's experiences of parental bereavement and to determine implications for this for improved counselling provision in secondary school. Your response is solicited because you suffered parental death within the last 12 months.

The information that you share will be kept in confidentiality, thus, whatever you say will not be shared with others. Your identity will remain anonymous: there will be no mentioning of names or other personal details, as such, you are free to select any name other than yours to be used in this study. The results of the study can be shared with you, if so desired. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time during the research.

The interview entails conducting face to face interviews with school counsellors/class teachers and school children. I will also conduct a document analysis of counsellors' or form teachers' documents. As such, you are requested to respond to interview questions as truthfully as you possibly can. This interview will be audio-tapped with your permission and the audio tapes will be securely stored and disposed of after all the data has been captured.

My contact details are as follows, if there is need for you to contact me on matters concerning this research: +263912933202/+27765440266; e-mail jennymshumba@yahoo.co.uk.

Thank you.

Jenny Shumba

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear participant,

You are kindly requested to read this letter of consent and to sign in the space below if you agree to the terms stipulated.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to explore and understand learners' experiences of parental bereavement and to determine the implications of this for improved counselling provision in secondary school.

Methodology: This study adopts a qualitative phenomenological case study methodology. Data will be collected from selected secondary school counsellors and parentally bereaved children in Harare Metropolitan region. I request to have face to face interviews with you. Data will be recorded on an audio-recorder with your consent. Interviews should last approximately 60 minutes per person.

Research Ethics: You are required to read the following information carefully so that you can make informed decisions about your participation.

Conditions for participation: Participation in the study is voluntary and should be done out of your free-will. You are free to withhold any information that you decide not to share with the researcher or withdraw from an interview at any point if you feel like doing so for whatever reasons.

Protection accorded to participants

1. Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence

2. Anonymity: Your individual identity will be revealed in any reports resulting from this study. All notes, transcripts and summaries will be given codes separate from your name. A pseudonym you may wish to select will be used.

3. Risks and discomforts: There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in participating in this study. Permission to conduct the research has been granted by the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture and Heads of selected schools.

Use of data collected: The data collected is mainly for a PHD thesis. Some of the data will be used for journal publications.

Benefits and Compensation: There are no direct benefits to you or any other individual participants. The anticipated benefits are a better understanding of bereavement experiences of learners with a view of informing counselling practice in school.

.....

INFORMED CONSENT

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary. I am free to decline to participate in this research or I may withdraw my participation at any point without penalty. My decision whether or not to participate in this research study will be upheld by the researcher.

Signature of participant ……
Date …….
Signature of researcher ……
Date …….

Thank you
Jenny Shumba
……..

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Section A: Personal information

Kindly tell me about yourself, starting with the following questions. Answer the questions as honestly as possible. Talk about each issue as much as you can. Describe the details as much as you can.

1. Your **age**/ **Gender**: ……..
2. **Grade** level at school: …….
3. Your home language/Ethnic/Cultural/religion:

……
……

4. With whom are you currently **living** at home / how long / ……..….
……

5. Whether you are the **youngest** or **oldest** in the family:
……
……

6. With the exception of your parent(s), which **family member passed** away in the last year?
…… Describe your relationship with this/these person(s) ……
……
……..

7. How did your mother / father (as appropriate) **die**? …….. (*Prompts: e.g. vehicular accident, cancer, HIV/AIDS, TB, Heart Failure*)
……
……

   Describe your relationship with your mother/father before he/she passed away (as appropriate) …
……
……..

Section B: Describing your experience of bereavement for your [mother / father's] death

Reflect on your mother / father's death and answer the following questions in as much details as possible. I would like you to describe your experiences with a time line in mind: (a) immediately after the death; (b) 5-8 months later; and (c) the present.

Phase 1 of the interview

What can you remember from your experience of your mother / father/parents' death? *(keep asking what else [how did it have, why it happen, at what point after the death, etc] until it is clear that the person exhausted all he/she can remember)h*

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8. How did you mourn the death? ……

Phase 2 of the interview

9. Describe (in as much detail as possible) your experiences in___ (*each element recalled above [you must listen keenly]*). In each case, give examples of what you did.

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10. How did you REACT immediately after learning of your mother/father's death? Describe those initial ***reactions / feelings / behaviours***? Give some examples of what you felt.

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……..

11. Have your ***feelings/reactions*** changed? When did you notice a change in your reactions/feelings above? What new feelings/reactions did you have after those initial ones? Describe the new feelings/reactions /behaviours. Give some examples of the experience

……
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……

12. Do you still have those same feelings (described above) today? What has changed? What has remained unchanged? Describe a ***typical reaction/feeling/behaviour*** that you have **nowadays** when you recall the death. ……

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…….

13. **Mention** one incident / experience of the death that really distressed you (or made you relieved/happy), and describe in detail what happened there to make you sad (relieved/ happy)

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…….

14. How has your brothers/sisters/other family members ***treated you / behaved towards you*** during the bereavement? Mention two incident / experience and describe in detail what happened

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[All Probe: *numbness, fear, sadness, disbelief, guilt, yearning, confusion etc;*

- *Crying, aches and pains, fatigue, muscular weakness, hollowness of the stomach or abdomen, dry mouth, oversensitivity to noise, breathlessness etc;*
- *Dreams, forgetfulness, reminders of the dead person, searching/calling for the dead person, social withdrawal, substance abuse, restlessness, memories of deceased, loss of appetite etc;*
- *Blame God, questioning God, lack of meaning in life, wanting to die too; material losses, home , inheritance etc]*

Cultural aspect experiences

15. How much influence did your culture have in the way you mourned the death? Give some examples of what you did? [***probe***: What happened, who attended the funeral, children's attendance at funerals, did you hold private and/or public mourning]

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16. Describe any rituals you performed as part of your bereavement. Give examples. What did the rituals mean to you? What was the purpose? [***Probe***: *when after the death it happen? body viewing rites; rites for bidding farewell to the deceased; Family gathering: inheritance of children, inheritance of property, relocation and separation of siblings, adoption*] …….

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Section C: Describing your experience of bereavement support at school for your [mother / father's] death

17. Did your mourning/grieving for your parent(s) death affect you at school? How did it affect you? Describe in some detail how it affected you. Give example of what happened. …….

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18. Did you inform your teachers / school counselors about your parent(s)' death? Tell me about the counseling support received at school as a result. How did you find the counseling support? Do you think it helped you? Give some examples of how it helped you. ……..

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19. How has your life changed as a result of the bereavement experiences? [probe: the bereavement, counselling etc}……

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20. You have been through this bereavement experience, what does it mean to you? …….

……

……

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Listen keenly for how it helped!!!!!!! **DO NOT INTRODUCE ANY OF THE WORDS BELOW**. Just listen to them. Compare if any of these things are mentioned.
Psychologically [probe: facing bereavement, your fears, your dreams, guilt, crying, acceptance of bereavement, sadness, how you view the deceased parent (s)]
Social interactions /Relationships [probe: at home with siblings and adults, at school with peers and teachers etc]
School work [probe: truancy, concentration, relationship with peers and teachers etc]
Behaviour [probe: forgetfulness, reminders of dead person, searching and calling for the deceased, social withdrawal. Substance abuse, restlessness etc]; Physically [probe:, eating habits, aches and pains, muscular weakness, fatigue etc]
Life at home [probe: provisions, relocation, head of household, relationships, isolation, stigmatisation etc]; [probe: school fees, books, relationship with peers, relationship with teacher(s), concentration, isolation, stigmatisation etc]

APPENDIX I: Interview Schedule for School Counsellors

PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT EXPERIENCES
OF ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOLS
STUDY, 2010

COVER LETTER

Dear participant,

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand learner's experiences of parental bereavement and to determine implications for this for improved counselling provision in secondary school. Your response is solicited because you suffered parental death within the last 12 months.

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My contact details are as follows, if there is need for you to contact me on matters concerning this research: +263912933202/+27765440266; e-mail jennymshumba@yahoo.co.uk.

Thank you.

Jenny Shumba

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

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Research Ethics:

You are required to read the following information carefully so that you can make informed decisions about your participation.

Conditions for participation:

Participation in the study is voluntary and should be done out of your free-will. You are free to withhold any information that you decide not to share with the researcher or withdraw from an interview at any point if you feel like doing so for whatever reasons.

Protection accorded to participants

4. Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence
5. Anonymity: Your individual identity will be revealed in any reports resulting from this study. All notes, transcripts and summaries will be given codes separate from your name. A pseudonym you may wish to select will be used.
6. Risks and discomforts: There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in participating in this study. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture and Heads of selected schools.

Use of data collected

The data collected is mainly for a PHD thesis. Some of the data will be used for journal publications.

Benefits and Compensation

There are no direct benefits to you or any other individual participants. The anticipated benefits are a better understanding of bereavement experiences of learners with a view of informing counselling practice in school.

INFORMED CONSENT

Participation in this study is voluntary. I am free to decline to participate in this research or I may withdraw my participation at any point without penalty. My decision whether or not to participate in this research study will be upheld by the researcher.

Signature of participant_____

Date _____

Signature of researcher_____

Date _____

Thank you

Jenny Shumba

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

Section A: Personal information

Kindly tell me about yourself, starting with the following questions. Answer the questions as honestly as possible. Talk about each issue as much as you can.

1. Your age [range]: .....

2. Your gender: .....

3. Your highest professional qualification

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4. Your COUNSELLING experience [probe: total number of years as a teacher, total number of years in the school, total number of years as a counsellor]

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Section B: Describing experiences of bereavement of learners

Reflect on your counselling experiences with learners who loss one/both parents, and answer the following questions in as much detail as possible.

5. What kind of problems do you have to deal with when counselling learners who lose one/both parents?

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Describe a typical problem encountered [give as much detail as possible]

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How do you identify learners with these problems?

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From experience, what could be the cause of these problems? [***Probe***: Do you think it's related to the loss of their parent(s)? WHY?

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Section B: Describing experiences of bereavement of learners

Reflect on your counselling experiences with learners who loss one/both parents, and answer the following questions in as much detail as possible.

5. What kind of problems do you have to deal with when counselling learners who lose one/both parents?

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Describe a typical problem encountered [give as much detail as possible]

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How do you identify learners with these problems?

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From experience, what could be the cause of these problems? [***Probe***: Do you think it's related to the loss of their parent(s)? WHY?

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6. WHAT AGE group of learners have you had to counsel because of the death of their parent(s)? [***Probe***: what is your greatest challenge counselling these different age-groups of learners who have as common denominator the loss of their parent?]

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7. Do you feel fully equipped as a counselor to deal with the range of issues that you are confronted with from these learners? What are the challenges? Give examples

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8. When you think of the ranges of needs of the learners-who-loss-their parents, what would you say needs to be done to improve the counselling that you offer here at school? [***keep asking what else***]

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THANK YOU

FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

APPENDIX J: Data collection form for life narratives

Write about your life story. Include information on the death of your parent or parents. Give detail about how the death occurred, where, when, your feelings before and after the death, how the death has changed the family and yourself. Furthermore, write about how you were assisted by different people at home and at school.

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DATA SET 1: Transcripts of Learners in School M

Your age/ Gender

PPL1M 17 years old Female

PPL2M 14 years old Male

PPL3M 14 years old Female

PPL4M 16 years old Female

PPL5M 16 years old Male

PPL6M 14 years old Male

Grade level at school:

PPL1M form 3

PPL2M Form 2

PPL3M Form 2

PPL4M Form 3

PPL5M Form 3

PPL6M Form 2

Your home language/Ethnic/Cultural/religion

PPL1M Ndebele Roman Catholic

PPL2M Shona and English New Life Covenant Church

PPL3M English/ Shona Coloured Africa Baptist Church

PPL4M Shona/ Seventh Day Adventist

PPL5M Shona AFM

PPL6M Shona English united Methodist and End-time Message

With whom are you currently living at home / how long

PPL1M I am living with father since birth. Still staying with father and my siblings.

PPL2M I am staying with my aunt (father's sister)

About six months

PPL3M I am staying with my grandmother and my mother's brother from birth.

PPL4M Mother. Since the 5th of January 2010 after my father's death

PPL5M My big brother and my sister. I have been staying with them since 15 December 2009 when mum passed away.

PPL6M I am currently staying with mother

Whether you are the youngest or oldest in the family

PPL1M I am the youngest. 4/4

PPL2M I am the youngest out of two. The older one is my sister

PPL3M I am number 4 out of 5. The eldest is my brother.

PPL4M I am the second born in a family of five. The older one is my big sister and the rest are my younger sisters.

PPL5M I am the last born. The older one is my sister and the other one is my brother.

PPL6M I am the first born and have a younger sister.

With the exception of your parent(s), which family member passed away in the last year?

Describe your relationship with this/these person(s)

PPL1M None

PPL2M No

PPL3M None

PPL4M No one that I know of.

PPL5M None

PPL6M No one

How did your mother / father (as appropriate) die? (*Prompts: e.g. vehicular accident, cancer, HIV/AIDS, TB, Heart Failure*)

PPL1M Mother died 19 May 2010. I don't remember…. Hmm…. BP. What I heard is that she had BP. She was operated. It was said her kidney was blocked.

PPL2M My father and mother passed away in a car accident on 18 November 2009

PPL3M She was ill for one week. She died of pneumonia. She died on 5 March 2010.

PPL4M (*Hesitant a bit*) He became sick. Hmm,…he was positive. He was sick for two months. In fact he had been ill but it then worsened.

PPL5M BP. I think she was suffering from it for a long time before she died. She died on 15 December 2009

PPL6M He was sick. He complained of a headache on a Tuesday then died on a Saturday. Ma'am, I suspect my uncle has a hand in it because he visited us and then dad got sick. I have heard he is a bad guy. When I grow up I will talk to him…. Well that is life.

Describe your relationship with your mother/father before he/she passed away (as appropriate

PPL1M We were very close, very close. I told her everything that I knew (crying, so pause. Gave her tissue)

PPL2M The relationship was good- that good. With dad we would go out to watch movies and to have braai. It was a boys' stuff. Sometimes we would go out with mum. We would sometimes go for shopping.

PPL3M I was quite close to her. I talked to her when I had a problem

PPL4M We were good friends but as you would expect of a father and daughter. We had misunderstandings sometimes. But there was no problem; (*pause*) he wanted the best out of me. We resolved our issues through dialogue

PPL5M She was ok. We used to get along very well….My dad passed away in 1995. He had cancer and I did not know him well.

PPL6M we did not have any quarrels.

What can you remember from your experience of your mother / father/parents' death? *(Probe what else [how did it happen, why it happened, at what point after the death, etc] until it is clear that the person exhausted all he/she can remember)*

PPL1M She had an operation since her kidneys were blocked. I don't remember much.

She died at Parirenyatwa hospital on 19 May 2010. She was 48. Ah…it was so hurting (sniff).

PPL2M I was told there was a truck and my father was trying to overtake.

PPL3M She passed away at Parirenyatwa hospital around 7pm. Grandmother helped her when she was ill at taken to Hospital. She complained of lower stomach pain. I used to have headaches. I also used to dream of her. Now it has stopped. Around April.

PPL4M My father passed away at home. We were in the house. We were actually seated in the house. He just went silent because previously we could hear him groan and breathe heavily. Grandfather (his father) was there. He had come to look after him. He told us father was no more. We thought he was asleep.

PPL5M I was really pained. I just cried a lot. My mother had a stroke. For a whole year she could not walk. She had stroke on the right side. Sorry, I initially indicated that it was the left side. The stroke recurred for a second time and she got very sick. However, she was killed by the third one. She then passed away in hospital in Harare. When she left home she had stopped talking and could not see. It made me very unhappy.

PPL6M When he died I was not there but my mother informed us about the death. She was with my uncle (her brother). Mmm, I was really distressed.

How did you mourn the death?

PPL1M It was held at home. There was a church service- she was a soldier so the Commando did it, conducted the funeral. We did the body viewing. All the children did.

It was held at home in Harare at Commando. There were many people. There was a Gun Salute because she was declared a provincial hero. She was a war veteran and my father is a deminer.

PPL2M They were mourned at home in Avondale

PPL3M There was a church service. Lots of people came to our house.

PPL4M We mourned at our house. My father had indicated that he wanted to be buried at our rural home (Gutu). He was buried there- no.. oh ..no sorry. What happened is that his body was ferried there but the people in Gutu were adamant that he should not be buried there. I am not sure why, (pause) but some said he was not their blood relative implying that grandfather was not his biological son. We had to bring him back to Harare. We buried him at Warren Hills. Because he was a Seventh Day Adventist, church members came, sang and prayed.

PPL5M My mother was ferried to our rural home in Wedza. People gathered and were crying while the body was still in the house. The body was taken out and body viewing was done. The body was carried to the family graveyard. Close relatives were asked to "throw" soil onto the body before it was covered with soil.

I am not sure why it was done.

Body viewing is done so that one sees the dead person for the last time.

PPL6M We mourned him at Warren Park . the people from his work place financed the funeral. There were many people

Describe (in as much detail as possible) your experiences in___ (*each element recalled above [listen keenly]*). In each case, give examples of what you did.

PPL1M My mother was a heroine. ….she was so strong, (Smile) hmm hmm hmm it is still hurting. Many people were crying.

Hmm it is still hurting.

PPL2M To me it came as a shock because I did not know such a thing could happen to them.

PPL3M When I heard that my mother had died I cried a lot. I was with my sister. We kept on talking about how much we missed our mother.

PPL5M She was taken to hospital by her elder sister, my elder sister, my cousin (son to her elder sister who accompanied her to hospital). After my father's death, my mother's family virtually looked after us. We heard about my mother's death from a nurse who phoned my sister.

PPL6M I was really tormented by my father's death. I was in great pain. It was stressful.

How did you REACT immediately after learning of your mother/father's death? Describe those initial *reactions / feelings / behaviours*? Give some examples of what you felt.

PPL1M At first I cried. I couldn't believe it!

But later on, I overcame the situation but I was still crying. Because I was still so hurting.

PPL2M I was in shock! I did not believe it. I felt lonely, I couldn't eat, couldn't stop crying. After 2 days that is when I started eating.

PPL3M It was quite bad-I felt hurt. I was not ok but tried to make myself strong because of my little sister and grandmother

PPL4M It hurt me so much. I could not believe it. I thought grandfather had not observed well. I realized that it was true when I saw people gathering at our house. Ha….it pained me very much.

PPL5M When the nurse phoned my sister to tell her that mother had died I was extremely devastated and up to now, I am still in great pain.

PPL6M (*Looking sad*) When I heard that my father was dead, it really pained me. ….I cried, I wanted to just run away to some place…I don't know where. I did not know what I wanted to do. I was worrying about the future, my fees about my mother… who will look after her…..I used to dream about him asking me to go to him so that we would leave together to where he stays. Sometimes I would have nightmares of my dad chasing after me. I would relate the nightmare to my mother and we would pray. ….I also used to feel weak always soon after the death. A lot of exhaustion.

Have your *feelings/reactions* changed? When did you notice a change in your reactions/feelings above? What new feelings/reactions did you have after those initial ones? Describe the new feelings/reactions /behaviours. Give some examples of the experience

PPL1M There are no changes yet.

I still cry a lot especially when I see some people with their mothers I feel hurt (Starts crying)

PPL2M Not really. Not actually the same though. Like I used to cry everyday. I now cry only when I think of them. For instance, during the first term when we had a talent show at church, I felt lonely. I wished they were there. I thought if only they were there. I sang. I sang a church song and thought of them then I cried….at the church.

PPL3M There has been a lot of change. My mother was always happy. I feel the change- I feel she is gone somewhere she is going to come back. I feel low when granny starts shouting or I am in my quiet times. When washing dishes or when watching tv

PPL4M It seems I am now in a lot more pain than before. I now meet a lot of challenges and wish my father was around- I can now realize his worth. For instance, I was transferred from boarding because of lack of money. I feel that if my father were alive I would not be in this kind of trouble.

PPL5M The feelings are still the same. I am still in great pain. It is still like that. *(Hesitant)* I am in pain. Still the same pain *(deep sigh).*

PPL6M There is some change. Now, I am now sort of forgetting about the death- the pain. I think about the bereavement once in a while. I think about the death when I do something wrong and my mother reprimands.

Do you still have those same feelings (described above) today? What has changed? What has remained unchanged? Describe a *typical reaction/feeling/behaviour* that you have nowadays when you recall the death

PPL1M It has not changed. I still have the same feelings as when she died

PPL2M I get along well with my aunt but I still feel something is missing in my life.

PPL3M Can't say what hasn't changed.

PPL4M It is now worse- ndava kuona kurwadza. I have now realized that he is really really, truly dead.

PPL5M When I think about my mother's death, I feel like crying. I then just decide not to think about her. I just stop thinking about her. I just divert my thoughts from such issues.

I just divert my thoughts from my mother's death. For instance, I try to do something that pleases me. For example, at home I watch tv, at school, I join my peers and talk, about other issues and forget,

PPL6M Ah, I think it is better that I just forget about it……it might help me….now things have changed I no longer dream about him as I used to. I now dream seeing his picture. Now, my mother and I keep asking God why my father died.

Mention one incident / experience of the death that really distressed you (or made you relieved/happy), and describe in detail what happened there to make you sad (relieved/ happy)

PPL1M Hmm none. Nothing so far

PPL2M At first I was worried about who is gonna take care of me but now have aunties taking care of me (smiling).

PPL3M No specific incident

PPL4M His illness and subsequent death really pained me. I was very distressed. He was very thin and could not talk. He was very ill and helpless. One incident that really distressed me before he died was that he called all of us (children) and told us that he wanted well behaved children and soon after he passed away. He said, "I want well behaved children."

PPL5M Nothing so far

PPL6M One incident that I can still remember was when my father told me that we would be going to South Africa… and weeks later he was gone-dead. I remember it was two weeks after my uncle (his brother) came to our house that my father complained of having a terrible headache. We did not sleep that night as he was experiencing excruciating pain. He was suffering…..it really hurt me.

How has your brothers/sisters/other family members *treated you* / *behaved towards you* during the bereavement? Mention two incident / experience and describe in detail what happened

PPL1M My father helped. He helped us, he comforted us. (still crying) we are 4 and I am the last born, 3 boys and I am the only girl. They (brothers) comforted me saying it happens in life. We have to continue with our lives. God did it for a reason to take our mother.

No incident I remember of when my brothers helped me (taking tissue).

PPL2M They helped me by going to church with me, going to see friends. Surprisingly my sister used to fail but she now passes,

PPL3M They (relatives) encouraged me that life goes on. My mother feared God so

PPL4M My sister and dad had conflict because she was impregnated by her boy friend. My dad and his younger brother had followed her to where she had eloped and thrashed her. So she did not want to come back home before our father died. She was very affected by the death as she was away from home when he died.

We were not able to assist each other as siblings because we were all very hurt by his death so none of us had energy to comfort anyone. My younger sister was the most affected because up to now she keeps on saying that she wants to go to daddy.

My aunt in the UK pays our fees. My aunt and uncle bought 2 Kombis to assist us. Money generated through the Kombis is supposed to help us. One Kombi is working the other not. That is what is sustaining us. However, in my mother's family they were four, 2 brothers and two sisters. One brother is late so at the moment my aunt is fending for a big family. She has her children in the UK, her brother's and us (her sister's children). It is quite heavy on her,….it is tough on her.

PPL5M My siblings care for me. I am now staying with them and they are paying my fees. We did not relocate we are still staying at the same house where we stayed with mother. They keep on telling me not to worry much about our mother's death and not to think about it.

My brother is a kombi driver and does not stay at home much.

PPL6M All family members are doing fine…they comforted me. We talked and comforted each other.

How much influence did your culture have in the way you mourned the death? Give some examples of what you did? [*probe*: What happened, who attended the funeral, children's attendance at funerals, did you hold private and/or public mourning]

PPL1M Cultural things have not yet done. It was attended by many soldiers, the neighbours and our relatives. It was a public funeral. Because she was a soldier and war vet she was given gun salutes.

PPL2M This was a church thing with no cultural thing. Father and mom's relatives friends and workmates attended. Children were allowed to attend the funeral service and burial. There was a very big crowd.

PPL3M There was nothing traditional. We had a pastor that preached. People from her father's family attended the funeral.

PPL4M Because he was an SDA church member, SDAs do not involve themselves in cultural things, they just bury their dead. "No nyaradzo, no guva." He was just buried by his relatives and my mother's relatives. The main snag was that my father's relatives did not want to contribute towards the funeral costs. We were assisted by my mother's relatives- some of mother's relatives are very wealthy.

PPL5M My mother was of the Apostolic sect Madzibaba so there was singing and praying and no traditional stuff. It was a public funeral.

PPL6M We had a church funeral at home. There was a lot of preaching and singing.

Describe any rituals you performed as part of your bereavement. Give examples. What did the rituals mean to you? What was the purpose? [*Probe*: *when after the death it happened? body viewing rites; rites for bidding farewell to the deceased; Family gathering: inheritance of children, inheritance of property, relocation and separation of siblings, adoption etc*]

PPL1M Everyone did body viewing. Rituals still to be done. I am still staying with father at Commando.

PPL2M There was body viewing. We were also allowed to do the body viewing to say our goodbyes to our parents. The church choir sang and there was bible reading. Mom was buried first. Our Grandmothers discussed and arranged that someone rent our house. Some property was shared among mom's and father's relatives. The items that were shared were clothes, television, DVD and decoders. The house is still ours. We (my sister and I) stay with aunt.

PPL3M Body viewing was done by all. I also went for body viewing. We are still staying with granny. I don't stay with dad. Granny is paying all the bills. All five of us children stay together. We all have different fathers

PPL4M We did body viewing. All his possessions were taken by his younger brothers, for instance, the car and all the items from work. We were only given the house. They said these things belonged to their brother. Furthermore, they said my parents' marriage was not registered, there was no marriage certificate so they were the rightful heirs to their brother's wealth.

PPL5M There was body viewing. And throwing of soil. I heard her property was shared amongst her relatives the morning after her burial. I don't have much detail since I was back in Harare.

We did not relocate and are still staying at the house we used to stay with mother

PPL6M There was body viewing done by everyone willing to do….His clothes were shared amongst the close relatives by dad's cousin/uncle (sekuru). We(Mother and us children) were assisting them with whatever information we had about the clothing items. All the other property was not distributed, only clothes were given away.

Did your mourning/grieving for your parent(s) death affect you at school? How did it affect you? Describe in some detail how it affected you. Give examples of what happened.

PPL1M So far there is no change in my school work. They (my classmates) contributed and donated money to support me. They came for the funeral service. I felt very happy for the caring and support. I felt very happy that there were people helping me and supporting me. So far nothing has changed at school. I am still brilliant.

PPL2M No it gave me hope. It gave me a lot of courage to work harder.

PPL3M Not really that bad- a little bit hard concentrating. It is hard on granny to pay fees.

PPL4M The death of my father affected my school work. I now have problems with school fees. We are five and four of us need school fees as a result we are always sent home to collect school fees. Sometimes money comes from our aunt (my mother's younger sister) in the UK.

I used to be very good in class but now deteriorating because I am always absent. I used to be at a boarding school where we had ample time to study – we really would study but now we have to look after mama. My sister and I take turns to look after our mother.

When father was there he would urge us to study-he would say "you should read and read," therefore, I was very good.

PPL5M There was no change. No change at all.

PPL6M My father's death definitely affected me. I failed at school… I only passed 2 subjects. I am now a bit better at school. After the death I was away for only 3 days, however when I was at school I lacked concentration due to worry. ….Now……am concentrating.

Did you inform your teachers / school counsellors about your parent(s)' death? Tell me about the counselling support received at school as a result. How did you find the counselling support? Do you think it helped you? Give some examples of how it helped you.

PPL1M My friend informed the teachers about my mother's death. Hmm… teachers did nothing. There has been no counselling so far.

It was going to help in some way? I am not sure

PPL2M I did tell my friends. My friends comforted me. I did not tell the teachers. Maam (senior woman) asked about us when you had come.

PPL3M I think granny told the school. The deputy head stays in the same area but heard after the funeral no support. I never got any counselling.

PPL4M Yes, I informed my form teachers of my former school about my father's death when I wanted a transfer letter. I was counselled and told that these things happen in life and that an individual can improve his or her life through education.

PPL5M My friend told my classmates. The teachers did not know until the senior woman came to ask for children who lost their parents.

I did not get any help from the school. My friends only conveyed their condolences

PPL6M After the death of my father, I told my classteacher why I had been absent…. that my father had died. The teachers said things will be ok after a while. I have had no counselling by a school counsellor. I also told the school that Beam will pay for me because my father was dead…. I think if I had got counselling it would have helped.

How has your life changed as a result of the bereavement experiences? [probe: the bereavement, counselling etc}

PPL1M Life has not yet changed. I am still overcoming the whole situation. Appreciating kuti ndizvo zvakaitika (appreciating that that is what happened).

PPL2M My life has changed a lot because I have to save money to buy school material unlike when they were alive they would buy the things for me.

PPL3M Change- It taught me to be independent. Not really look at what people say about me.

PPL4M My life has changed completely. I can now distinguish right from wrong. I am now repeating form 3 because I fell back in my studies during the third term when my father was ill, what what for a couple of months. I also did not write the form 3 end of year exams.

PPL5M Life is still the same

PPL6M We are comfortable enough because my fees was paid and the people at my father's work gave us some money and actually paid the funeral expenses.

You have been through this bereavement experience, what does it mean to you?

PPL1M It means that we all have our time to live and our time to die. I have to just live my life. Just to continue to live my life.

PPL2M Specifically- life is not the same. God has His own plans. I think I am gonna be a well behaved man having a good life.

PPL3M It taught me that life is not a joke and something to waste. Before I did not take life seriously. Now I just want to be into my work. The pastor said he would come to talk to us but is still to see us.

PPL4M (*With her head balancing on her left hand)* this experience has taught me to be serious with my school work so that I can take care of my younger siblings (pause) and to look after mama. I need to look after her for instance, my mother was in hospital and was discharged last Friday. She bought some medicines but could not afford the other drugs not found in the hospital. My aunt in the UK is not working at the moment so the husband is the one actually helping us.

PPL5M It means losing someone who was looking after you. Yes, someone who was looking after me. That is all.

PPL6M I have accepted my predicament and say that is life. I want to become a pilot so that I help my mother and sister.

DATA SET 2: **Transcripts of Learners in School LM**

Your age/ Gender

PPLILM 15 years old Male

PPL2LM 16 years old Male

PPL3LM 13 years old Female

PPL4LM 18 years old Female

PPL5LM 14 years old Female

PPL6LM 16 years old Female

PPL7LM 17 years old Male

Grade level at school:

PPLILM Form 3

PPL2LM Form 4

PPL3LM Form 1

PPL4LM Form 4

PPL5LM Form 1

PPL6LM Form 3

PPL7LM Form 6

Your home language/Ethnic/Cultural/religion

PPLILM Shona Bulawayo - (*Later date)* My mother comes from Mberengwa and my father from Malawi

PPL2LM English, Shona I am Zezuru from Sanyati

Methodist Church in Zimbabwe

PPL3LM Ndebele Christian-Roman Catholic

PPL4LM Shona- Zezuru- Chivhu -Methodist

PPL5LM Mutoko- Shona- Methodist

PPL6LM Ndau ZCC

PPL7LMShona Karanga Mberengwa SDA

With whom are you currently living at home / how long

PPLILM With my uncle, my mother's brother. My uncle is 24 and has been recently married.

PPL2LM Aunt-maiguru elder sister to my mother since March 2009

PPL3LM I currently staying with my father. He has another wife. He got married in 2009

PPL4LM I stay with my brother in Harare… my mother is in Chivhu. He is the second born out of eight 2/8

PPL5LM I am staying with my aunt (maiguru) my father's brother's wife and babamukuru (dad's brother). My elder brother also stays with us.

PPL6LM I am staying with Brother on 5 April 2010. We came From Chipinge. My brother is the first born out of eight -1/8

PPL7LM I have been staying with father for about 6 months now since mother passed away on 20 December 2009.

Whether you are the youngest or oldest in the family

PPLILM I am the third one out of 4 (2 elder brothers are my mother's sons and the 4th is my younger sister who stays in Mutare with maiguru, my mother's elder sister. My father had a daughter we were staying with but she passed away when she was in grade six).

PPL2LM I am the second and last born to my mother 2/2 and to my father second born out of three 2/3.

PPL3LM I am the 4th child out of 6. My stepmother has 2 children of her own not my father's

PPL4LM I am the seventh child out of eight 7/8.

PPL5LM I am the youngest of the two 2/2. My brother is in form 3 at this school.

PPL6LM I am number 7/8

PPL7LM I am the third born out of 4 siblings ¾. I have an elder sister and elder brother and a younger sister.

With the exception of your parent(s), which family member passed away in the last year?

PPLILM No one that I know of.

PPL2LM

PPL3LM No one died.

PPL4LM No one close but my father passed away on 22 December 2009

PPL5LM Yes. My uncle (my father's younger brother). He passed away in South Africa where he was working. We were very close. I was really pained by his death. I experienced the same pain as the one I felt when my mother died because he used to buy us many things.

PPL6LM No one close died.

PPL7LM None that I can remember.

How did your mother/father (as appropriate) die?

PPLILM My mother died of blood cancer. She died on 30 May 2010, father died in 2001.

PPL2LM My mother passed away in November 2008 after suffering from an unknown terminal illness that pathologists could not prove. My mother's death was surrounded by controversy and her family blamed my father for her death.

My father died in April 2009 in a car accident.

PPL3LM My mother had cancer. She was ill for a long time.

PPL4LM He had stroke…he passed away 6 days later. It was described as left side Celebrovascular accident, hypostatic pneumonia and respiratory arrest. He was very old-95.

PPL5LM My father passed away in 2003. I can't remember much about this… I was very young. My mother passed away on 27 November 2009. My mother's tummy first turned black and then after a short while she passed away. They said it was her uterus.

PPL6LM My mother died because of food poisoning. She had a running tummy for many months….six months.

PPL7LM My mother had a one month illness and she died on 20 December 2011

Describe your relationship with your mother/father (as appropriate) before she/he passed away.

PPLILM We loved each other. I loved her and she loved me.

PPL2LM My mother was my good friend. We would talk about anything. Dad was good …(*pause*) before he married my 23 year old stepmother (she is 23 now and has a 5 year old son). Before, our home was full of love and we got everything we needed. When mother died her relatives and my father had conflict and I ended up staying with father and my brother with my mother's relatives.

PPL3LM With mother we were very happy. We talked about many things and laughed a lot.

PPL4LM My father was very quiet but talked a bit.

PPL5LM When my mother was alive, we had a happy home. We were poor and would beg from others but we were content and happy.

PPL6LM With my mother we were very very close. We were really always happy. We had a good…friendship.

PPL7LM We were very good friends. We were very close. My mother was closer to me than to all the other children.

What can you remember from your experience of your mother / father/parents' death? *(Probe what else [how did it happen, why it happened, at what point after the death, etc] until it is clear that the person exhausted all he/she can remember)*

PPLILM I was really pained/ hurt by her death because I loved her and she loved me. She told me to look after my sister who now stays Mutare with mother's elder sister. Mother passed away in my presence. She prayed and said, "I am now leaving my children. There is nothing I can do. God is the one who created us." I saw her die with my own eyes. She was in extreme pain…Had blood cancer… She was in pain… crying. She said to her sister, " Sister I did not know that I would be bathed by you because of ill-health." Her tummy was swollen

PPL2LM My father died in a car accident on his way from Kwekwe. This was the most shocking event of my life. When mother died she had been ill and we expected it in a way… but a car accident… it was different. The death opened a wound of my mother's death and the conflict we had with my father before he died. Iran away from home 3 weeks before he died to go to my aunt's house. He died while I was at my aunt's place. I feel guilty my father died… because we had quarreled.

PPL3LM My mother passed away at home. She had been ill for a long time… She was bed-ridden- was always in bed and could not walk. On the day she died she was very quiet…she had completely changed and was very thin (*about to cry*).

PPL4LM I remember he was looking after many children. He was a unifying force and united our extended family to become one. When he had stroke he was in a lot of pain.

PPL5LM My mother came home from Harare. She had a black tummy and people said it was her uterus that had caused that. She passed away at home and was taken to hospital by her mother. She was taken to a morgue. The doctor (pathologist) confirmed that she had died due to uterus complications.

PPL6LM my mother died at 1 o'clock at her home in Bocha on 3 June 2009. She was poisoned and had diarrhoea for a long time and had to be cared for by her mother at her mother's home. She was taken from Chipinge to Bocha.. Where she later died. My younger sister and myself accompanied mother to her village and were out of school for a term. When she died we went back home.

PPL7LM Because my mother did not write a will there were problems with inheritance. My mother had a house left for her by her parents when they died. Mum owned the house. She had step brothers and sisters. All these were clamouring for the house left for my mum and brother. There was a will then- my grandparents had written a will. I suspect she was poisoned with 'juju' (medicine). The issue came to the fore in the 1990's and resurfaced last year and on the burial day the issue was raised again.

How did you mourn the death?

PPLILM People mourned my mother first in Harare then Mutare. We went to church in Mutare then to the cemetery.

PPL2LM We mourned my father in Harare and then went to Sanyathi for the burial. There were many people crying and talking about him. There was a church service held by some elders… He had not been going to church after marrying a second wife and resorting to beer drinking so one elder conducted the service.

PPL3LM We mourned her at our house here in Harare. There were many people. She was later buried at Warren Hills

PPL4LM When he passed away the family gathered together to make contributions-money to buy clothes for the deceased and a coffin and for other expenses. We had a church service after they had to the traditional doctor to find out about the cause of death. The closest family members gathered for feedback from the traditional doctor.

PPL5LM She was mourned at home. Some people were crying and others were not especially those not related to us and men. My father's relatives did not come for the funeral.

They were not aware of the death. They did not know about the death because my mother's rural home is very far.

PPL6LM She was buried in her rural home.

PPL7LM I am a member of the SDA church. I am the only one who attends. I talked to the church members and they came to bury my mother. Mom came from Mozambique so her relatives did the cultural things. There was an old man who was close to my grandparents who did the traditional things. I did not attend that part because as a Seventh Day Adventist we are not allowed to do that. My father is a war vet does not go to church

Describe (in as much detail as possible) your experiences in___ (*each element recalled above [listen keenly]*). In each case, give examples of what you did.

PPLILM I feel- loneliness. Now I have to prepare my own food.

PPL2LM *looking down and shaking head slightly*) I feel guilty that my father died. Even when doing body viewing I could see the anger on his face. He was definitely angry with me I could tell. I did not want to look at him.

PPL3LM When my mother died I was not told there and then. I was told later when she had been taken to the mortuary. I was taken by her friend so that I could to sleep at her house.

PPL4LM It was painful … because he was the only person I could talk to. What pained me is that I did not bid him farewell. I was quite old enough to understand death. My brother told me that my father has died. I was shocked and could not believe that he had gone forever and would not be seeing him. After his burial thatis when I realized he had gone for good.

PPL5LM When my mother died I cried and was in shock. I gave away all my clothes. My grandmother had said when my mother was alive I did not share my things with others. It hurt me …I was very depressed.

PPL6LM The death of my mother really pained me. Up to now I am still in pain. If I go deep in thought about it….mmm…it stresses me and sometimes I think of committing bad things.

PPL7LM My mother's death really pained me. Now I have a problem with my sister who is in form 2. She is emotional and always crying for our mother. My father drinks a lot. He is an alcoholic. When he gets his money on pay day, he gives most of the money to me. When he wants money for beer and anything he asks from me. I have to budget for food, my sister's books and her other needs, toiletries, my bus fare and everything needed in the home. After my mother's death I began playing some of my mother's roles. I could wash dishes, sweep the floor etc… I have to see to it that everyone at home has eaten…Playing the role of a mother when you are a student is such a hard time.

How did you REACT immediately after learning of your mother/father's death? Describe those initial *reactions / feelings / behaviours*? Give some examples of what you felt.

PPLILM My mother's death pained me very much. She was my confidante. We talked about everything. When my father died it did not affect me much because I was young.

PPL2LM I was shocked, I could not believe it. I can describe this as the most shocking period of my life. I cried a lot. My brother tried not to show his grief but I guess he was grieving too but did not want me to see his pain… my brother is 28 and I suppose he wanted to protect me so that I feel there is a stronger person there for me.

PPL3LM I was really in pain. I was crying very much. I could not eat neither could I sleep. I was continuously thinking about her. When she passed away I always dreamt about her during the days immediately after her death. I had tummy ache and did not want to eat. It finally disappeared on its own.

PPL4LM I lost my courage, sense of humour, I was frustrated, angry and blamed everyone for the death of my father. I was shocked. I always had headaches.

PPL5LM At first I did nothing. I was distressed because I felt there was no one to buy clothes for me. When she was buried that is when I cried. I cried because I realized there was no one to take care of me because I did not know whether my grandmother was going to be cruel to us. But she is ok- I was just speculating

PPL6LM her death was a painful experience for me. When she died I cried a lot. It was hurting.

Have your *feelings/reactions* changed? When did you notice a change in your reactions/feelings above? What new feelings/reactions did you have after those initial ones? Describe the new feelings/reactions /behaviours. Give some examples of the experience

PPLILM The pain is still there nothing has changed.

PPL2LM I still feel sad, unhappy and hurt a lot. However, my aunt and her children have given me a home. She is strict and I have managed to follow her stiff rules. I am happy most of the time when I am not thinking of my parents and brother. … Mmm, I never really got over the death of my parents.

PPL3LM Now things have changed, I no longer feel the same pain I used to feel immediately after her death. I am ok now. I used to have a lot of pain.

I no longer think about her. I no longer dream about her.

Yes, I said I no longer think about her so that I don't feel any pain.

PPL4LM Sometimes I still feel sad- I asked why him, want to cry. If someone makes me cross I feel sad. I still have headaches but only when someone hurts me e.g. at home if I am alone and feel lonely the headache recurs and persists for two days then disappears.

PPL5LM Things have changed- the feelings are no longer the same. I prayed to God so to help me not to think about my parents' death. When I arrived in Harare people were talking about it and this kept on reminding me about it.

PPL6LM I still have pain but at home a friend of mine helped me because she comforted me. I felt better.

Do you still have those same feelings (described above) today? What has changed? What has remained unchanged? Describe a *typical reaction/feeling/behaviour* that you have nowadays when you recall the death

PPLILM I still feel sad and very unhappy when I see other children with their parents.

PPL2LM I am still angry and hurt. I am especially angry with my uncles and stepmother. I don't see a day when I can sit down with my stepmother at the same table- to eat and talk happily…she hurt me. I go to see her but not her…I do not even greet her….. My elder brother and I agreed to be close to our young stepbrother but not her. I ran away from home because of my step mother.

PPL3LM I am still in pain. I am still in torment/anguish these days (Pamwoyo panorwadza these days).

PPL4LM I still feel sad but trying to accept the fact that he is no longer among us and is not coming back.

PPL5LM Yes, but I pray in the best possible way I can so that I suppress the feelings. I "ignore" thinking about my mother.

PPL6LM I still endure a lot of pain. There is slight change.

Mention one incident / experience of the death that really distressed you (or made you relieved/happy), and describe in detail what happened there to make you sad (relieved/ happy)

PPL2LM The sharing of my father's property did not please me. His brothers grabbed the property leaving us with nothing claiming that we ran away from home.

PPL3LM I don't remember any incident. My friend is the one who made me happy by buying me things such as food and small presents.

PPL4LM Cannot think of one offhand.

PPL5LM Yes . for example if someone gives me lots of clothes to wash, I think about my parents' death and wish they were alive.

PPL6LM I was very distressed by my sister. When we went back home, I stayed with one sister and the other one took my younger sister in…but mmm…my sisters chased us away from their homes and we ended up staying at our parents' home-just the two of us. We did not have any money for the grinding meal and no money for fees. We then decided to go to our brother in Harare. I had joined the ZCC church so when they came to our place we asked for lift to Harare. That is how we ended here.

How has your brothers/sisters/other family members *treated you / behaved towards you* during the bereavement? Mention two incident / experience and describe in detail what happened

PPLILM I talk to uncle (my mother's youngest brother). We are good friends.

We agreed to tell each other the truth.

PPL2LM My aunt and her children always ensure that I am happy. My brother in the UK always phones me to check on me, to encourage me to be good, to remind me to go to school and to always take my schoolwork seriously. (with a broad smile) He is my role model…he is now in university doing medicine.

PPL3LM My aunt (my father's sister) talked to me and told me that death happens in life and I have just to accept it. If I needed anything I should tell her.

No I have not yet told her what I need, I do not need anything at the moment.

PPL4LM My other family members comforted me. My mother told me that my father's death should actually strengthen me.

PPL5LM My aunt (the one whose husband died in South Africa told me not to cry because it was not my mother's wish to die and leave us but it was God's will. She told us if we encounter problems we should go to tell her at house. We have not because she stays far away in Borrowdale.

My brother never said anything to console me.

Another aunt (mom's sister) told us not to be distressed too much because if we do she (mom) will come back to take you and you also die.

PPL6LM My elder sisters were actually cruel to us. We were always chased away from home for petty issues. When we came to Harare my brother told us to stay with his family at his home, but my sister in-law was not happy about it and is always shouting at us. My brother does not know about it

How much influence did your culture have in the way you mourned the death? Give some examples of what you did? [*probe*: What happened, who attended the funeral, children's attendance at funerals, did you hold private and/or public mourning]

PPL2LM I did not notice much. I was in shock. I only saw the service. Children attended too and many of my father's friends were there- sahwiras (friends) were imitating what my father did when he was alive-some of it was funny but I was crying all the time.

PPL3LM There was nothing traditional. A Roman Catholic pastor came…we had a church service at home…praying and singing church hymns. We threw soil into the grave- I don't know why we were doing it.

PPL4LM The elders went to a traditional healer to "ask" how it happened and who had caused it before the burial. We, however, later had a church service- A Methodist pastor came to preach and bury my father.

PPL5LM When my mother died the elders went to a traditional doctor to find out about the mystery surrounding her death. Her spirit was tormenting my aunt(her younger sister). She (mom) was saying she wanted her dress that was stolen. My aunt would be possessed by mom and talk about the dress. They went to one sekuru (witchdoctor) who told them that the dress was taken by a relative. They went to another where they were told to buy a dress to appease the spirit. I am not sure of the other details. The spirit said she needed a memorial service this was done in April 2010. She possessed her mother too and they had to do some rituals at the graveside-vazokomba guva. I do not know what was happening.

Children were allowed at the graveside during burial even when the rituals were done..

PPL7LM Mum was from Mozambique. My church people attended the funeral. I asked them to sing and pray and bury my mum. Her relatives (those people from her father's place) conducted their traditional rituals. I could not stop them as I did not have any say.

Describe any rituals you performed as part of your bereavement. Give examples. What did the rituals mean to you? What was the purpose? [*Probe*: *when after the death it happened? body viewing rites; rites for bidding farewell to the deceased; Family gathering: inheritance of children, inheritance of property, relocation and separation of siblings, adoption etc*]

PPLILM Inheritance- my father's mother who stays in Malawi, his sisters and brothers took away most of the property after my father's death. At the moment I am afraid of telling them that my mother passed away for fear that they will come for more property. We had to go to court to resolve the inheritance issues… the house is in my name. I had a step-sister (father's daughter from another relationship) who passed away when she was in Grade 6. I have two elder half- brothers, but they are thieves- one cannot live with them. Before mother died grandfather surrendered them to their father in Mutare. Mum divorced their father before marrying my father. One of them stole some engine bearings. One is 24 married and has a child. The other one is 19 and still single.

26/07/10 My eldest uncle came to fetch the papers for the house and said he wanted the house to be in my younger uncle L's name. Uncle L is the last born in my mother's family. He said my father had not paid lobola in full and he died before the cottage was completely built these belong to his. He now wants to enrich his younger brother, the one recently got married. Now, I will lie to him and tell him that the house papers are

needed at school so that I am registered as an orphan. If that fails I will take further steps/actions. I once talked about this with one old lady I am used to, she advised me to wait and see what his intentions were. (PPL1LM)

PPL2LM We did body- viewing, all the people present who were willing did it. My father had not written a will so the property was taken by his brothers and they gave my stepmother the house. She is already married to one of my uncles who was not married. She was inherited when we had a memorial service in May a month after our father's death. My uncles said she was very young and needed to be taken care of. Her current husband is 24 younger than my brother. My elder uncle who is an accountant took over my dad's shares in the company-my dad had two laboratories. When I went to talk to my uncles about school fees they told me to go back to my aunt's place as I had deserted them.

PPL3LM All the people there did body viewing… mmm…I do not know why we did it.

Her clothes were distributed to relatives by her brother's daughter . I was given some of my mother's skirts too.

PPL4LM Because of suddenness of death the people at home –the grandparents went out to kunovhunzira. Sekurus and vanambuyas announced what they found out from the traditional medicine man to our adult close relatives.

My father's clothes were distributed / shared by his nephews to the close family members and the male children.

Girls did not get anything and we only stay at my late father's farm. That is our inheritance. Girls could not get anything because we are a big family so the property was not adequate/ enough to go round for everyone.

PPL5LM We had body viewing at home not at the graveside.

Her clothes were shared amongst relatives but some not yet because they had been left in Harare … I heard they will be taken home for distribution in August. When the items were shared we were also given to one martenal aunt who is not married who stays in our mother's house. We do not stay there but sometimes go there during weekends.

Did your mourning/grieving for your parent(s) death affect you at school? How did it affect you? Describe in some detail how it affected you. Give examples of what happened.

PPLILM I always come to school late because I have to do business before I come to school. I keep a cellphone and bring it to school so that customers can phone me. I know it is illegal but I have to since we need to eat and my dad trained me about the business. Uncle does not know much he came from the rural areas/village …you see. I bought a cellphone for him too.

PPL2LM I was transferred from Speciss College back to my present school because my aunt could not afford the high fees. When my mother died I was transferred to Speciss College where I joined a group of friends and started drinking beer. We would buy beer and drink it before going home and when I got home would just sleep. My father was also drinking and spoiling me by giving me a lot of money. (*Sighing*) You are the first person I am telling this. This was because of my stepmother. She had said she wanted to stay with us but as you know it is hard to look after someone else's child. I ran away to maigurus (aunt) and my father stopped paying fees for us. My aunt could not afford the fees so had to come back to my former school and three weeks later my dad died in a car accident. No one at home knew about my drinking – I confessed to my brother after our father's death. He advised me to go back to church. I have done that and I no longer drink.

PPL3LM This affected my school work...last year when I was in grade seven I would not concentrate and was very forgetful…. I would not concentrate in my school work as I continuously thought about her as a result I had 27 units.

PPL4LM When I came back to school I was depressed and lacked the will to continue with my schoolwork. It felt as if part of me was also dead. I came back to school late. I had headaches so could not concentrate much in class. I wanted to cry. I was different, withdrawn not very energetic quiet ….because I was grieving.

PPL5LM Yes the death of my mother affected me. When I tried to read a book at home I would see her face in the book and then I would stop looking at the book and stop reading. I hve never been absent at my current school but when I was at my mother's rural home I was always absent so that I could help my grandmother because she is old and is a weakling. I would write to school to tell them that I will not be attending school. Now I am ok because I am always at school.

PPL6LM It affected me a lot because I spent a whole term out of school but now I am happy because iam back in school. I transferred from my rural day school to this school.

PPL7LM the death of my mother affected my studies. I could not concentrate in my studies. I even contemplated dropping out of school because my father is a drunkard and before my mother died she was the one who used to provide school fees. I was also afraid of my aunts and uncles because they wanted to snatch mother's house from us.

Did you inform your teachers / school counselors about your parent(s)' death? Tell me about the counseling support received at school as a result. How did you find the counseling support? Do you think it helped you? Give some examples of how it helped you.

PPLILM The school was told by my friends.

PPL2LM The school only got to know about the deaths last week when the Deputy Head announced that she wanted to talk to children who had lost their parents in the last year. I did not get counselling at school.

How do you think counselling would have helped?

If I had got it maybe I would not have gone to beer drinking after my mother's death. I thought my friends were helping me to forget about the sad death.

PPL3LM I never got any assistance at my previous school…I never told the teachers there… but I don't know how they got to know about it. .

At this current school, other learners and teachers did not know about my mother's death. I got no help. They only got to know about it when the Deputy Head came to our classroom last week to identify the students who had lost parents.

PPL4LM My father died during the holiday. I was absent from school during the first few days of opening. My friend informed teachers why I was away from school. The teachers talked to me. They were very helpful. They told me that life goes on and this changed my perspective to life. I am always happy at school. I interact with my friends. I got a lot of support from my schoolmates.

PPL5LM In my old school my friends asked me about my bereavement and I told them. The teachers knew because in the village there are few people and they got to know about the death early. There was no counsellng there. At this school the Deputy came to announce that children who lost their parents should come to her office.

Had counselling been done. It would have helped me in encouraging me not to think about the death otherwise it might end up boring.

PPL7LM Maybe it could have helped me to focus more on my school work and given me advice on how to deal with problems I have at home.

How has your life changed as a result of the bereavement experiences? [probe: the bereavement, counselling

PPLILM I am no longer like other children who have parents. When mother died I had to focus more on my future.

PPL2LM It has changed. Before my parents died we had a happy life as a family. My father had laboratories and my mother was a nurse so we were quite comfortable. Now, I live with my aunt and just visit our house to see my little brother (stepmother's son). Life has changed completely with my brother away in medical school in the UK. One time I went to my uncles to ask for fees and they said there was none. I challenged them that my father's company was making profit before he died. They told me to go back to my aunt's. I reported this to my aunt (father's sister) in UK who told them to pay the fees. Nowadays they pay but we do not communicate.

PPL3LM No change so far…… I would have stopped thinking of her very much.

PPL4LM Although my father is gone now he will always be a part of me. Life has changed. I have accepted that my father is dead. From the time I felt teachers and my friends were on my side I got my strength back and started working hard again.

PPL5LM My life is still the same

PPL6LM Life is hard. Our brother does not buy us items but buys for the wife's relatives. We know our brother has a lot of money but is told by his wife not to buy us anything.

You have been through this bereavement experience, what does it mean to you?

PPLILM I am now focusing on the future

PPL2LM It has taught me that life changes. It is up to me now to work hard in school and pass and have a bright future.

PPL3LM No response.

PPL4LM I realize my father is gone…I have to live with it and I have to work hard so that I achieve what my father wished for me.

PPL5LM This experience has taught me that it is not only me who has lost parents. There are some very young children. If I continuously think about my bereavement, how about young children? What I aim for is to do any job God grants me.

PPL6LM I now look up to God's grace so that I have a good life so that I can look after my mother's children.

PPL7LM After my mother's death I began playing some of my mother's roles. I could wash dishes, sweep the floor etc… I have to see to it that everyone at home has eaten…Playing the role of a mother when you are a student is such a hard time. Usually when there is no money I cannot study.

DATA SET 3: DATA COUNSELLORS SCHOOL LM

Your age range

CI –LM 40-50

C2 –LM 60-65

Your gender

CI –LM female

C2 –LM Female

Your highest professional qualification

CI –LM Graduate Certificate in Education

C2 –LM BSc honours in Counselling Degree

Your counselling experience

CI –LM 21 years as a counsellor

18 years as a counsellor

C2 –LM 40 years as a teacher

21 years in this school

20 years as a counsellor

What kind of problems do you have to deal with when counselling learners who lose one or both parents?

CI –LM The pupils find it difficult to adjust to their predicament. Pupils have no choice in decisions made about them... they are abused in several ways and in most cases there are no immediate solutions to these problems.

C2 –LM There have been lots of children involved in grieving. Lots of counselling was involved in the area. Some parents crying and pupils were affected by the parents. Some parents were also called for counselling because their grieving affected their children so much. Some pupils were counselled because they were now engaged in behavioural problems.

Describe a typical problem encountered (give as much detail as possible).

CI –LM A pupil was being sexually abused by a guardian who happened to be the only close relative to the pupil. The aunt whose husband was the abuser/perpetrator defended her husband. The pupil is HIV positive and on medication. The matter was referred to Justice for Children but no immediate solution was found.

C2 –LM A mother lost a husband who was a breadwinner and the children caught her crying all the time, so the children got so affected. I called the mother and recommended her to go for AIDS test. She did and she was found positive and was counselled and she is now living positively.

How do you identify learners with these problems?

CI –LM Pupils who have lost their parents are easily identified by aloofness, loss of interest in activities eg sports, music or group activities. Some of them are very emotional and tearful. In some cases some of them are poorly dressed and come to school late or abscond.

C2 –LM Some become so withdrawn and sad. Others become attention seekers while others bave behavioural problems.

From experience what could be the cause of these problems? Do you think it is related to the loss of their parents? Why?

CI –LM This is related to the loss of parents because no one really cares for them on appearance, punctuality or even food. The lack of interest in life and also self esteem all these show a big gap and loss in their lives.

C2 –LM They now lack that love and attention which they used to get from their parents, so they cry out for attention from even the opposite sex if they are girls.

What age group of learners have you had to counsel because of the death of their parents?

CI –LM 12-15

16-18

C2 –LM The age group is mostly from 12 years to twenty and mostly girls

What is your greatest challenge counselling these different age groups of learners who have as common denominator the loss of their parents(s)?

CI –LM The biggest challenge is of trying to convince pupils to persevere in their studies despite the various challenges. At times you feel as if you are not doing enough because they may need food, uniforms and shelter.

C2 –LM ..... There has been no group counselling because it is not all children who react in the same way and also the losses do not occur at the same time.

Do you feel fully equipped as a counsellor to deal with the range of issues that you are confronted with from these learners? What are the challenges? Give examples.

CI –LM Yes, the knowledge and skills are there but in terms of crisis eg abuse, the solutions are rather limited. Pupils will not have alternative relatives to stay with or a home to move in quickly. Relatives refuse with documents e.g. death certificates of deceased parents for pupils to access help.

C2 –LM I feel I can counsel the girls but sometimes it is very difficult when girls have been raped by breadwinners because everybody in the family turns against them. There are several pupils whose parents or guardians say that they were raped and were in a worse predicament than themselves (pupils).

The process of reporting is rather slow because some of the cases ought to go through psychological services.

When you think of the ranges of needs of the learners who lose their parents, what would you say needs to be done to improve the counselling that you offer here at school?

CI –LM The training of more counsellors in the school and also the change in attitude by teachers towards counselling. A timetable for counselling should be made and the rooms and teachers for counselling be readily available.

C2 –LM The pupils need love and attention which is not easy to get from strangers that is why pupils end up teaming up with guys or women in relationships. I suppose the guardians should be counselled or the pupils should be put in homes.

DATA SET 4: DATA COUNSELLORS SCHOOL M

Your age range

C1M 42years old-40-45 range

C2M 40-45 years

Your gender

C1M female

C2M female

Your highest professional qualification

C1M Certificate in Education

C2M Graduate certificate in Education- UZ

A Certificate in Systemic Family Therapy-CONNECT

Your counselling experience

C1M I have been a teacher for the past eighteen years (1992-2010). I have been at Morgan High School for the past eight years (2002-2010). Currently, I am simply a justice for Children Trust Co-ordinator, with no professional counselling qualifications (2005-2010).

C2M Total no of years as a teacher: 18years

Total no of years in the school: 13 years

Total no of years as counsellor: 7 years

What kind of problems do you have to deal with when counseling learners- who- lose one or both parents?

C1M The problems range from emotional, physical to social. Emotionally, the children become withdrawn and reserved. They hardly participate freely and they find it very difficult to express themselves. They usually deteriorate in performance. Physically, they can be frail or hungry looking. Socially, they have a few friends and usually fail to raise the fees at school. Therefore, they are forced to drop out of school.

C2M

1. lack of adequate food
2. problems of bus fare
3. lack of adequate clothing, uniforms, jerseys etc.
4. child labour-child made to do all housework/ chores before coming to school, yet even when, guardian has got her/his children, they will be doing nothing or not much.
5. Sexual-uncles proposing to sleep with child. Rape cases

Describe a typical problem encountered (give as much detail as possible).

C1M One of the girls in the school lost both parents at a tender age. She started reasonably well in form one with a relative paying her fees. Later, due to economic hardships, she started losing weight and must have been an AIDS victim because of ceaseless illnesses. Finally, she dropped out of school due to lack of fees and total neglect from relatives.

C2M An girl orphan staying with an aunt, was made to wake up around 3 in the morning to do all the housework before going to school, also do the nappies for aunt's granddaughter, comes to school without eating, goes back home to find people have already eaten and that nothing had been left for her, prepares supper but cannot dish out food for herself, aunt the later dishes out a small portion for her. Babamukuru (aunt's husband) claims she is wife number two therefore could sleep with her.

How do you identify learners with these problems?

C1M There are many ways in which learners can be identified.

1. they usually perform inconsistently.
2. They have weird mood swings.
3. They are very sensitive to comments.
4. They usually fail to meet the school requirements of full uniform and stationery.
5. They hardly pay school[fees on time.

C2M As a teacher and counselor I tell all children to approach me if they have any problems. The announcement was made at assembly and I also distribute pamphlets in the school. Pupils then could approach me anytime with problems.
Sometimes, I identify pupils by their lack of participation, type or way of dress.

From experience what could be the cause of these problems?

Do you think it is related to the loss of their parents? Why?

C1M Yes, the major contributing factor is the absence of parents in their lives. They have no one to really camouflage them and they become bitter and fear society. As far as they are concerned, society is in a hurry and has no time to entertain them.

C2M Yes.

1. vulnerability of an orphan- that he/she no longer has anyone who really is protective about her/him.
2. attitude (negative) from guardians/caregivers tend to identify orphan as a burden/ added load.

lack of adequate resources from government and other organizations to deal with problems.

What age group of learners have you had to counsel because of the death of their parents?

C1M 13- 18 years

C2M Normally 7- 18 years

What is your greatest challenge counselling these different age groups of learners who have as common denominator the loss of their parents(s)?

C1M The fear of failing to reach at eh to them financially cripples feelings of identifying with them. That is, whenever I am counselling them, the greatest obstacle is failure to gratify them in a way as far as solving their material needs. The children need to be financially cushioned and not to be only "God –empowered," so to speak.

C2M My inability to source income to alleviate the financial burdens of pupils- BEAM. This facility is not really accessible at secondary school level.
Lack of support from colleagues. One actually arguing that giving too much support emotionally and otherwise would worsen the plight of these orphans and that they would have to stand up and face their own struggles.

Do you feel fully equipped as a counsellor to deal with the range of issues that you are confronted with from these learners? What are the challenges? Give examples.

C1M Sometimes. Otherwise, I am usually generally at a loss because these children would like to receive every day attention, day to day affection. Of course, the words of comfort release their stress. What they really hunger for is permanent (everlasting) affection. Above all, society should sympathise with them by helping them financially.

C2M Yes. As a fully qualified professional counselor I am well equipped with the skills of counseling these children. When one counsels a child, it gives the counselor warm and good feelings. If the child then is able at the end of the day to feel empowered to handle and find solutions to their problems.

When you think of the ranges of needs of the learners who lose their parents, what would you say needs to be done to improve the counselling that you offer here at school?

C1M The school should seek ways of raising funds that are set aside for these children so that they easily get counselled emotionally not worrying about their fees. As I have said before, what really counts is cushioning them financially, so that they do not drop out of school. Therefore, funds should be set aside for these vulnerable children.

C2M 1. All or the majority of the teachers must become counsellors in order to handle orphans with the right attitude.

2. There is need to set up more institutions to house the orphans that find themselves in a very difficult situations, especially if one finds himself/herself with nowhere to go after a rape or argument.

3. Government needs to source more money to help such children.