

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF PARENTALLY BEREAVED UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The loss of a parent is one of the most traumatic events an adolescent and emerging adult can face. This study examined the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey. The population of the study consisted of all Undergraduates at the University of Ilorin while a sample of 200 respondents was selected through the purposive and snowball sampling procedures. A self-designed questionnaire titled "Psychological Problems of Parentally Bereaved Undergraduates Questionnaire" (PPPBUQ) was used to gather data. The demographic data generated were analysed using percentages. The main research questions were analysed using mean and rank order analysis while t-test and Analysis of Variance statistical tools were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level of significance. The finding revealed that the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin include the inability to trust and confide in people, loneliness, depression and upset, whenever they lack something important such as the inability to pay school fees among others. There was no significant difference in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in Nigeria based on gender, age at bereavement and nature of bereavement, but a significant difference was found based on length of years of loss. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that school counsellors should introduce work and pay programmes to bereaved undergraduates by collaborating with different organisations to solve their financial problems, identify adolescents who have lost their parents(s) and are struggling with academic achievements, and assist them to adjust to the loss. A grief counselling support programme should be initiated by the University Counselling Centre to provide emotional support to students who have lost their parents.

Keywords: Parentally bereaved, psychological problems, undergraduates.

Introduction

Parental loss in childhood, adolescence, and emerging adulthood, is typically a trauma unlike any

other and the most difficult time in one's life. Childhood is defined as the period between birth and the age of ten, adolescence is defined as the period between the ages of ten and eighteen, and emerging adulthood is defined as the period between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five (Arnett, 2000). A person's body, mind, and soul are all affected when they lose a loved one. As a result, somatic issues, health anxieties, enuresis, sleep disorders, jealousy, guilt, melancholy, school troubles, and feelings of isolation are common symptoms of parental mourning. Parental bereavement is a risk factor for depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder in several studies.

The death of a parent is sometimes referred to as parental loss or bereavement, while the death of a child is referred to as parentally bereaved. Unclear statement Cerel, Fristad, Verducci, Weller, & Weller (2006) discovered that the risk of depression is three times higher in bereaved children than in non-bereaved children. Bereavement of a parent as a kid has also been linked to an increased incidence of depression in adulthood (Kendler, 2002). As a result, bereaved teenagers have greater levels of despair, more health issues, statistically significant indicators of inferior academic performance, anxiety and dread, lower self-esteem, a larger external locus of control, and less hope for future achievement (Schuurman, 2003).

The loss of a parent can have a substantial detrimental influence on a child's personality development. For example, children's self-esteem has been linked to increased mental health problems in children who have lost a parent (Haine, Ayers, Sandler, Wolchik, & Weyer, 2003; Wolchik, Tein, Sandler & Ayers, 2006). Following the death of a parent, children often suffer negative occurrences that lower their self-esteem, such as the loss of pleasant interactions with significant individuals and/or more harsh parenting from a sad remaining parent. Children who have lost a parent may feel more powerless and believe they have less internal control over circumstances than their non-bereaved peers (Worden & Silverman, 1996).

The death of a parent is a devastating experience that many children have had to endure throughout their lives. It is thought that young children are unable to comprehend death and cannot grieve. Children are frequently informed that the deceased parent has just "gone away" as a result of this misunderstanding, as well as bewilderment and worry in dealing with children about death. Children who are protected from death are deprived of the ability to grieve and, as a result, recover. Post-traumatic stress symptoms are common in children who have lost a parent. Parentally bereaved children were shown to have considerably greater symptoms of post-traumatic stress than catastrophe and non-trauma control groups in research by Stoppelbein and Greening (2000).

Apart from personality concerns, losing a parent has an impact on overall relationships, beginning with the connection with the remaining parent and peers. Following the loss of a parent, some children become closer to the remaining parent, while others' relationships are strained. Peer relationships may shift as well. Many children avoid discussing their sentiments about a parent's death because they don't want to stand out among their classmates, or because they believe other children won't understand. Some kids retreat from social activities, which harms peer relationships.

When a kid loses a parent, he or she may be afraid of being abandoned by not just the surviving parent, but also other people he or she cares about. Fear of abandonment promotes suspicion. Feeling unworthy of love can also stem from a sense of abandonment (either by the parent who died or by

others who dismiss the child's need to grieve). This sense of unlovability might become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Wolfelt, 2007). A youngster may not allow himself or herself to form intimate relationships in the first place because he or she does not want to endure the sorrow of losing a loved one again. The youngster might grow up to be an adult who abandons others before they can abandon themselves.

The researchers speculated that grief may have a long-term impact and that ongoing assistance may be required throughout secondary and maybe postsecondary education. Dyregov (2004), on the other hand, discovered that bereaved children and those who had been exposed to trauma were absent from school at a higher rate than the general population. The study also discovered that school performance might suffer as a result of the incident, particularly in areas that need a high degree of concentration. While the causes of this decline are unknown, a lack of desire, a diversion of attention to distracting material and cognitive processing, and a reduction of cognitive speed due to depression are all possible culprits. Post-traumatic stress has also been linked to a lack of perceived support from parents, peers, and instructors.

Adolescents who have lost a parent are compelled to develop and grow up faster than their classmates who have not gone through a comparable bereavement. They may be required to assume additional family tasks such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, or caring for a younger sister, or they may be forced to work after school. These obligations add to an already stressful existence that includes schoolwork and other after-school activities. Adolescents may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of grieving because, unlike children, they are no longer shielded from the full impact of loss by underdeveloped cognitive skills and concrete thinking (Allen, 2002).

The death of a parent necessitates the completion of yet another key job connected with late adolescence: developing personal strength by effectively dealing with catastrophic life experiences. The teenager must grapple with the meaning of life and death as a result of this. According to Hooyman (2006), the teenager might emerge from the conflict with the meaning of life and death with a philosophical, spiritual, and/or religious perspective that fosters hope for the future and a cause to live. A late teenager dealing with loss is maturing at a rate that other late adolescents may not have reached. Late adolescents may miss out on the benefits of adolescence as a result of their early maturity. The extra responsibilities and obligations may make it difficult for the teenager to feel at ease being "a child" or simply having fun with his or her classmates. This "joy" counterbalances many of the stressors of adolescence and provides an opportunity for the teenager to consolidate his or her self-image throughout periods of rapid change.

The adolescent's age and stage of development at the time of his or her parent's death have a significant impact on how the youngster reacts and adjusts to the loss. According to Patterson (2009), knowing a child's emotional and cognitive development can help caregivers and professionals figure out how to best communicate about death with that child, as well as understand and empathise with the child's experience and help the child through the grieving and healing process. Losing a parent has always been devastating, and dealing with the sadness that follows is tough for all children. At different stages of development, losing a parent or caregiver has distinct effects on children. In the African environment, the death of a parent, particularly if it is the mother, has a significant impact on the child's well-being, considering the important role that mothers play in raising children in this community. When an adolescent experiences parental loss, they may

experience feelings such as numbness, loneliness, sadness, guilt, fear, easily becoming upset or frustrated, forgetfulness, dreaming of a deceased parent, sensing the presence of a deceased parent, and not wanting to speak with the person, among other things. When an adolescent reacts socially to parental loss, it means that the teenager may not want to communicate with others, may feel too reliant on others, may have difficulties picking up the phone, and so on (Seattle Children's Hospital Research Foundation, 2012). As a result, this study seeks to discover the psychological issues associated with parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The major goal of this study is to investigate the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria. The researchers also looked at whether the psychological issues of parentally bereaved undergraduates differed by gender, age, religion, and the cause of death.

Research Question

A research question was posed to guide the conduct of the study:

1. What are the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

1. Based on age at bereavement, there is no significant difference in the psychological issues of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria.
2. There is no significant gender difference in the psychological issues of parentally bereaved University of Ilorin undergraduates in Nigeria.
3. The psychological issues of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria are unaffected by the number of years since the bereavement.
4. There is no significant difference in the psychological issues of parentally bereaved University of Ilorin undergraduates in Nigeria based on the cause of death.

Method and Design

For this study, a descriptive survey was used as the research strategy. The study's participants were all bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. Two hundred bereaved undergraduates from around the University of Ilorin made up the study sample. This was accomplished by choosing bereaved undergraduates utilising Snowball sampling and purposive sampling. The snowball sampling approach is often employed in situations when respondents are unknown or unusual, as well as when selecting respondents is difficult. As a result, the researcher contacted several informants who provided references of undergraduates who had experienced parental bereavement, as well as links to other undergraduates who had experienced parental bereavement.

The main instrument that was used to collect data for this study was a researcher designed questionnaire tagged "Psychological Problems of Parentally Bereaved Undergraduates Questionnaire" (PPPBUQ) which comprised of two sections (A & B). Section A elicited the demographic information of the respondents. Section B comprised 25 items that focused on the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates. The items in section B were scored on a four-point Likert type scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly

disagree (SD). The instrument was validated by lecturers in the Department of Counsellor Education for vetting and was adjudged valid. The test-retest method at an interval of four weeks was employed to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The two sets of scores from the two administrations were then correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and a co-efficient of 0.76 internal consistency was obtained at a 0.05 Alpha level of significance.

The items in the instrument were structured negatively and scored negatively as follows: SA = Strongly Agree 1 point; A = Agree 2 points; D = Disagree 3 points; SD = Strongly Disagree 4 points. The highest obtainable score in the item is 4 while the lowest is 1, to get an average mean score for an item the mean average will be calculated thus, $4+3+2+1 = 10/4 = 2.50$. Hence any item with a mean average score of 2.50 and above will be considered a psychological problem for parentally bereaved undergraduates while an item below 2.50 will not be considered a psychological problem. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Section A of the instrument was analysed, using percentage, section B was analysed using the computation of central measures (Means, and Rank order analysis) and the null hypotheses formulated were tested using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Religious Affiliation, Nature of Death and Length of Years of Loss

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Gender		
	Male	89	44.5
	Female	111	55.5
	Total	200	100.0
2.	Age at Bereavement		
	Below 10years	57	28.5
	11-20years	121	60.5
	21years and above	22	11.0
	Total	200	100.0
3.	Nature of Death		
	Sudden	90	45.2
	Anticipated	48	24.5
	Others	62	30.7
	Total	200	100.0
4.	Length of years of loss		
	Less than a year	46	23.0
	1-5years	70	35.0
	6-10 years	65	32.5
	Above 10 years	19	9.5
	Total	200	100.0

Table 1 displays the gender distribution of responders. According to the Table, 44.5 per cent (89) of the respondents were males, while 55.5 per cent (111) of the respondents were females. Also, 28.5 per cent (57) of the respondents are under the age of ten, 60.5 per cent (121) are between the ages of eleven and twenty-one and 11 per cent (22) are between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-two. More specifically, 45.2 per cent (90) of the respondents' psychological problems were caused by a parent's sudden death, 24.1 per cent (48) of the respondents' psychological problems were caused by a parent's anticipated death, and 30.7 per cent (62) of the respondents' psychological problems were

caused by a parent's death of a different nature. The table also shows that 23% (46) of respondents were under the age of one year, 35.0 per cent (70) were between the ages of one and five, 32.5 per cent (65) were between the ages of six and ten, and 9.5 per cent (19) were between the ages of ten and twenty when they lost their parents.

Research Question 1: What are the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the university of Ilorin?

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order Analysis on the Psychological Problems of Parentally Bereaved Undergraduates of the University of Ilorin.

Item no	Psychological Problems of Parentally Bereaved Undergraduates	\bar{X}	Rank
1	I feel I have no one to confide in again	3.27	1 st
2	I always feel lonely	3.04	2 nd
3	I feel depressed most of the time	2.86	3 rd
4	I see myself longing for my parent always	2.78	4 th
5	I yearn for parental love especially when I see other people with their parents	2.64	5 th
6	I feel upset whenever I lack something important e.g. unable to pay my school fees	2.59	6 th
8	I am preoccupied with the thought of my parent	2.59	6 th
16	I make sure I avoid people who will remind me of the loss of my parent	2.55	8 th
15	I feel I have a reduced relational intimacy	2.48	9 th
13	My academic performance is dwindling and this distresses me a lot.	2.45	10 th
12	I have a problem with retaining or recalling information	2.44	11 th
17	I worry excessively about my future	2.40	12 th
11	I am finding it difficult to concentrate	2.38	13 th
23	I have been facing so much tension	2.34	14 th
22	I feel isolated by other members of the family	2.33	15 th
21	I find it difficult to trust people around me	2.32	16 th
24	I always have a mood swing	2.32	16 th
6	I feel I have lost my sense of security or safety	2.31	18 th
14	I find it difficult to function socially.	2.31	18 th
9	I have lost hope in my future ambition	2.29	20 th
19	I always have feelings of self-worthlessness	2.28	21 st
10	I have engaged in drugs to cope with my feeling of depression	2.25	22 nd
18	I am preoccupied with suicidal ideas/thoughts	2.23	23 rd
25	I have decreased interest in school activities	2.17	24 th

Table 2 presents the mean and rank order analysis of respondents' psychological problems at the University of Ilorin. The Table revealed that item 1 which states that "I feel I have no one to confide in again" ranked 1st with a mean score of 3.27. Item 2 states that "I always feel lonely." ranked 2nd with a mean score of 3.04. Ranked 3rd is item 3 which states that "I feel depressed most of the time." with a mean score of 2.86. Item 4 which states that "I see myself longing for my parent always" ranked 4th with a mean score of 2.78. Item 5 which states that "I yearn for parental love especially when I see other people with their parents" ranked 5th with a mean score of 2.64. Item 6 which states that "I feel upset whenever I lack something important e.g. unable to pay my school fees" and Item 8 which states that "I am preoccupied with the thought of my parent" ranked 6th with a mean score of 2.59. Item 16 which states that "I make sure I avoid people who will remind me of the loss of my parent" with a mean score of 2.55 ranked 8th, was the only item above the average mark of 2.50. On the other hand, item 19 which states that "I always have feelings of self-worthlessness" with a mean

score of 2.28, ranked 21st, and item 12 states that "I have problem with retaining or recalling information" ranked 22nd with a mean score of 2.25, item 18 which states that "I am preoccupied with suicidal ideas/thoughts" with a mean score of 2.23 ranked 23rd, item 25 which states that "I have decreased interest in school activities" ranked 24th with a mean score of 2.17 and item 25 which states that "I have been depending on my friends and this distresses me" with a mean score of 1.86 ranked 25th. Hence, we can now say that the undergraduates who are parentally bereaved at the University of Ilorin have fewer psychological problems.

Hypotheses Testing

Four null hypotheses were postulated and tested for this study. The hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA statistical methods at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant gender difference in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in Nigeria

Table 3: Mean, standard Deviation and t-value on the Respondents' Psychological Problems based on Gender.

Gender	No	\bar{X}	Standard Deviation	df	Calculated t value	Critical t - value	p-value
Male	89	61.56	11.89	198	0.21	1.96	.083
Female	111	61.23	10.11				

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of -0.21 at a degree of freedom (df) of 198 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value, the hypothesis states that "There is no significant difference in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in Nigeria based on gender" is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in Nigeria based on gender.

Hypothesis Two: Based on age at bereavement, there is no significant difference in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Respondents' Psychological Problems the based on Age at Bereavement

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Calculated F- ratio	Critical F- ratio	P-value
Between Groups	141.14	2	70.57	0.59	3.00	0.55
Within Groups	23555.97	197	119.57			
Total	23697.12	199	190.14			

Table 4 shows that the calculated F-ratio of 0.59 at a degree of freedom (df) of 2 and 197 is less than the critical F-value of 3.00 at a 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated F-ratio is lesser than the critical F-value, the null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in Nigeria based on age at bereavement is accepted.

Hypothesis Three: The psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria are unaffected by the number of years since the bereavement.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Respondents' Psychological Problems the based on Length of Years of Loss

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Calculated F- ratio	Critical F- ratio	P-value
Between Groups	1576.82	3	525.60	4.66	2.60	.004
Within Groups	22120.29	196	112.86			
Total	23697.12	199				

Table 5 shows that the calculated F-ratio of 4.65 at a degree of freedom (df) of 3 and 196 is greater than the critical F-value of 2.60 at a 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated F-ratio is greater than the critical F-value, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in Nigeria based on the length of years of loss. To ascertain where the difference lies, Scheffer Post-Hoc was further conducted and the output is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Scheffe Post-Hoc showing the Degree of Difference in the Respondents' views on the Length of Years of loss based on the Length of Year of Loss

Length of years of Loss	N	1	2
Above 10 years	19	54.00	
6-10years	65		61.02
1-5years	70		61.49
Less than a year	46		64.78
Sig.		1.00	0.49

Table 6 shows that respondents that were above 10 years had a mean score of 54.00 (in subset 1), 6-10years had a mean score of 61.02 (in subset 2), 1-5years had a mean score of 61.49 (in subset 2) while Less than a year had the mean score of 64.78 (in subset 2). This implied that respondents

whose Length of year loss was Less than a year have a mean score of 64.78 which is greater than the mean score of others.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the psychological issues of parentally bereaved University of Ilorin undergraduates in Nigeria based on the nature of death.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Respondents' Psychological Problems based on Nature of Death

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Calculated F- ratio	Critical F- ratio	P-value
Between Groups	216.59	2	108.30	0.91	3.00	0.41
Within Groups	23480.53	197	119.19			
Total	23697.12	199				

Table 7 shows that the calculated F-ratio of 0.91 at a degree of freedom (df) of 2 and 197 is less than the critical F-value of 3.00 at a 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated F-ratio is lesser than the critical F-value, the null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant difference in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in Nigeria based on nature of death is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in Nigeria based on nature of death.

Discussion

The psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin, according to this study, include the feeling that they have no one to confide in again, loneliness, depression most of the time, and upset whenever they lack something important, such as the ability to pay school fees, among other things. The result backs up the findings of Holland (2001) and Burris (2005), and Cluver and Gardner (2006), who highlighted mood swings, self-talk, financial stress, and difficulties falling asleep as prevalent problems related to parental bereavement. Similarly, Burris (2005) found that grieving people go through a range of typical emotional reactions. This is because students are financially reliant on their families.

The first hypothesis found that there was no significant gender difference in the psychological issues of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria. Ssewamala, Han, and Neilands (2009), who studied physical and mental health functioning among AIDS-orphaned adolescents in rural Uganda, disagreed. Boys and girls are affected differently by parental loss, according to the study. They claimed that when a parent dies, girls are more likely to take on additional household tasks, such as caring for a surviving parent and small children. These duties may have a detrimental influence on children's academic performance as well as their mental health. In comparison to males, girls are more likely to arrive late to school and express emotions of fear. Boys, on the other hand, were more likely to express contentment and a desire to succeed after the death of a parent. This might be due to the way boys are indoctrinated and groomed to take care of the family, especially in the absence of their fathers, as seen by the claims of happiness and resolve to

succeed in their new duties. The researchers believe that grieving undergraduates at the University of Ilorin, regardless of gender, face identical psychological difficulties as a result of losing a parent.

Hypothesis two found that there was no significant difference in the psychological issues of parentally bereaved University of Ilorin undergraduates in Nigeria based on their age of bereavement. Jenny, Ashley, and Marilyn (2014), who performed research in Canada on the association between early bereavement and later features of worldview, agreed. The association between bereavement in childhood and adolescence and personality traits in early adulthood was studied in this study. There was no significant difference between bereavement in childhood and adolescence, according to preliminary studies. The findings emphasise the need for social support in coping with loss, as well as the possibility of developing a worldview that is influenced, directly or indirectly, by early mourning experiences. The research of Ketron (2008), who worked at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, Massachusetts, on parental death: mourning loss of life while maintaining a connection, opposed this one. The findings of this study revealed that continuing to recognise the departed parent was a significant feature or a desirable component of the lives of the participants. Participants' age, developmental stage, and family dynamics were determined to have the most impact on the child's experience at the time of death. The findings revealed that the number of effort people put into relating to their deceased parents fluctuated throughout time, most often in response to typical life circumstances. This might be because this study was conducted on college students, whose age and attitude cannot be matched to University of Ilorin undergraduates. Because of the amount of exposure and personal freedom that distinguishes the University setting, undergraduates' attitude and ability to manage things differs from that of college students.

Hypothesis three revealed that the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria, differed significantly depending on the amount of time after the bereavement. A youngster whose parent has just died is two times more likely to drop out than a child whose parents are still alive. Hesham and Heba (2017), who studied the effects of support group treatment on parentally bereaved teenagers in Egypt, also agreed. The findings demonstrated that participants who had lost a parent for a year or more before the research have yet to adjust and adapt to their new lifestyle, in contrast to those who had lost a parent for more than 7 years and had acclimated to their present lifestyle. According to the study, undergraduates who lost a parent years ago (5 years or more) may have adjusted and gone on with their lives, but undergraduates who lost a parent less than 2 years ago are still dealing with the pain.

Hypothesis four revealed that the psychological issues of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria were unaffected by the form of death. Ava, Elizabeth, Wayan, and Duncan (2011), who performed research in Aceh, Indonesia, on the impact of parental mortality on child well-being, disagreed. The findings demonstrated that the tsunami's unpredictability had an impact on the well-being of children who had lost a parent in the tragedy. This was also refuted by Nadine (2008), who studied how a parent's untimely death might affect children's mental health. According to Nadine's study, children who had a parent who died unexpectedly had three times the chance of depression as those who have two surviving parents, as well as a higher risk of post-traumatic stress disorder. The researchers believed that regardless of how undergraduates lost their parents, they still experience the agony and devastation of parental loss. Bereaved students still suffer the grief of losing a parent, regardless of how their parent died, and this trauma impacts them mentally.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin, include the feelings that they have no one to confide in again, loneliness, depression most of the time and upset whenever they lack something important such as inability to pay school fees among others. There were no significant differences in the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin, based on gender, age at bereavement and nature of death, but a significant difference was noted based on length of years.

Implications for Trauma-Focused Counselling

The study investigated the psychological problems of parentally bereaved undergraduates at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Parentally bereaved undergraduates of the University of Ilorin are faced with feelings that they have no one to confide in again, loneliness, depression most of the time, and loss of interest in education among others. The counsellor can assist such students to work through the emotions that he/she (bereaved undergraduates) tend to feel, and reassure him/her that what he/she is experiencing is a normal reaction because death is inevitable. Hence, counsellors should strive to rise and help undergraduates who are faced with a series of bereaved reactions as a result of their parental loss for them to still be able to attain their academic standards and have a positive life view.

The findings showed that bereaved undergraduates experienced psychological problems caused by parental death, regardless of their age, gender or nature of death; therefore, counsellors should also endeavour to make it a point of duty to help these students overcome and move on with their lives in the right manner without having regrets of losing their parent irrespective of their gender, age and nature of parental death. Counsellors should also help the clients cope with unmet expectations where necessary.

The counsellor can organise trauma-focused group counselling to allow undergraduates to share their experiences and bond with others who share similar experiences of loss. Through this approach, undergraduates who had lost their parents and already adjusted to normal life can share their experiences with undergraduates who just lost their parents and assist them to get over the trauma in time. Also, undergraduates who are unable to express their feelings, should be helped by a counsellor through group counselling.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should make it a point of duty to organise seminars in school to be able to enlighten students on how to cope with the loss of a loved one, especially one's parent as well as seek help when faced with a similar situation.
2. Counsellors should assist in getting support from NGOs and other charitable organisations that can help parentally bereaved undergraduates financially such as providing scholarships for them.
3. Counsellors should be professionally trained, and they should be vast in the use of the skills learnt for them to be able to assist these students to cope with the loss, avoid any mental health problems and still function effectively academically.

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