Research Paper

Exploring Bereavement Experiences From University Students In Eswatini

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study was to explore the bereavement experiences of university students in a university in Eswatini. The study was informed by the interpretivist paradigm because the nature of this study entailed understanding human loss, grief and bereavement in the natural context of the participants. The study adopted a qualitative approach and a phenomenological research design. Purposive sampling was used to select a total of 18 student participants who were known to have been bereaved. The participants signed the informed consent forms before participating in this study. The Students' Representative Council (SRC) assisted in identifying them because all bereaved students have a procedure of reporting such incidents to the SRC. Individual interviews and a focus group discussions were used to gather data from the participants. A thematic analysis was used in data analysis to determine some common themes emerging from the study and these were scrutinised to understand the lived experiences of bereaved students in the Motherland University. To a great extent, the findings were consistent with the reviewed literature regarding their experiences of bereaved students in other universities across the globe. These were a feeling of despair, maelstrom of confusing emotions, a feeling of loneliness, quite emotional and sometimes initially very devastating. The student participants felt that they had very little support from the university. Among the suggestions student participants made was a capacitation of the office of the Dean of Students Affairs to handle such matters. The study recommended that the university creates and maintains a formal pastoral care system to take care of such emotional distress as bereavement which if not handled very well can create circumstances detrimental to bereaved students.*

Index words: Bereavement, death, funeral, grief, loss.

I. BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Human beings exist in a social and cultural context and they go through a well-defined life span that begins with birth and ends with death. Thus, just like birth, death is not simply a biological process, it is a social reality (Archer, 2001). Throughout history, death has been imbued with cultural, social and spiritual meaning and this remains so even in modern societies. Attitudes towards death, however, have changed over time and exploring contemporary attitudes towards death and dying is relevant in helping to understand and situate current health and social care approaches to the care of dying people and their bereaved relatives, particularly off springs (Archer, 2001). Bereavement is a consequence of death. Death takes place in every community and bereavement processes follow. The researchers observed that university students are not spared by this devastating biological and social calamity. Hence, death and bereavement issues are critical social issues in every society. In this study, the researchers observed that the management of death and bereavement of university students at Motherland University is given very little attention by the university authorities. This prompted the researchers to explore the bereavement experiences through which university student at the university go.

The researchers also observed that bereaved university students go without university support during bereavement. This; it was assumed impacted negatively on students' mental wellbeing which has a bearing to their academic performance. It was against this backdrop that this study intended to explore the bereaved students' experiences of loss with the intention of establishing how the university can effectively support the bereaved students to lessen the pain experienced as a result of loss and cope with academic imperatives.

The study focused on the experiences of students from a Christian university in Eswatini during the death of a close relative. The study explored the experiences of the bereaved students in order to find out the level and amount of support these students receive or not from the university when bereaved. This paper began with background information to the study, explained the research problem, annotated the research objectives and questions, explained the significance of then the study and defined the research problem.

This study was prompted by the researchers' observation that the Christian University, herein referred to as Motherland University (a pseudonym) does not provide the students with the services that may enable them cope with grief during bereavement. Although the Student Services Department was established, it is currently seriously understaffed. An attempt to look for documents related to the university's facilities to handle grief and counselling services was fruitless. In recent times, Eswatini, was faced with high mortality rate owing to HIV and AIDS pandemic, road carnages, sometimes domestic violence and currently the Corona virus also called Covid 19 is added to the national calamities that are threatening human life in Eswatini and the global world. Higher institutions are a place of study and it is prudent for such institutions to provide the necessary bereavement support systems to students so that they are able to navigate their way through the institutions. Institutions of higher learning are not immune to death and bereavement especially in these years of world pandemics. The outbreak of the Corona virus in 2019 led His Majesty King Mswati III and Ingwenyama of the Kingdom of Eswatini to commanded Government to introduce a partial lockdown on selected sectors of the economy to curtail the spread of coronavirus with effect from 27 March 2020. This was eventually converted to a total shut down in response to the World Health Organisation (WHO) regulations meant to arrest the spread of the disease (Africa Press Office, 2020). To this effect schools, colleges, universities, business entities and other institutions were necessarily shutdown. The Motherland University was no exception because the increasing number of confirmed Covid 19 cases in the country called for everyone to be vigilant and responsible in all actions in order to quickly turn the tide against this rampaging virus.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study sought to:
2.1 Find how bereaved students felt when they lost their loved ones.
2.2 Identify the emotional experiences through which the bereaved students go during bereavement.
2.3. Suggest and develop a bereavement programme for the university to assist bereaved students.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study intended to answer the following questions:
3.1   How do the bereaved students feel when they lost their loved ones?
3.2   What are the emotional experiences students go through when bereaved?
3.3   In what way could the university develop a bereavement programme to assist bereaved students?

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Dual Process Model of Coping and Bereavement by Stroebe and Schut (1999) was selected to inform this study. The model was developed by Stroebe and Schut (1999) who claim that it is a less prescriptive model of grief which focuses on coping processes. Their concept of oscillation between different kinds of coping behaviours, has two orientations. The first focuses on the loss of the deceased (loss orientation) and the second one (restoration orientation) aims at avoiding dwelling on the loss as a means of starting to make adjustments for the future. They argue that both orientations are necessary to adjust to the loss and move on but that the bereaved may move across these at different times and with varying intensity. This 'forwards and backwards' or 'switching' approach to explaining grief acknowledges the importance of culture, gender, age and the individual circumstances of the death (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1993). The model also incorporates the idea that the bereaved may be emotionally overwhelmed by the pain of grief and that 'taking time out' from their grief may help them make the necessary adjustments to enable them to rebuild their lives. This model was therefore seen as relevant to explain the situation among the student participants at Motherland University in Eswatini.

Thompson (1997), commenting on this model, draws out its flexibility in relation to issues of social difference such as gender. He observes that a loss orientation may be seen as a characteristically female approach in contrast to the restoration orientation which he associated with masculine approaches that focus on activities and 'doing' rather than feelings. He commends the model to practitioners because of its on-going dialectic feature that obviates the more common 'either/or' approach. He also notes that the dual process model successfully accounts for the notion that some people never completely get over with their loss, so that although the loss orientation is submerged, it may re-surface at poignant times and is never eliminated altogether. Thus, this model was relevant for this study because it suits the characteristics of the participants in this study. Figure 1 below demonstrates graphically what the Dual Process Model of Coping and Bereavement entails.
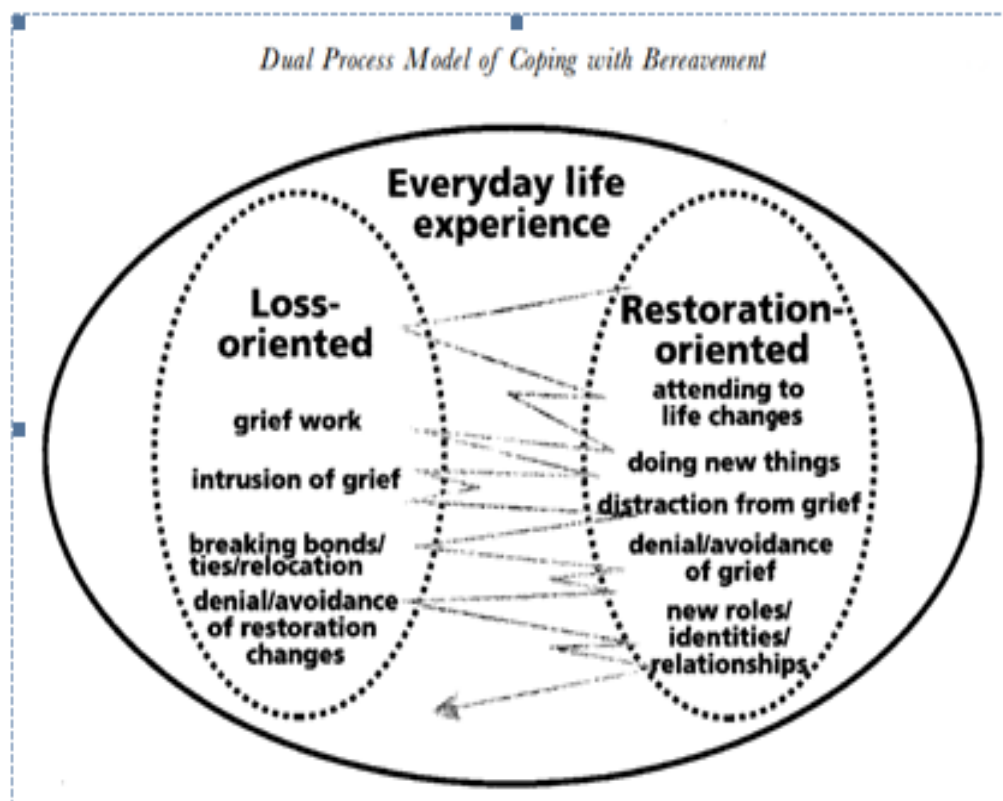
Source: (Stroebe & Schut, 1999)

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

From the preliminary literature review done, it was evident that literature on bereaved tertiary students for Africa is scanty. There is however a large amount of literature from the Unites States of America. In Nigeria, literature is found on bereavement experiences of widows and in Eswatini, the only study found was one of the horrid experiences of widows so one tends to imagine what the effects would be like on their children in institutions of higher learning.

In Nigeria, Busari and Folaranmi (2014) found memory loss, anxiety, frustration and anger among bereaved widows in the North District of Oyo State. In Eswatini, the only study found explored the "lived experiences" of widows in a community where widows became disinherited because their in-laws took advantage of the death of their sons and interpreted Swazi traditional customs to their advantage (Leopold & Lechner, 2016). Hence, this study sought to focus on the experiences of bereaved students in a university set up and was thus deemed relevant because it will cover this gap.

In contemporary societies where bereavement support is concerned, there is now the province of professionally trained counsellors and therapists (Jenkins & Merry, 2005). Traditionally, in Eswatini, this kind of support was a community activity, not professionally organised but 'organically' provided. However, in the contemporary Swazi situation, this kind of support is now seen mainly within faith groups, with care of the bereaved framed by prescribed mourning rituals and practices. The researchers observe that in tertiary institutions, students who are bereaved are often geographically distant from their envisaged regular support systems. They do not receive support from their peers and consequently are often struggling with academic demands and bereavement expectations, and to ease the situation, bereaved students are often surrounded by alcohol and a temptations for taking drugs. In this study, the researchers has observed that grief affects some students holistically, that is, physically, cognitively, behaviourally, interpersonally, emotionally, academically and spiritually. Hence this study explored the experiences of bereaved students in a university in Eswatini in order to suggest mitigation strategies to arrest the situation.

The researchers observed that death lays its icy hand on everyone, including high profile individuals and it changes the flesh into rotten matter. Death is shrouded in mystery in some cultures in the world and there is a lot of myth surrounding death. According to Parkes, Laungani and Young (2015), 100 per cent of people die despite the advances in science. Illich (1975) commented on death as follows.

Socially approved death happens when a man has become useless not only as a producer but also as a consumer. It is the point at which a consumer, trained at great expense, must finally be written off as total loss. Dying has become the ultimate form of consumer resistance (Illich, 1975:77).

In the United States for example, studies by Parkes et al., (2015) asserted that science has taught humans very little about death. Science at times delays death but it cannot prevent it nor can it tell anything about if anything, lies beyond death or what humans can do to prepare for it (Parkes et al., 2015). Traditional mourning customs have been to a greater extent abandoned and the rituals of cremation or burial of the dead have lost much of the emotional significance which, in the past, often made them a source of support for the bereaved rather than an ordeal (Crunk, Burke & Robinson, 2017; Parkes et al., 2015). Parkes et al., (2015) contend that psychiatrists and counsellors called upon to give help to bereaved people, do not find the endeavour easy.

Smyth, Hockemyer, Heron, Wonderlich and Pennebaker (2008) with the objective of finding out information on the prevalence of adverse life experiences of college students examined the prevalence, nature, severity, and disclosure of adverse events, in addition to reports of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptomatology within the sample. They sampled undergraduate college students ($N = 6,053$) from diverse academic settings (public and private schools) and geographic locations. They found that the prevalence rates of adverse events ranged from 55.8% to 84.5%, replicating previous findings in larger samples. In a subset of undergraduate students ($n = 97$) who the authors interviewed in greater depth, 9% reported symptoms of clinical Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and an additional 11% reported sub-clinical symptoms. They reached the conclusion that research using college samples for the study of stressful life events like death is a useful and reasonable strategy. These studies were quantitative and were done in America. This study was qualitative and was done in Eswatini.

Each generation and each society has come up with its own solutions to the problem of death and has enshrined them in a complex web of beliefs and customs which, at first glance, seem so diverse as to be impossible to understand (Parkes et al., 2015). There are nevertheless common themes running through all of reactions to death (McCarthy, 2006). Crying, fear and anger are so common elements of reaction to death. Western cultures, which tend to discourage the overt expression of emotions at funerals, are highly deviant. They differ from most other societies and from the society as it was a hundred years ago (Parkes et al., 2015). There is some debate on the reaction to death in literature. Some studies do not find measurable harm from bereavement, for example, observed only minor impairment of mental health due to bereavement. Others suggest that a more precise predictor of psychological harm is the degree of grief that the bereaved person actually experiences rather than death itself (Shelton, 2016).

In Africa, south of the Sahara, there is a dearth of information concerning how universities support students during their grief after bereavement and therefore their experiences. There is, however, some literature on bereavement, funerals and mourning in local communities. In Ghana, the most talked about funeral processes is the Akan tradition which is a long process that starts on the day of death and continues for 40 days till the deceased in buried. Relatives, friends and community members come together and normally; the opportunity is used to iron out family conflicts. Music and dance are components of the ceremony and both Christian prayers and libation form part of the ceremony (Segal, 2016).

In Kenya among the Embu ethnic group, their belief that the dead person's spirit lives on, guides them. Traditionally, the Embu ethnic group did not have a burial ceremony because they did not bury the dead. The dead were thrown into the forest to rot. Currently, because most of them have been converted to Christianity, they now bury their dead (Weiskittle, 2016). However, this community still do not have as elaborate a ceremony as the Lou and Luhya who have wailing as part of their ceremony. Among the Luo and Luhya, the funeral ceremony for males takes four days while that for females and children takes three days. In the Kingdom of Eswatini, Christianity has influenced funeral ceremonies but one still finds elements of traditional beliefs woven into the funeral rituals.

The search for literature in Eswatini on the experiences of students during bereavement yielded no results. However, in Eswatini funerals are basically a family affair though the community and friends pay visit to the bereaved and express condolences. After the funeral, it becomes a family issue. Forty days after the burial ceremony, is the cleansing ceremony, also by and large, a family affair. Because of the many deaths caused by the HIV pandemic, palliative care, grief, bereavement and support during grief have now become a watchword in the vocabulary of institutions. Many euphemisms are used when a person dies. One scarcely hears a person say in siSwati that a person is dead. Grieving has traditionally not being a topic discussed but in recent times it has become an important issue because of the bereavement support needed by persons who are bereaved.

In this study, the university is one of the emerging universities in the Kingdom of Eswatini. It is a pastoral university. The university does not have accommodation facilities for students and the nature of its programmes creates a situation where it is only during contact hours that faculty staff and students interact. Student services arrangements at the university are in an inchoate state. Recently, (2019), a Dean of Students Affairs was appointed to supervise pastoral and counselling services to students and is now recruiting staff to fill in some vacant offices (Office of Dean of Students, 2016). Very little information is available regarding the experiences of bereaved and grieving students and the support these students receive from the university in

Eswatini. It is against this backdrop that this study was conducted to determine the experiences of bereaved students and how they cope and are assisted to cope with bereavement at the university. The current study is meant to fill in the gap in the provision of support of university students during grief and bereavement in Eswatini. The Kingdom of Eswatini where this study was done is a Southern African country. Hence, this study is done in a different setting.

VI. METHODOLOGY

This section describes the research design and methods employed to obtain answers in a study done to explore bereavement experiences of university students at Motherland University (MU) in the Kingdom of ESwatini.

6.1   Design

This study employed a purely qualitative approach which followed a phenomenological research design. The aim of this study was to explore bereavement experiences of university students at Motherland University (MU) in the Kingdom of Eswatini. The phenomenological design is a research design used to describe a "lived experience" of a phenomenon where participants express the feelings of what they have experienced. It explains how the study employs the scientific approach in its venture (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The sample size that was adopted in this study were ten (10) bereaved students. Student Representative Council (SRC) records were obtained and used to identify students who had lost their loved ones during the academic year and were approached and requested to participate in the study.

According to Creswell (2003), two to ten participants are sufficient to reach data saturation in a qualitative study. Thus, ten participants were deemed adequate for this study. In qualitative research data saturation is reached when the responses given by the participants begin to repeat themselves with no new information coming in (Creswell, 2013). In order to gather in depth information about students' exploring bereavement experiences from Eswatini University, ten participants were sufficient. This is due to the nature of the study and the fact that qualitative studies are more concerned with in-depth exploration of the phenomenon under study, hence numbers are not important (Radzilani, 2010). In this study, in-depth exploration of bereavement experiences of students were the essence of the study and not numbers.

6.2   Sampling and sampling procedure

The study adopted a non-probability sampling method known as purposive sampling for the selection of the participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method which allows the researchers to select informants who are information rich on the phenomenon under study which in this case, was the exploring bereavement experiences from Motherland University students. In this study, purposive sampling technique was used because it allowed for the selection of bereaved students who had reported loss of a close relative during the academic year. Moreover, purposive sampling was adopted to ensure that participants provided the richest information needed to answer the research questions. Creswell and Clark (2011) stated that purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals that are knowledgeable or experienced with a phenomenon which is of interest to the researcher. In this study, the focus was on the lived experiences of bereaved students which tries to answer a question like, "What are you experiencing now as we talk about your loss?"

6.3 Data collection instruments

Two instruments were employed in this research. The researchers conducted individual interviews and focus group discussion to achieve the objectives of the research.

6.3.1 Individual interviews

Interviews collected information about the ways that people understand the events and experiences of their lives (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). Interviews are a flexible way of collecting qualitative data suited to a wide variety of projects and research methodologies including grief and bereavement. The researchers were particularly interested in eliciting the views of the students and so wanted to avoid the use of controlling interview styles or structured interview questions, choosing instead, more relaxed and conversational styles of interviewing that facilitated in-depth understanding and reciprocity of exchange (Harper & Thompson, 2012b).

The researchers chose interviews because they allowed the researchers to investigate the issue of bereavement from the perspectives of the students involved. Interviews are now seen as a creative and interactive process whereby the interviewer and the interviewee participate in a joint construction of events and interpretations. A well-known version of this new way of conceptualising interviewing is Gubrium and Holstein's (2000) description of the 'active interview'. Active interviewing entails awareness about 'how meaning and reality are created through interactions that are embedded in the social occasion of the interview' (Marvasti, 2004:30). It follows that: 'All participants in an interview are inevitably implicated in making

meaning' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000:487). Hence, it is for this reason that interviews were chosen for data collection.

In this study, semi-structured interviews, also called focused interviews, were used. The researchers were not bound by any expectations that they would ask the same questions at each interview, nor that they would ask them in the same way – unlike structured open-ended interviewing. Instead, the interview guide was put in place to help the researchers during the interviews to remember topics they wanted included in the interview. The researchers were also free to ask probing questions during the interview and to respond to issues and questions raised by the interviewee. During the process, the researchers listened carefully and allowed pauses and thinking time for the research participant. The researchers endeavoured to provide a space for the interviewees to elaborate on their views and experiences related to the issue of bereavement and grief. That way, a rapport was built between the interviewees and the interviewers.

6.3.2 Focus group discussion

Another tool that was used to collect data was the focus group discussion. These have been used to investigate a wide range of psychological issues (Harper & Thompson, 2012a; Hoiseth & Keitsch, 2015). The researchers also chose focus groups as one of their data collection methods because they considered that group discussions with people similar experiences would help participants to explore the sensitive issues of bereavement. As hoped, the focus group interviews helped to open up discussions on a plethora of bereavement experiences through which students went on campus.

TRIANGULATION

Data was triangulated by the utilisation of two different instruments for eliciting information. The two instruments were the interview and the interview. The purpose of collecting data with two different instruments is 'data triangulation' to contrast the data and 'validate' the data if it yields similar findings. The weaknesses of each of these instruments was strengthened by using a combined approach to a given problem. Triangulation involves cross-checking of data using multiple data sources or multiple data-collection procedures. Triangulation, in the researchers' estimation enabled the researchers to understand the experiences from students on bereavement well.

ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

In this phenomenological qualitative study, the audit trail was used to establish the credibility, dependability, coherence and transferability of the study findings (Seidman, 2006). An audit trailor meticulous logs and records concerning one's research methods and decisions ensure that every aspect of the data collection and analysis can be traced and verified by others (Wangru, 2016). The audit trail was used to ensure that every aspect of the data collection and analysis could be traced and verified by others; thus ensuring credibility (Glesne, 2014). An audit trail allows research teams and outside researchers to reconstruct the work of the original researcher. This method was used to critically investigate or cross-check the data collection and analysis (Glesne, 2014).

Member checking was used to determine the accuracy of the findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants felt that they are accurate. The researcher took back parts of the major findings and the themes to conduct a follow-up interview with participants in the study and provided an opportunity for them to comment on the findings (Flick, 2014). Finally, to ensure trustworthiness in the qualitative tradition, the researchers used a rich, thick description to convey the findings. This description it is hoped, will transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences. Specifically, the following procedures were employed to ensure trustworthiness.

8.1 Credibility

Credibility is the internal consistency where the core is how the researcher ensures rigor in the research process and how the researcher is able to communicate he or she has done exactly that (Anney, 2014). The questions that will be asked during the individual interviews and in the focus group discussions covered the objectives of the study (Anney, 2014). To ensure credibility, the researchers wrote field notes which reflected the behaviour of the bereaved students while narrating their experiences. Theoretical field notes included the researchers' inferences and associations with regard to what they observed from the setting. The researchers also went back to the participants to conduct member checking (Cohen & Manion, 2007). The reason for conducting member checks was to correct inconsistency errors and to check the accuracy of responses the participants gave. Credibility was finally achieved by attempting as far as possible to ensure that the participants had been accurately identified.

8.2 Dependability

Credibility and dependability are closely linked, the latter replacing the notion of reliability in quantitative research. If the findings of the study are to be dependable, they must be consistent and accurate (Anney, 2014). This means that readers will be able to evaluate the adequacy of the analysis through following your decision-making processes. This concept relates to the degree to which another researcher will be able to replicate the same research and obtain very similar results.

8.3 Conformability

Conformability refers to the criterion of neutrality according to which the bias of the researcher should be avoided with regard to the procedures and findings (Cohen & Manion, 2007). It relates to the degree to which a researcher's own bias or prejudices may impact on the findings of the study. To enhance conformability, the researchers declared personal biases and prejudices at the beginning of the study. These were the researchers' religious beliefs as well as experiences on death. An audit trail was also done to limit researchers' bias which included reviewing written field notes, documents and survey results. Trustworthiness also entailed filing all the data in such a way that it followed the chain of evidence that led to the final report. This included initial notes on the research questions, interview schedule, audio tapes, annotated transcripts, coding and initial categorizations, draft reports and final reports. The research is judged by the way in which the findings and conclusions achieve the aim of the study and are not the result of the researcher's prior assumptions and preconceptions. Therefore, for the study to be confirmable, the researcher has shown how the data are linked to their sources so that a reader can establish that the conclusions and interpretations arise directly from them.

8.4 Transferability

Transferability replaces the notion of external validity, and is close to the idea of theory-based generalizability. Many qualitative studies like this study involve very small samples or single case studies and it is the role of the researchers to help the reader transfer the specific knowledge gained from the research findings of one study to other settings (Anney, 2014). Therefore, the researchers made sure that the context of the study was so well described that findings are specific to the context of the university students studied and other contexts with similar attributes. Member checking was also used to determine the accuracy of the findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they were accurate (Anney, 2014).

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was done according to the meaning generated from the data. These meanings formed themes which were of interest to the researchers. Themes were established based on converging several perspectives from participants (Creswell, 2012). According to Yin (2011) and Creswell (2009), the purpose of data analyses is to have meaningful synthesis of the information that participants have provided and best interpret their experiences. The interviews were audio recorded and the recordings were transcribed word-by-word (verbatim) into word processing documents. An analysis of the transcribed communication was carried out. An analysis, according to Hoyle et. (2002, p. 397) "takes on or both of two major approaches: coding the narratives according to discrete themes or categories and narratives on continuous dimensions". The data were coded and then classified under identified categories (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014) which assisted the researchers in identifying the emerging themes. The evidence from the sources was used to build a coherent justification for themes which were then used as an answer to the research questions.

VII.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section discusses the findings of this study which explored the experiences of bereaved students at the Motherland University of Eswatini during the loss of their loved relatives through death. As said above, data were collected using individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussions. Categories and themes were generated out of the collected data and as suggested by Geertz (1973) "thick descriptions" have also been presented from the verbatim expressions of the research participants. It is significant also to note that during all interviews, the researchers were alert to observe and note the non-verbal communications of research participants so as to obtain the total rendition of feelings of research participants. The presentation of data was guided by the research questions of the study.

7.1 How students felt when bereaved
Table 1: Emerging themes on how students felt when they lost a loved one

Objective	Theme	Sub-themes	
Find out how students felt they lost when bereaved	Loss of source of sustenance	1.	Great feeling of loss
		2.	No shoulder to lean on
		3.	Loss of counsellor
		4.	Loss of financial support

The findings of the study revealed that all those interviewed expressed shock, confusion and a feeling of great loss. Every one of the key informants reported that they had a feeling of great loss.

With the focus group interviews, the researchers got the advantage from putting eight people together to discuss the issue of loss, grief and bereavement. The advantages of focus group discussions became apparent when the members held deliberations. Those who took part in the focus group were all third year students who were all familiar with the services provided to the students by the university.

7.1.1   Great feeling of loss
The major theme that ran through the discussion concerning the feeling of loss was that it was heart-breaking and created a level of numbness that made one dumb and speechless and looking completely confused. What others said did not make meaning at all. They revealed that there was no level of comforting that removed that hopelessness, shock and disbelief upon receiving the bad news. In the excerpt from the transcribed data, the level of devastation experienced by some of the participants in the focus group discussion is clearly shown. The presentation shows the "lived experiences" of each of the students regarding what they felt about the loss of a beloved one.

The following verbal quotes confirm the assertions above:
I lost my aunt who was a mother to me. The loss is just not imaginable because I had lost my biological mother and father as a young girl and I was raised by this aunt so much so that I so bonded to her that I just do not know how I was going to survive without her. Though I am married, I have a great deal of support from my aunt. (Participant J, Female 30 Years).

Loss cannot be quantified. It is just loss! It just came. It was sudden. Now who will pay my rent in Manzini? Who will buy me food? These were the questions that ran through my mind when I sat down those days. I thought life was not going to be the same.... In fact, it has not been the same. The quality of life I had has changed tremendously and I am not sure how long I will be able to continue with the hard life I lead now. It is miserable. ... but this person is gone! (Participant FD, Female, 30 years old, Focus Group).

7.1.2 No shoulder to lean on
It also emerged that the participants, during both individual interviews and focus group discussion were all melancholy. They complained vehemently that with the loss of their loved ones, they did not know who to talk to and who to seek consolation from when they had a crisis and a confusion of this nature. Their voices trembled as they narrated their ordeals and some paused to suppress tears and to gather confidence to continue talking.

The verbal quotes below reflect the assertions above:
His death took me by surprise. I had to learn to accept it though. Finding out someone close to me [died] was hard for me to accept. How will I survive? Who will I tell my problems" (Participant G, 1ˢᵗ year student, Female, Age 28).

I lost my mother because of cancer. I failed to report because to me it was too much to handle and I was so weak physically and I could only tell one friend. I don't know why I did not want to talk about it? I just was confused about who I would talk to when I had problems because she was the one I went to when I had problems. I can't imagine what others felt! (Participant FE, Male, Age 32, Focus Group).

7.1.3 Loss of counsellor
Participants indicated they had lost their counsellors. They felt that they would not have people they could rely on for their emotional well-being. They actually expressed a great sense of loss in that the people who acted as

their consciences and guided them when they were in dilemma were gone. They expressed the fear that they would be directionless in the quest to study because these were the people who served as their guides on how they managed their time for studies.

The verbal quotes below attest to the assertions above:
My aunt in reality was my academic counsellor, marriage counsellor and great confidant who treated me with great respect. I was looking forward to beginning to work so I could express my heartfelt gratitude to her for all her guidance but now the opportunity is lost for such expression. (Participant J, Female 30 years).

I lost my brother when I was in the first semester of the third year at MU while I was still happy to be at the university, I got the bad news that he was sick. I had hope that I will help him when I completed my education to get better medical help. Suddenly I got the sad news that he was gone. He got my application forms for me. He guided me in the subjects to choose and even was the one who searched for information for me on the Internet and guided me during my assignments. Now he is gone I have no one to guide me. (Participant FC, Female, Age 28, Focus Group).

7.1.4 Loss of financial support
   Most of the participants said they became disoriented, wept and wailed and expressed the feeling that the loss of their relatives was so calamitous that they thought they were going to die themselves. Some of them were philosophical and went stoical. The deceased were their primary source of finance and they just did not imagine how they were going to pay their rent, buy food and just live. The participants were generally concerned about how they were going to finance their many academic activities like paying school fees, surfing the Internet, making photocopies, scanning pages from textbooks and buying books.

The verbal quotes below reflect the assertions above:
"Ye Make" (Madam), do you know you cannot find your way home? You miss the normal paths that you used to since childhood. You forget things people tell you. That was my experience. I still believe that I got temporarily mad. Where was food going to come from? My clothing and all my academic financial support? I am married but during financial crisis I went to him. He was my bread winner. (Participant G, Female, 28 years old).

Now I can say it. When I failed my year two, my mother started paying my fees. When I heard of her death, I had a gaping wound in my heart and it seemed it would never heal! You see, I just don't know how to describe it. At that time I wondered how I was going to be able to pay the fees. (Participant, FE, Male, Age 32, Focus Group).

It was unbelievable and even other people didn't believe but our pastor and other brethren were always there for the preparation and it was like they were part of my family. Life won't be the same because she was a source of everything, she was a pillar even of the entire family. Still there is tension. No one has been able to replace her so it is now difficult to survive. She bought food, paid rent and got me to the university. Now I walk all the way from where I stay to the university. (Participant J, 1ˢᵗ year student, Female, Age 30).

7.2 Emotional experiences students go through during bereavement.
  Table 2: Themes that shows the emotional experiences through which the bereaved students go during bereavement

Objective	Theme	Sub-themes	
Identify the emotional experiences through which the bereaved students go during bereavement	Sadness and confusion	1.	Not knowing what to do (A state of confusion)
		2.	Feeling of despair
		3.	Maelstrom of confusing emotions
		4.	All melancholy
		5.	Disorientation

7.2.1 Not knowing what to do (A state of confusion)
All the participants in this study agreed that in the very first hour of hearing the sad news of the demise of their loved ones, it was almost impossible to engage in any meaningful activity. The impression was created that there came a feeling of emptiness that made it impossible to engage the brain in any activity.

The verbal quotes below attest to the assertions above:
… you see, you just walk around like a zombie. You do not know the direction to which you are going and you feel that everybody is talking about you, and how vulnerable you have become. You pray that you are not sent on an errand because you are not sure if you would do the right thing. You feel your mind is blocked and blank.

Meanwhile you are very sad that the person did not wait for you to have the means of organising a befitting funeral for her. (Participant F, Male, Age 26).

Yes! I lost my orientation. I was so confused that I just sat down and looked into space and remained idle for a long time. I was surprised that I did not get seriously sick. You feel like your mind has been deleted. Its empty. (Participant H, Female, 28 years old).

7.2.2   Feeling of despair

Participants expressed feelings of despondence. They all said they felt very dispirited, sad and felt very lost. Most of them said they were downcast and thought all hope was gone and could not continue to live. They also thought of dropping out of the university and for days most of them reported they could not eat because they had lost appetite.

The verbal quotes below attest to the assertions above:
I had relied on my grandmother for all support so I thought I would be dropping out of the university because there was going to be no support. I became confused. Sometimes in the first week before the funeral, I would hide in the room alone and cry. People told me I spoke to myself and threw my arms around as if I was asking myself questions. It was total confusion, I tell you, (Participant F, Male, 26 years old).

Anguish, gloom, hopelessness are all the words I can use for the situation I was cast into. Hope left me. I thought with my grandmother gone, I was lost. That day, I remember very well. I thought I was going to lose my mind. How would I continue with my education? How will I get to school? What will I eat? These were my questions which I did not find answers to. I am very surprised I am still in the Motherland University today! (Participant F, Male, 26 years old).

7.2.3   Maelstrom of confusing emotions

The participants reported that confusion, disorientation, even hallucination, characterised their experiences in grief. All of the participants reported some confusion. They were even worried that the situation might lead to permanent brain damage that could make it difficult for them to study.

The verbal quotes below confirm the assertions above:
I was confused and had very bad nightmares. I woke up in the middle of the night several times after having very frightening dreams of snakes chasing me, finding myself in a park full of lions and even being on the doctor's surgery table. I thought my world had come to an end. (Participant J, Female, 30 years old).

You see, I could not hold myself from talking while walking. Things were not the same as they used to be. I laughed when I did not have to. I went to lie in bed and I will not be knowing what I will be doing and one day I just felt like running out after taking my bath and drown myself in a nearby stream. (Participant FD, Female, 30 years old, Focus Group).

7.2.4   All melancholy

Though none of the participants reported that they ended up in the hospital, they however expressed clear signs of being extremely sad and confused. Some said they developed diarrhoea and had some abdominal pain. The story was similar for almost every one of the participants. Most participants said that during three to four weeks from the death of their loved ones, they remained depressed, apart from the melancholy they experienced. They never thought daily life would ever be normal. There was the feeling that their worlds had come to an end and their sources of support were lost. They said they exhibited sadness, anger, disappointment and sometimes anxiety but were very much aware of their surroundings. Since they were mostly in early adulthood, it is possible, culture may have played a part in the dispositions of these students during bereavement. The stoic nature of the members of the culture could have been the factor. To be described as being stoic is to firmly restrain response to pain or distress.

The verbal quotes below corroborate the assertions above:
What is called sadness is what I experienced. You see; there is no situation that can be worse than that. It developed loss of appetite, loss of weight and went to pee too often. I just did not understand. I hated food. I hated talking to people. I wanted to be alone. I became a chain smoker. One cigarette lighted the other. You see, there are no words to describe the state I was thrown in. The big word "melancholy" that I learnt from Macbeth in form three came to my mind. Just like that my grandmother was gone. (Participant F, Male, 26 years old).

I did not know how important my grandmother was to me until she died. It was like the world had come to an end. The loss brought sadness, the grief brought sadness, and the crowd that came to the house revived the sadness every day. I wanted to be asleep always so the sadness would be forgotten but the sleep would not come and sympathisers would not stop bothering me. Sometimes I felt they were a nuisance! (Participant FH, Female, 27 years old, Focus Group).

7.2.5 Disorientation

During the focus group discussion, all the participants indicated that there was confusion, disbelief, some disorientation and some period of withdrawal from friends and family but gradually as the routine of the university activities increased, the grieving reduced. This is an indication of the impression created that such bereavement incidents are not normally expected by people, particularly because people are most often full of hope. The participating students were afraid that the situation of confusion could last longer and jeopardise their concentration on studies on return to the university.

The verbal quotes below support the assertions above:
If I tell you I put sugar into my sauce! You might doubt it. But it happened. All I saw when I added the sugar to the sauce was salt. It was when I tried to eat that I discerned the food had no salt. I went back to the kitchen and found out that I had used sugar. I nearly went mad. I forgot to do things I would plan to do and many people told me they did not think I was the person they knew before. It was a difficult period. When I remember now, I laugh. Upon hearing the news, I nearly went out naked. (Participant FD, Female, 30 years old, Focus Group).

I nearly removed my clothes. Really, I was doing that when someone came in and held me. I shuddered and tears just came down my cheek. I thought I was in a trance and I just remembered the Nigerian movies. When the women in particular hear bad news, the way they wailed and threw themselves on the ground and unto people. But I could not do this. Death is bad! (Participant FC, Female, 28 years old, Focus Group).

7.3 Suggestions for bereavement programme to support bereaved students.
Table 3: Emerging themes on bereavement programme for the university to assist bereaved students

Objective		Theme	Sub-themes
Suggest and develop a bereavement programme for the university to assist bereaved students	a.	University as a body, faculty and Students Representative Council (SRC) to give support	1. Student services in the administration to develop a formal system of support 2. SRC to be involved in grief support system 3. Provision of transport for willing students to attend funeral 4. Counselling sessions to facilitate closure 5. Formal system for announcing loss

7.3.1 Student services in the administration to develop a formal system of support

In this study, all the participants clamoured for a university policy on bereavement. The participants did not only talk of bereavement but also spoke about students' psycho-social needs and pastoral care. They indicated that it was just desirable for a university to have a comprehensive student support system that took care of the psycho-social needs of students and they wanted its establishment to be treated as a matter of urgency.

The verbal quotes below authenticate the assertions above:
We need someone at the university who must always be there for us; talk to us, encouraging us when we have lost our guardian because it's not easy for bereaved students to cope before and after the loss. During our Orienting Day, students must be informed where to report when bereaved but at this moment, there are no clear rules or policy about where to go." (Participant F, Male, 26 years old).
Issues of bereavement at university must be given serious attention because it is among factors that contribute to academic failures. Financial, emotional and more spiritual support must be provided since it is a Christian university. (Participant I, Male, 21 years old).

7.3.2 *SRC to be involved in grief support system*

The participants mooted that the university as a body, faculty and Students Representative Council (SRC) should be able to give support to students when they are bereaved. This emerged as a major theme in the interviews. None of the student participants suggested any other system. All they wanted was support. But their main concern was that the Students Affairs Department and the SRC should be involved. They must play a major role in assisting bereaved students in the university.

The verbal quotes below corroborate the assertions above:

The SRC must announce its official presence at the funeral. We are a family at university. They were supposed to act as if a lecturer has died. Transport must be organised for those who are willing to attend a funeral and the administration must attend. Even if there is no financial support but the presence of students is well appreciated. If there were many students in the funeral, even the gap of the family differences would not be noticed. The SRC must be in the forefront. (Participant B, Male, 28 years old).

The SRC has to be in the forefront for this kind of thing to happen. Instead of going on demonstration and embarking on strikes, we should request things that can help the institution grow. We must use modern methods of solving problems. It is like this university needs more professionals. (Participant FH, Female, 27 years old, Focus Group)

7.3.3 *Provision of transport for willing students to attend funeral*

The participants from this study spoke about university providing transport and funds but some of the participants spoke about counselling sessions as they indicated during the portion of the interview about university support. Some participants spoke about the university providing transport, some spoke about support in the form of finances.

The verbal quotes below confirm the assertions above:

It is important that students attend funerals of their friends' relatives so I think there must be a formal system where arrangements can be made for a group of students to attend the funeral. What I feel is that the Students Affairs Department and the SRC must take care of this. I do not know what should be done but I think there must be a contribution system where students will contribute money and the SRC makes arrangements for transport and some other contributions. (Participant J, Female, 30 years old).

I have just thought of something. An idea has just come to my mind. I think it is possible that the SRC, supervised by the Students Affairs Department of the university can establish a fund to which all students contribute. It can be called anything, but its use will be for funding transportation and donation during funerals for those on record to be students' parents or guardians. This can work ...don't you think so? (Participant FE, Female, 32 years old, Focus Group).

7.3.4 *Counselling sessions to facilitate closure*

The need for counselling was the major issue raised by the participants in this study. They seriously decried the fact that there was no psycho-social support available for students when bereaved. They spoke about the need for it and how important it is to have counselling services put in place in the Motherland University.

The verbal quotes below attest to the assertions above:

SRC don't take care of students' grievances instead they keep on asking the grieving students some questions like how your parent died whereas you are not comfortable in answering many questions. Most comments you get from SRC are hurting because they are not trained to handle those issues and are students just like us. When you are in your first year, it is not easy to report to SRC because they are seniors to you. A permanent office at our faculty is needed urgently with a trained counsellor to help students who are bereaved and with other problems. When we have lost a student or parent, all interested students must be allowed to attend, the university mustn't limit the number of students who want to attend the funeral. (Participant FB, Male, 29 years old, Focus Group).

Parents and guardians from students must be supported by the university if your guardian is your immediate brother or sister you need support from MU. We also need a counsellor in each faculty to help the students when they are back after the funeral. That is the critical stage because everything is left for you to face and you are alone and need to cope with your academic world. At this time the DSA (Dean of Students Affairs) is not there for students, at this time we have lost a student the DSA was supposed to report that news to us. He was introduced to us in absentia. He was supposed to come and address us as students and tell us his duties so that everyone knows him. We have a morning assembly every day, he must have a slot once a week and say

some words of advice to us so that we know him and be free to communicate with him. Not that we have to see him if we have some issues. The office of DSA must be easily accessible. Our DSA at our Faculties are needed to be close to us every day as students and the office must be known and label DSA so that all students are free and have access. (Participant FC, Female, 32 years old, Focus Group).

7.3.5   Formal system for announcing loss
Participants indicated that if there was an official way of informing the SRC and the student body even some students could even assist with some chores like cleaning because after the funeral a lot of work is left to be done at home hosting the grieving and burial ceremony. The participants, especially during the focus group discussion felt strongly that there must exist a system for reporting loss.

The verbal quotes below support the assertions above
The university must provide forms to be completed by bereaved students so that when death of a parent occurs, the student can go to a designated office to complete this form. They must establish the type of relationship to the student that the university will involve itself in. I think parents and guardians should be the only people whose death the student should report. (Participant FH, Female, 27 years old, Focus Group).

I totally agree with you. You know distant relatives should not be included. This information on the parent or the guardian must be obtained when the student is admitted so that there is no confusion, otherwise students will come with all sorts of bereavement issues. This is a big job for the university. (Participant FE, Female, 32 years old, Focus Group).

VIII.   DISCUSSIONS
The researchers observed that the findings here were quite consistent with the literature from across the globe. It was not surprising that, all those interviewed expressed shock, confusion and a feeling of a great loss. The participants reported that they had a great feeling of loss. All the participants complained of the loss of a shoulder to cry on and the feeling of a great loss that might not be replaced. Apart from the feeling that there was the loss of a companion, those who lost parents were quite clear that they had lost counsellors. All the participants bluntly or implicitly said they had lost bread winners. The participants indicated that these bread winners were also their sources of finance for many other pertinent life imperatives.

These observations were quite consistent with literature. From several years of research, Balk (2011) found that grief affects students physically, cognitively, behaviourally, interpersonally, emotionally, and spiritually. Parents provide their dependants with shelter and other necessities of life. The death of parents is one of the most severe traumas that any human being can suffer (Adesina, 2014; Agbe, Akume, & Kohol, 2013). As family roles, relationships, and circumstances change consequently, children often tend to be depressed, anxious, angry, demanding and noncompliant, and experience difficulty to cope with situations (Leopold & Lechner, 2015). Emotional distress occurs in reaction to a loss of a beloved one and this was clearly demonstrated in the responses of the participants who were interviewed. The widowed expressed a great sense of loss and dependent children also indicated a great sense of loss. In a particularly patriarchal society such as the Kingdom of Eswatini, it can be readily understood that a good husband, father or any grand-parent would be a valuable assert in the family and a provider of needs; so a sudden demise of that individual, will no doubt bring a great sense of loss and desperation to the dependents.

The literature also agrees with these findings. Weiskittle (2015) found out that there were differences in which college students reacted to bereavement according to ethnicity. Weiskittle (2015) indicated that although African Americans endorsed higher rates of violent loss when compared to Caucasians in her quantitative studies, there was no significant relationship between type of loss and grief intensity scores, and there were no differences between African Americans and Caucasians on the outcome of grief intensity. The researchers noted that there is a big difference in the way grief is expressed in the Swazi society and in other cultures. Individual differences such as gender, ethnicity, and age have been assumed to be particularly salient to the way individuals experience and express their grief, but literature is mixed regarding these variables' influence on grief outcomes (Roberts, 2016). However, this study did not venture into making such comparisons. From the study, however there is evidence that certain background characteristics determine the way humans express their emotions when bereaved.

The participants made many suggestions regarding support for bereaved students. Among these were the establishment of the student services department, the SRC to be involved in grief support, the university should be formally represented at funerals of lost loved ones of students among many others. This may come from the Students Affairs Department. The fact that there was no system in place, it may require a lot of resources to be generated in that space. The literature showed that the college setting brings in a number of challenges for bereaved students. For the undergraduate students, who are normally young and living away from

home for the first time, the college environment is a unique one often with the distractions of social activities, athletics, sport and fun. Alcohol is frequently glamorized as a rite of passage in college (Walker et al., 2014). These factors, coupled with seemingly constant academic pressure, make a college campus a difficult place to grieve. Both physical symptoms, such as insomnia and headaches; and psychological symptoms, such as inability to focus or attend classes; may make it difficult to approach instructors or advisors for incompletes, makeup assignments, or extensions. In addition, peer support may be minimal or lacking due to feelings of discomfort talking with or to the bereaved student, resulting in isolation for that student (Balk, 2008). As literature has revealed, it is important that systems are put in place for grieving students as soon as possible. The only strategy suggested by research participants is to establish a strong counselling process for students and make the office of the Dean of Student Affairs more visible and properly capacitated.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

The researchers concluded that like in all societies, when students are bereaved they experience loss and therefore grieve. In the process, they become confused and so they need a great deal of support during this period of grief. The study concluded that melancholy and confusion were some of the emotional experiences that students went through during bereavement. The conclusion drawn from the findings of the study is that since these feelings could be intense and result in disorientation, there is need for psycho-social support.

The researchers concluded that some of the suggestions proposed by the participating students in the study as support for bereaved students may be out of the way for a formal institution. The SRC would be more suitable for playing roles like the provision of transport and funeral contributions. The conclusion is that a great deal of planning and thinking taking into consideration best practices from universities in Eswatini and in other countries and a thorough understanding of the culture of the country and the tenets of the church that has established the Motherland University will, enable the university to design and be able to implement a support system for bereaved students. The participants felt the SRC should be formally involved in any loss and bereavement support processes.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made to obviate the situation.
1. A counselling department should be put in place and staffed with fulltime employees. This department will handle the psycho-social support for students during crises like bereavement.
2. There is need to put in place a very strong pastoral care system to give support to students.
3. A specific budget has to be put in place to support students' services
4. A clear procedure must be established for reporting loss and bereavement stating specifically relationship with student.
5. With the SRC, the university authorities should arrange the nature of economic, psychological and social support to be given to students. Administratively, there may be roles played by the SRC. These are roles like arranging for transport to funerals.

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