

Introduction leads to  
grieving. due to the  
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## **Introduction**

Death of a loved one within the family, a distant relative or someone in the society is an irreversible loss that leads to grieving. Due to the diversity of cultural religious beliefs, different people respond uniquely to death, which causes loss and subsequent grieving. Although death has been occurring since the creation of the world, it has confounded the meaning and the purpose of living, and it still scares everybody even today. Death is a mystery that human beings strive to unravel because; unfortunately no one can predict or control its occurrence in humanity. The death of loved one is a great loss that one can experience in life and it takes the process of grieving to accept the fact that loss has actually occurred. Attig argues that, "... human experiences of bereavement and grieving ... recur throughout our lifetimes and serve as lenses through which we can see many meanings of death, human existence, suffering, the life of the deceased, the life of mourner, and the love" (2004, p. 342).

Human experiences due to the death and loss of loved ones have different perceptions and responses in the society; nevertheless, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross gave a typical model that explains five stages of grieving.

## **Human Experiences**

Death and loss are constant human experiences that people encounter in the course of life. The experiences surrounding death and loss of loved one depend on religious and cultural beliefs, which define the nature of life and death in the society. Without religious and cultural beliefs in the society, the death would still be a remote and mysterious incident that strikes human beings obliviously.

Research findings revealed that there is "...ethnic differences in the character of death attitudes, with American whites reporting greater fears of a protracted and painful dying process, whereas American blacks were more fearful about what transpired after death itself, including fears of being buried alive" (Neimeyer, 2004, p. 10). Such disparity in ethnicity and beliefs determines the perception and understanding of death in the society.

Death is a scary reality in that people are struggling to deny and run away from it. Human beings face great challenges in understanding the nature of death and accepting its occurrence. Since death is a mystery that has instilled fears into humanity across all ages, discussions regarding death or news about death are scary for they remind people that they are going to die. According to Attig, death has diverse meanings and "...an expansion of focus within the field to encompass consciousness of death across the lifespan and to foster a vision of our place in the universe to guide us in

facing and integrating the certainty of death” (2004, p. 341). Therefore, expanding death phenomenon for people to understand its psychological intricacies would help humanity to attain meanings of life, suffering, and loss associated with death.

When death occurs in the society, there are varied psychological and emotional reactions that the bereaved experience. These responses depend on the cultural and religious assumptions that form part of the grieving process. Given that there are beliefs and assumptions regarding the process of grieving, Wortman and Silver argue that, “...depression is inevitable following loss; that distress is necessary, and failure to experience it is indicative of pathology; that it is necessary to ‘work through’ or process a loss; and that recovery and resolution are to be expected following loss” (1989, p. 349). Therefore, for people to accept the reality of death and the loss that occur therein, they must pass through the process of grieving to receive psychological and emotional healing.

## **Grieving Process**

Grieving is the process of accepting and acknowledging the reality of death and the loss that has occurred due to death of a loved one in the society. This occurrence is the most crucial process that an individual must undergo for effective resolution of psychological and emotional conflicts associated with the loss.

Attig argues that, “...our lives are woven together with the lives of those we care about and love and we cannot change the event when one of them dies, bereavement challenges us to take constructive action in response” (2004,

p. 242). The process of grieving is constructive response that enables the bereaved to come into terms with the loss and accept that the loss is real and irreversible, hence must continue with their normal lives in spite of the challenges. According to Kubler-Ross Model, denial precedes anger before someone enters into bargaining which leads to depression, but finally one accepts the truth and these are the five stages of grief that the bereaved must undergo during the grieving process. Denying the fact that death of a loved one has occurred is the first stage of grieving that people experience. Friedman and James argue that, " in cases of sudden, unexpected deaths, it's possible that upon receiving the news, a surviving family member may go into emotional shock, during which time they are in a suspended state, totally removed from events in the real world" (2008, p. 39). At this stage, the shocking news of death triggers emotional and psychological responses that throw the bereaved family and friends in a state of disbelief.

Due to the shocking news of death, the bereaved become defensive against reality of death by denying that they have lost the loved one. They perceive that they are in a dream and what they are experiencing is not reality. The experiences of denial and unbelief are short-lived after which reality dawns on the bereaved. When the reality of death dawns on the bereaved, they become angry about the cause of death; this is the second stage of grieving.

At this stage, individuals direct their anger to people who appear to be responsible for the death of their loved one. For example, if death occurred due to accident, the bereaved direct their blame to driver for careless driving, or if death occurred in hospital, they blame the doctors for medical negligence. Grieving is not a passive response to death as Morrow argues <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-leads-to-grieving-due-to-the-diversity/>

that "...we don't simply react passively or automatically to death and bereavement, ...we engage with the loss, come to terms with our reactions to it, reshape our daily life patterns, and redirect our life stories in the light of what has happened" (2009, p. 16). Thus, anger is an active response that tries to attribute and justify the cause of death. The third stage of grieving involves bargaining where the bereaved consult the Supreme Being to bless the deceased and give them hope and strength to cope with the challenging times ahead. At this stage, the bereaved come to terms with the reality of death, and since they are helpless about the loss of loved one, they only look upon the Supreme Being for comfort and encouragement.

After bargaining, the bereaved enter the stage of depression where they experience loss of concentration, weakness, loss of appetite and irregular sleep patterns. Wortman and Silver argue that, " it is widely assumed that a period of depression will occur once the person confronts the reality of his or her loss and that the person must ' work through' or process what has happened in order to recover successfully" (1989, p. 351). In this the stage, resolution of psychological conflicts pertaining to death occurs and proper resolution is critical for healing to be successful. Acceptance of the loss and reality of death is the fifth and the last stage of grieving. Grievers at this stage have undergone denial, anger, bargaining and depression stages, and have finally realized that death and the loss of loved one is a reality that happens in life. The bereaved at this stage begin to perceive death as part of humanity and develop positive perspective about life, which make them to live normal lives despite the great loss they have suffered.

Concerning acceptance, Attig argues that, “ it is about opening ourselves to and making ourselves ready to welcome unexpected possibilities and to pursue meaning down unanticipated pathways” (2004, p. 355). Thus, acceptance is about realizing the meaning of death as an inherent part of life that needs endurance as life goes on in the world.

## **Conclusion**

Death is a mystery that still scares people because no one has ever unraveled its nature and occurrence in the society. Different cultures and religious beliefs have helped people in ascertaining the meaning of life and death, therefore shedding some light to the purpose of life and living. The diversity of beliefs concerning death determines the perception of life and subsequent grieving as a way of defining the nature of life. Thus, life is very complex because death of the loved ones makes people undergo a long period of grieving in a bid to unravel the mystery of death, which causes irreversible loss. According to Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, grieverers undergo five stage process of grieving in order to attain psychological and emotional healing.

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