

## **Effectiveness of Teacher Counsellors in Psychological and Emotional Adjustment of Orphaned Students in Kandara Sub-County, Muranga County, Kenya**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examined the effectiveness of teacher counselors in psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students in public secondary schools in Kandara sub-county, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A targeted population of 1030 orphaned students and 63 teacher counsellors took part in the study. A sample of 103 orphaned students and 7 teacher counselors obtained through purposive stratified and sampling took part in the study. Data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics including means, percentages and frequencies. This was done with the help of SPSS version 23 and presented in charts, tables, percentages, means and frequencies. The study found out that teacher counselors were effective in helping orphaned students to adjust psychologically and emotionally. The study recommended consistency in guidance and counseling services to the orphaned learners as well as refresher courses for teachers to equip them with relevant skills to manage loss and grief among orphaned students.

**Keywords:** orphans, teacher counselors, psychological and emotional adjustment

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **Back ground Information**

United Nations Agency for International Development (2008) provides various global estimates of orphans as ranging between 143 million to 163 million with roughly 90% of those classified as orphans having one living parent. An estimated 18.3 million orphans globally have lost both parents. In addition every day 5760 more children become orphans. United Nations International Children's Fund (2003) indicates that there are over 14 million orphans from various causes of deaths.

The number of orphans has been rising steadily in many African countries. UNICEF (2006) notes that, the number of orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa has been increasing by more than 50% per year since 1990

Over the past few five years, the number of orphans and vulnerable children living in Kenya has been escalating at an alarming rate. In 2004 the number of orphans was estimated to be 1.8 million and by 2009 the number had grown to nearly 2.6 million. In 2010 the number of orphans in Kandara sub-county was estimated to be 960 and by 2011 the number had increased to 1030. An upward trend of orphaned students has been observed in Murang'a County specifically, Kandara sub-county (DEOs office, 2011). This new status substantially affects the student's ability to learn as a result of the psychological and emotional adjustment problems commonly experienced by orphans. Psychological and emotional adjustment problems have been documented as educational issues of concern for centuries thus calling on teachers, pastors and significant others to assist students through guidance and counselling services.

According to Maputo (2001), students experience immense psychological pressure in today's world. For this reason, guidance and counselling services need to be provided in schools to enable the students to adjust psychologically and emotionally in case of any traumatizing occurrence during their schooling life. Egan, (2002) state that the goal of counselling is to reduce psychological disturbances. Some of the approaches that need be adopted to help orphans adjust psychologically and emotionally include; pastoral counselling, psychological and emotional counselling offered by trained and experienced counsellors.

Different countries around the world are addressing psychological and emotional maladjustments problems faced by orphans in a variety of ways. The literature available reveals that, guidance and counselling had gathered momentum in Europe and United States of America by the close of 19th century. Merrill, (1995)

and Weaver, (1992) carried out the systematic work in the field of guidance and counselling. They both reported that, in countries like Britain, counselling was offered in learning institutions in the 1920s and 1930s as a career guidance and service to help young people to adjust to the demands of school life. One of the ways used by some countries is the establishment of guidance and counselling programmes in schools as it is in United States (Gysbers,2004),Hong Kong (Yuen,2002) and Botswana (Navin,1999).These programmes have been structured to respond to orphans' psychological and emotional maladjustments.

In the US, school guidance and counselling program includes psychological services and guidance and counselling services to ensure that there are support services. These services are made available to each student to meet their needs and that educational needs of all students are identified and catered for. Within this, there are obvious opportunities to introduce the concepts of bereavement and grief with differentiated emphasis on issues pertaining to psychological and emotional adjustment (Social Personal and Health Education, 2009). Students are also made to understand the stages of bereavement and loss, including how they might support themselves and each other in times of bereavement (National Christian Council Association, 2006). Department of Education and Science, (2005) reveals that guidance counsellors role has been recognized as a key part of development of the students, in that it enables them to develop coping strategies to deal with stress, personal ,social issues and challenges that life may present.

In Kenya, the need for effective guidance and counselling has been emphasized by various commissions set up by the Government of Kenya since independence. Republic of Kenya (1964) stresses that every child has a right to guidance and counselling services while Ministry Of Education Science and Technology, (2001) and Kamunge, (1993) emphasizes the need for training teachers in guidance and counselling provision as part of their profession. Ministry of Home Affairs, Heritage, and Sports (2002) report further emphasized need for counselling services especially among youths. This implies that guidance and counselling has been recognized as an important programme in Kenyan institutions to assist individuals to adjust psychologically and emotionally. The government of Kenya, therefore, implemented national legislation policies for protection of orphans. Among these policies and action plans was the need for guidance and counselling services which were recognized to play a vital role in assisting the orphans (Government of Kenya, 1998). The intended goal of education is to produce physically, emotionally, psychological, intellectually and socially mature children. Kenya as a signatory, to the United Nations Convention (UN) on the Rights of a Child emphasized guidance and counselling as a means of maintaining sound mental health (MOEST, 2001). Guidance and counselling services are important in enabling orphaned students to adjust psychologically, emotionally and to understand that they are equally important and have a right to live a sound life. Essentially this calls for clear, effective, supportive and progressive policies to deal with the psychological and emotional adjustments of orphans and with the introduction of free formal education in Kenya, orphans are likely to feel abandoned due to over population in classes.

Foster and Williamson (2000) observed that “internalized behaviour changes such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem” are more evident than externalized behaviours in children that are orphaned. The tendency to internalize may be due to their inability to find ways to express their grief adequately. In this respect, effective guidance and counselling services in schools is encouraged to assist orphaned students adjust psychologically and emotionally so as to learn with ease.

Report on man power training and development (Republic of Kenya, 1999), recommends that guidance and counselling in educational institutions should be an active and available service on a daily basis to all students, and should begin at primary school level where children's ability, interests and aptitude can be harnessed well at the initial stages of life. This should be carried on as the student continues with her or his school life to enable her or him, to make his/her choices wisely.

In any education to have a change, teachers are believed to be the change makers (Ertmer, 2005).This means that teachers are able to contribute change in education of orphaned student Effective guidance and counselling services have a positive impact on orphaned students' school life. This impact in turn will have an effect on their life in that it will enable them to live fully adjusted life. It is important to examine effectiveness of guidance and counselling services because the services act as a driving force of change in orphan's life (Corey, 1991). For this reason, this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students in public secondary schools in Kandara sub –county.

Kandara sub-county schools have teachers who have trained in guidance and counselling. These teachers play dual roles in their duties. This leaves us with the question do these orphaned students receive effective guidance and counselling services that effectively enable them adjust psychologically and emotionally?

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The cases of orphaned students in Kandara Sub-county have been on the increase in the last few decades. Orphans often undergo several social, psychological and emotional challenges such as depression, withdrawal, anxiety and low self-esteem, which greatly affect their normal schooling activities as well as their general development (Worden, 1991). Guidance and counselling services should help orphaned students to adjust psychologically and emotionally, maintain sound mental health, be efficient and well integrated persons (Varcarolis, 2006).

A serious case has been made for the establishment of guidance and counselling in secondary schools by the government through the Ministry of Education. Many studies have been carried out on the need for provision of guidance and counselling services in psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students, such as Varcarolis (2006) and Christ (1999) but the role of the teacher counselors and their effectiveness in psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students has not been clearly examined. This study was done with the hope that it would provide insights that would help fill the missing gaps in the teachers role in the psychological and emotional development of orphaned students in Kandara Sub-County.

### Objective of the Study.

The objective of the study was to determine the effectiveness of teacher counsellors in psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students in Kandara sub-county, Muranga county, Kenya.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. According to Ogula (2005) descriptive survey research design is used to collect data in order to analyze and report the current status of the subject of study. Survey design was in this case used to establish the status of the effectiveness of guidance and counseling teachers in the psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students. Rubin and Barbie (2010) assert that surveys designs make more generalized findings, thus the design was appropriate for the study since the researcher sought to obtain information concerning the psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students.

### Location of the Study

The study was carried out in Kandara Sub-County, Kenya. The Sub-county comprises of five educational zones.

### Population of the Study

The population for this study comprised of 1030 orphaned students and 63 teacher counsellors drawn from the five educational zones in Kandara Sub-County, Kenya. Orphaned students participated as the key recipients of guidance and counselling services. Teacher counsellors provide guidance and counselling services hence their participation in the study. Table 1 show number orphans while Table 2, shows the number of teacher counsellors in Kandara Sub-County.

**Table 1:** Number of orphans in Kandara Sub-County

Zone	No. of schools	Orphaned students		
		Boys	Girls	Total
Githumu	15	43	51	94
Ithiru	11	172	218	380
Muruka	11	169	141	310
Kagundu	7	92	77	169
Gaichanjiru	8	29	28	77
Total	52	505	525	1030

Source : Kandara Sub -County office, 2016

Table 2 indicates the population of orphans in Kandara Sub-County Murang'a County as enrolled in each zone. There are 505 orphaned boys and 525 orphaned girls making a total of 1030 orphans. There is a high enrolment of orphans in Ithiru, Muruka and Kagundu zones as seen in the statistics.

**Table 2:**Population of Trained Teacher Counsellors in Kandara Sub-County

Source : Kandara Sub-County Education Office, 2016.

Zone	No. of school	No. of trained teacher counselors
Githumu	15	3
Ithiru	11	17
Muruka	11	20
Kagundu	7	11
Gaichanjiru	8	2
Total	52	63

The number of trained teacher counsellors in the 52 schools within Kandara Sub-County is presented in Table 2.

### Sampling Procedures

Ithiru, Kagundu and Muruka zones in Kandara Sub-County were purposively sampled for the study. This was on the basis of zones with the high number of orphaned students. Out of the purposively sampled zones, all trained teacher counsellors were automatically sampled for the study. Stratified sampling technique was used to sample the orphaned students on basis of gender and classes formed the strata. Stratified sampling yields more reliable and detailed data while ensuring that no sub-population is omitted (Orodho, 2004). The researcher employed stratified sampling technique to sample 65 orphaned boy students and 65 orphaned girl students. This ensured that every orphaned student had an equal chance of participating in the study.

### Sample Size

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) and Gay (2009), recommend a sample size of between 10%--20% of the population. The researcher took 15% of the population which is within the recommended sample size. A study population of 869 orphans was used for the study. Out of this study population, there are 433 boys; the researcher took 15 % of this sample. This gave a sample size of 65 boys. There are 436 girls. The researcher took 15 % of this sample to get a sample size of 65 girls. This gave a total sample of 130 respondents for the study. Out of a sample of 47 trained teacher counsellors, the researcher took 15 % of the total population to get 7 trained teacher counsellors who participated in the study

**Table 3:**Sample size of Orphaned Students

Respondents	Study Population	%
Boys	433	65
Girls	436	65
Total	869	130

The Table 3 shows the purposively sampled distribution of orphaned students. The sample sizes comprised of 65 boys and 65 girls totaling to 130 orphaned students.

**Table 4:** Sample size of Trained Teacher Counsellors

Zone	No. of schools	No. of Teachers
Ithiru	2	2
Muruka	2	3
Kagundu	1	2
Total	5	7

Source: Kandara Sub- County Education Office,2011

Table 4 shows the sample size of trained teacher counsellors. The sample size consisted of 2 teachers in Ithiru zone, 3 teachers in Muruka zone and 2 teachers from Kagundu zone. A sample size of 7 teachers was used.

### Research Instruments

The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from the teacher counsellors and orphaned students. The questionnaire for the orphaned students collected data on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students compare the effectiveness of pastoral counselling and psychological counselling towards emotional and psychological adjustment of orphaned students as well as data on effectiveness of teacher counsellors on psychological and emotional adjustment of

orphaned students. The questionnaire for the teacher counsellors collected data on effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students, comparison of pastoral counselling and psychological counselling as well as effectiveness of teacher counselors on psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students. Questionnaires are advantageous in that they have the ability to yield the most satisfactory range of reliable data. They also provide confidentiality and it gives the respondent time to fill out his/her schedule and they are also easier to administer (Gay, 2009).

#### **Data Collection Procedures**

Prior to data collection, the researcher sought an introductory letter from Masai Mara University and a permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) for authority to conduct the research on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling on psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students in public secondary schools in Kandara Sub – County. The researcher then sought permission to conduct the administration of instruments to the respondents from the education administration protocols in Kandara Sub-County schools included in the study. The researcher personally administered and collect the instrument one at a time to ensure that all the instruments were collected. The respondents were assured of high confidentiality of the information gathered in the study process.

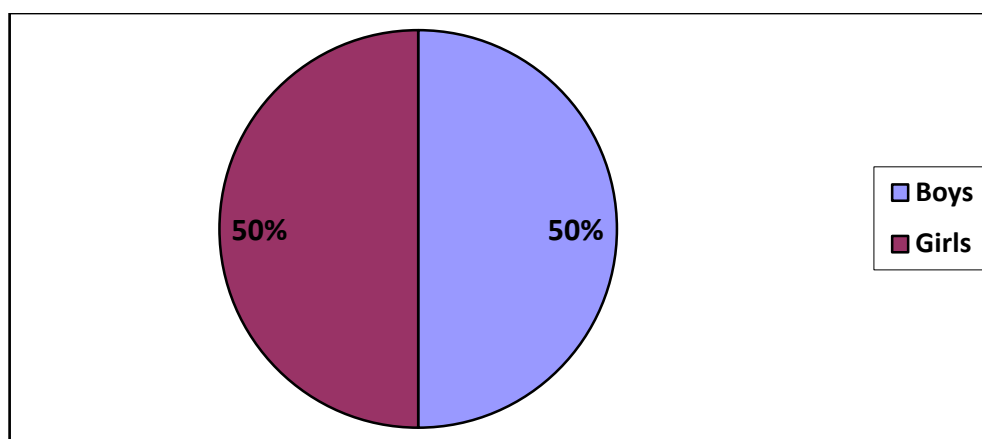
#### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Raw data was edited to correct errors and omissions. According to Kothari (2004) editing involves a careful scrutiny of the completed questionnaires. To ensure data accuracy and consistency with the other gathered information in a uniform manner to enable coding and tabulation. Descriptive statistics including means, percentages and frequencies was used to analyze the data at an alfa level of 0.05. This was done with the help of SPSS version 23 for windows. Gay (2009) observed that developing and analyzing clusters of items related to one issue, make a report of a survey more meaningful and improves reliability of the scores. The data was presented in form of charts, tables and graphs.

### **IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Demographic Information of Respondents**

Respondents of the study comprised male and female students, male and female teacher counsellors. The researcher analyzed their responses hence, the outcomes is presented in figure 1.



*Figure 2.* Gender of the orphaned students

The distribution of the respondents by gender showed that the percentage of male and female students was at 50% owing to the fact they were purposively equally sampled.

#### **Age Bracket of the Students**

Figure 3 indicates that 62.3% of students were in the age bracket of 16-19 years of age brackets with only 7.7% in the over 20 years' age brackets. The 13-15 years of age brackets were 30% students within age bracket require continuous guidance and counselling to help them adjust psychologically and emotionally to the loss of parents. Bereaved children in the age bracket of 13-15years are able comprehend with death of their parents (Christ,1999). In affirming to Christ' assertion Worden, (1991) posits that psychological and emotional adjustment of orphaned students in Kandara need a professionally qualified personnel to help them adjust psychologically and emotionally (Mwangi, 2003).

The researcher notes that orphaned students require guidance and counselling services to help them adjust psychologically and emotionally.

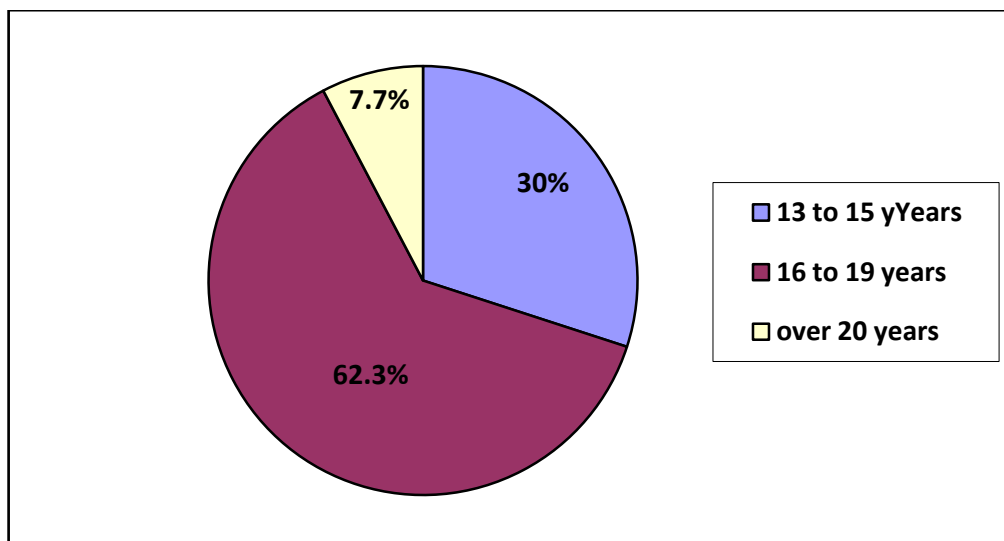


Figure 2 Age Brackets of the orphaned Students

### Student's Duration of Orphan hood

The researcher further established how long the student has been an orphan. The findings are shown in the Table 5.

Table 5: Students' Duration of Orphan Hood

Years	Frequency	Percentage
0-3 years	21	16.2
4-6 years	44	33.8
7-9 years	40	30.8
10 years and above	25	19.2
Total	130	100

Table 5 indicates that majority (33.8%) of the sampled students had been orphaned for 4-6 years followed by 7-9 years at 30.8 % and 10 years and above at 19.2%. 16.2% had been orphaned between 0-3 years. The length of period a student had been orphaned determined the level of psychological and emotional adjustment. Orphaned students who had lost their parents in recent times could still be going through fresh psychological distress as compared to students who were orphaned long time ago.

The researcher also observed that these orphaned students could still be grieving for their deceased parents. This is supported by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2000) who asserted that orphans grieve for their deceased parents and since grieving is a process; some orphans do not stop grieving. Christ, (1999) also posited that physical and emotional functioning of the surviving parent can affect the emotional and psychological adjustment of a child.

### Demographic information of Teacher Counsellors

The teacher counsellors' demographic information included age brackets, years of experience and teachers' level of training. Figure 5 revealed that majority of the teacher counsellors were in the age of 35-44 years and 45-54 years both at 28.6% and 42.9% respectively followed by 25 to 34 years and ages 55 and above representing 14.3 % respectively. These are also teachers who have been in the teaching profession for more than 7-10 years. This means that, these teacher counsellors have vast experience with the students' bereavement problems. Thus they are in a better position to handle psychological and emotional problems in order to assist orphaned students to adjust psychologically and emotionally.

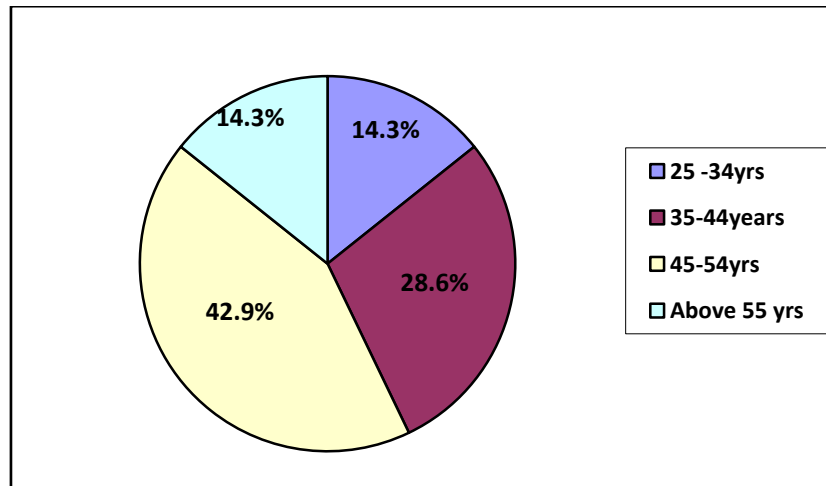


Figure 2: Age Brackets of teachers counselors

### Training Levels of Teacher Counsellors

Figure 3 indicates that the majority (79.5%) of the sampled teachers were actually formally trained in guidance and counselling while the (20.5 %) of teachers had not received formal training in guidance and counselling. This implied that most teachers had been trained on guidance and counselling hence could give skillful, effective and professional guidance and counselling services to the orphaned student to enable them to adjust psychologically and emotionally.

The researcher observed that these teachers who had received guidance and counselling training were in a very good position of providing effective guidance and counselling services. Provision of effective guidance and counselling services would enable orphaned students to actualize the loss by enabling them to talk about it (Wild, 2002). This has also been supported by Worden (1991) who asserts that counsellors have a duty to help orphaned children actualize the loss in order to adjust psychologically and emotionally.

The findings in figure 6 revealed that a majority (40.6%) of the trained teacher counsellors had a degree in guidance and counselling, 28.2% had a certificate or a diploma in guidance and counselling whereas 10.7% had a masters in guidance and counselling. The study notes that most teachers had acquired basic knowledge and techniques in guidance and counselling which they could apply as they provide guidance and counselling services to orphaned students. Kamuli and Kathore, (2003) asserted that the level of training and education for teacher counsellors determines the kind of knowledge, skill or technique they will use to the help orphaned students to adjust psychologically and emotionally.

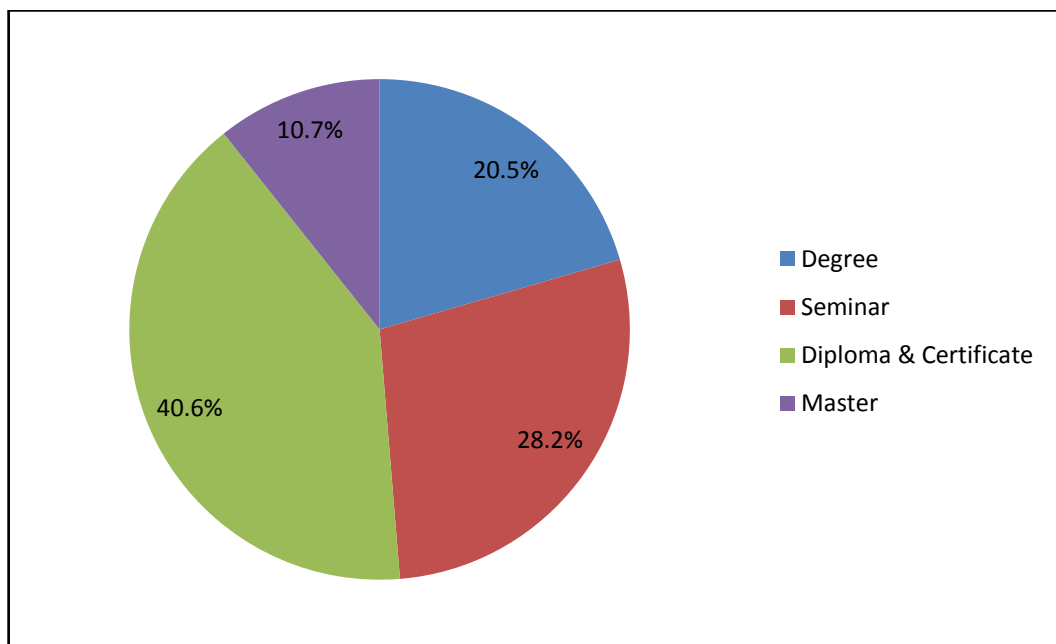


Figure 3. Teachers' Training on Guidance and Counselling

#### 4.2.2 Years of Experience as a Teacher Counsellor

The researcher also sought to establish the years of teachers' experience. The findings are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Years of Experience as a Teacher Counsellor

Category	Frequency	Percent
0 - 5 years	1	14.3
6 - 10 years	2	28.6
10 - 15 years	3	42.9
16 years and above	1	14.3
Total	7	100.0

As shown in Table 6 researcher established that 42.9% of teachers had served as teacher counsellor for the 10-15 years, followed by 6-10 at 28.8% and 0-5 years and those with 16 years both had 14.3 % respectively. The length of service determines a teacher's experience to provide significant experience to provide guidance and counselling to orphaned students in order to help them adjust psychologically and emotionally. Teachers with vast experience are in a better position to enable bereaved students to cope with bereavement more effectively than those who were unexperienced (Sutcliffe, Tufnell and Cornish, 1998).

#### Effectiveness of Teacher Counsellor towards psychological and Emotional Adjustment

The study examined the effectiveness of the teacher Counsellor in conducting guidance and counselling services. The findings are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Effectiveness of teacher counsellor in psychological and emotional a of orphaned students.

Effectiveness of guidance and counselling	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Total
Students who receive information services are more familiar with what is required of themselves as compared to their fellow students	3(42.9)	3(42.9)	1(14.3%)	0	13 (100%)
Orphaned students who attend guidance and counselling services are able to express and cope with their emotions better.	4(57.1)	3(42.9)	0	0	13 (100%)
Students who go for guidance and counselling are able to support their fellow students to cope with loss and grief.	4 (57.1)	2(28.6)	1(14.3)	0	13 (100%)

Table 7 indicates that a majority (71.5%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the fact that orphaned students who came for guidance and counselling seemed well adjusted as compared to their colleagues. Another 42.9% of the sampled teachers strongly agreed and agreed respectively that students who receive information services are more familiar with what is required of themselves as compared to their fellow students. The other 14.3% disagreed to this fact. A greater percentage (100 %) of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed to the item that orphaned students who attended guidance and counselling services were able to express and cope with their emotions better. This finding agrees with Schafer, (2000) that psychologically and emotionally adjusted orphans are capable of living fulfilled lives, use proper ways of communicating their challenges and lead 'normal' lives through the use of effective guidance and counselling services.

The respondents were asked whether students who go for guidance and counselling were able to support their fellow students to cope with loss and grief. A majority 57.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, another 28.6% agreed while only 14.3% strongly disagreed with this item. These findings agrees with Hornby,(2003) argument that teacher counsellors are in an ideal situation to help students and young people with their social and emotional problems since they are with them regularly over a long period of time. Cranwell, (2007) also found out that teacher counsellors has the ability to provide adequate and appropriate support for bereaved students in order to alleviate any potentially negative health related outcomes in the future



## V. CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that guidance and counselling services available helped orphaned students to adjust from loss and grief. Orphaned students who accessed guidance and counselling services were in a better position to cope with grief and loss.

The teacher counsellors were effective in enabling orphaned students to adjust psychologically and emotionally. The training they have undertaken was considered very important in enabling the orphaned students to adjust from loss and grief.

### 5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends the following:-

There is need to ensure consistency of guidance and counseling services in order to increase high levels of psychological and emotional adjustment among the orphans. Teacher counselors need to reach out to orphaned students for psychological counseling services.

The government should implement grief and loss education in schools so as to equip the affected students with knowledge of dealing with loss and grief effectively.

The teacher counsellors need to be given refresher courses on loss and grief management on regular basis so as to enhance their effectiveness in helping the orphaned learners.

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