PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN MITIGATING BEREAVEMENT RISKS: A CASE OF MILLENNIALS IN KENYA'S ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and it has not been presented anywhere else for a degree or any other award in any other University.

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor

Signed…….. Date ……
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Dr. John Kithaka, who has walked with me and given his unwavering support even through the toughest seasons in our lives. To our lovely children, Karen, Calix, and Karlin, you are indeed a precious gift to us. You made a difference in our lives; you gave me a new identity and new meaning to this life.

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Abstract

One of the most painful experiences a parent can face is losing a child, and modern socio-economic difficulties are fuelling family disintegration, complicating the grieving process. It is on the modern reality that this study examined the perception of the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programmes in mitigating bereavement risks among millennials in online support groups in Kenya. The study objectives include to: establish a perception of the benefits of informational support programmes in mitigating bereavement risks; establish the sense of effectiveness of the emotional support programmes helpful in mitigating bereavement risks; find out how useful the instrumental support programmes are in mitigating bereavement risks; and assess strategies useful in enhancing online psychosocial support programmes' use in mitigating bereavement risks among. The study used a mixed-methods design and is grounded in social support and cognitive-behavioural family theories. The target population was 900 members. Stratified sampling technique was used to select a sample of 277 members for the quantitative data while purposive sampling was used to select four group leaders from each participating organization. Quantitative data were analysed using correlation and regression techniques in SPSS version 27, while qualitative data were analysed using Atlas.ti version 15. Descriptive analysis showed a slightly positive view of the benefits of informational support programmes for easing grief. However, regression analysis indicated that the impact of these programmes on bereavement risks was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.008$, $t = -0.09$, $p > .05$). A small majority felt that instrumental support programmes were moderately effective in reducing bereavement risks, but regression analysis showed their influence was also not statistically significant ($\beta = .008$, $t = 0.11$, $p > .05$). In contrast, emotional support programmes had a statistically significant impact on bereavement risk ($\beta = .619$, $t = 5.85$, $p < .01$). Descriptive analysis revealed mixed and generally lower views on the usefulness of emotional support programmes. As for strategies to improve online psychosocial support programmes, the most favoured approach was sharing experiences during online peer support sessions ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.346$). Key themes included the need for organised psychoeducation, professional support systems, and community-integrated help to strengthen online programmes. The study concluded that emotional support programmes were the most effective in reducing bereavement risks among Millennials, while instrumental and informational programmes were less effective. To improve online psychosocial support for bereaved Millennials, there needs to be a focus on developing structured, professionally backed, and community-integrated support systems.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BRAT	Bereavement Risk Assessment Tools
CBFT	Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapy Theory
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
M	Mean
PAC University	Pan African Christian University
PGD	Prolonged Grieving Disorder
SD	Standard Deviation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Operational Definition of Terms

Bereaved Parents: A parent or parents who have faced the loss of an offspring, whether it was their biological child, stepchild, or even an adoptive child (Zhou et al., 2022). Any parent who has experienced loss following the passing of a loved one, in this case, their child, was referred to in this study as a bereaved parent.

Bereavement risks**:** These are the extent to which an individual is negatively predisposed with the accompanying adverse effects attached to the loss of someone dear, especially after death. Bereavement risks also refer to the potential negative psychological, physical, and social consequences that individuals may experience following the loss of a loved one (Pregerson et al., 2022). The study operationalizes bereavement risks as comprising reduced physical health problem, psychological problems, fear (emotional problem), and social stigma, and post-traumatic stress.

Bereavement: According to standard definitions, bereavement is a process that includes all an individual's or family's experiences following the loss of a dear one (Eklund et al., 2021). Bereavement was referred to in this study as the psychological reaction of millennial parents to a child's horrific death.

Child: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a son or daughter who is younger than 18 years old and was either biologically born or adopted, unless other laws that apply to such a child provide otherwise (Santrock, 2021). The term "child" in this study is any person, regardless of his/her age.

Grief is the process of coping with the feelings, effects, and actions brought on by the death of a person or people (Michael & McNeil, 2020). In this instance, grief is defined as a parent's experiences and emotional responses to the loss of their child.

Millennials**:** Individuals born between 1981 and 1996. Millennials were born into a technological world, and a majority became of age in the new millennium. Their families, the technology they used, and the turbulent times they were growing up in all had a significant impact on them during their formative years (Fry, 2020). This term operationalizes Millennials as parents aged 30 – 45 years.

Online emotional support programs: Programs that create a safe space for expressing feelings and receiving empathy, comfort, validation, and encouragement from peers or professionals (Garriot et al., 2023). In this study, it is an umbrella term encompassing online memorials, bereavement support videos, online debriefing programs, peer support telephone calls, and support for health care personnel.

Online informational support programs: Initiatives that provide bereaved individuals with knowledge on the grief process, advice from peers, and resources to help them understand and cope with grief (Holmgren, 2022). In this study, the term refers to online resources, grief support packages, and virtual memories.

Online instrumental support programs: Help that provides practical assistance, such as referral support to available professionals, provides access to practical coping tools such as checklists, plans, routines, service coordination, or material resources to help in coping with loss and associated grief, to help manage daily tasks during bereavement (Klarare et al., 2020). In this study, the term refers to financial aid, food donation, and other forms of material support accessible to support group members.

Online Psychosocial support programs: These are digital interventions that provide emotional, psychological, and social support through virtual platforms, such as websites, mobile applications, and telehealth services. These programs typically offer a range of services, including individual counselling, group therapy, peer support, and self-help resources (Wind & Riper, 2020). The present study

operationalizes online psychosocial support programs as proposed by Wind and Riper (2020).

Parents*:* Any person who oversees the raising of a child, whether biological, stepchild, or adopted, falls under this category. Parents are the primary caregivers of their children, responsible for their upbringing, care, and development (Bornstein, 2022). The study operationalises parents as people born between 1981 and 1996 who are taking care of biological children, stepchildren, and adopted children.

Support groups: A group of people who have covenanted to support each other in achieving agreed common goals (Vickery, 2022). This study operationalizes support groups as groups of people who have come together to support one another during adverse situations, such as bereavement.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Chapter one lays the groundwork for this investigation by introducing bereavement risks, the main variable of the study, and exploring the role of online psychosocial support programs in addressing it. It also provides an overview of the study's core components, including the statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, research questions, and assumptions that frame the research. Additionally, it discusses the justification and significance of the study, as well as its scope. It explains the limitations, and delimitations, providing a comprehensive overview of its structure. The chapter concludes with a summary, setting the stage for the subsequent discussion on the theoretical framework and literature review.

Background to Study

Parents face profound existential losses, especially when they experience the death of a child, resulting in intense bereavement. This loss is incredibly painful and can be psychologically devastating, with sorrow often being the dominant emotional response (Zhou et al., 2022). As highlighted by Buur et al. (2024), bereavement risks can result in a range of risks for affected individuals, including complicated grief, depression, anxiety, social isolation, and even physical health issues. Bereavement is defined as the personal experience of having lost someone significant to death (MacArthur et al. (2023). Studies indicate that bereavement can lead to severe psychological risks and consequences, such as depression, anxiety, and prolonged grief disorder, which may manifest through various cognitive, social, behavioural, and physical outcomes (Uchida et al., 2022).

Bereavement risks could be seen as the process of grieving and mourning the loss of a loved one, which inherently involves a variety of emotional, psychological,

physical, and social challenges (McNeil et al., 2021). The authors outline that the Prolonged Grieving Disorder (PGD) is characterized by prolonged mourning, including a strong desire for and obsession with the departed, emotional anguish, and impairment in daily functioning, often lasting for six months or more (Killikelly et al., 2025). If not effectively addressed, these challenges can escalate into more severe and long-term conditions, such as PGD. Furthermore, unresolved grief can lead to emotional, psychological, and physical health complications, contributing to a broader societal burden (Killikelly et al., 2025). It may also impair an individual's ability to function socially and professionally, leading to further personal and community-level impacts (Schmidt, 2023).

Psychosocial support in grief entails being present, spending time with the grieving individual, listening to their narratives without judgment, and honouring the deceased loved one through reminiscing and openly using their name. It also involves refraining from imposing time limits on the grieving process (Ciupak & Smith, 2025). Based on this understanding, therapists have developed various supportive interventions, delivered in individual or group formats, to prevent grief-related complications (Kim et al., 2025). However, according to Wagner et al. (2022), efforts to improve accessibility, quality, and integration with traditional support systems are challenging to maximize their effectiveness and reach. This limitation often hinders the effectiveness and reaches of psychosocial support programs, potentially impeding the healing and recovery process for the bereaved.

According to Arias and Xu (2022), more than 50,000 children in the United States die each year, leaving their parents with profound emotional distress. The researcher also indicated that bereaved parents, particularly mothers, face a heightened risk of first-time psychiatric hospitalization, with this risk remaining

significantly higher for mothers even five years after the child's death compared to fathers. Further studies have revealed that parents continue to think about their child's death daily, even three to four years post-loss (Alimohamadi et al., 2024). Therefore, ongoing psychosocial support can help these parents develop resilience in the face of stigma. Support groups, therapy, and community interventions play a crucial role in helping bereaved parents navigate their grief and rebuild their lives (Ronad, 2026).).

In Africa, Djelantik et al. (2022) report that over half of the global 2.6 million annual infant deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa, primarily due to complications during childbirth. This region has an average infant mortality rate eight times higher than that of higher-income countries. Bereaved parents may feel abandoned and even contemplate death to escape their profound psychological pain (Yahaya et al., 2024). The death of a child profoundly impacts parents, leading to severe psychological distress and emotional turmoil. Psychosocial support may provide a safe space for parents to express their grief and emotions without judgment. This validation helps them feel understood and accepted, reducing feelings of isolation that often accompany stigma associated with the death of a child. Looking at the perspective of Sub-Saharan Africa, losing a child is one of the most depressing and painful life experiences among parents, often leading to ill health and diminished social engagement (Jena et al., 2025).

At the same time, in Kenya, Ng'ang'a (2021) carried out a study on the role of feedback in enhancing user engagement in online mental health interventions. The study established that parents in Kenya, particularly those who experienced the loss of a child, often endured prolonged and severe depressive symptoms that persisted for years. The grief associated with such traumatic losses was profound, leading to recurrent intrusive thoughts, vivid flashbacks, and overwhelming anxiety. Another

study by Kathomi et al. (2022) on culturally responsive bereavement counselling in Kenya highlights that post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and bereavement can increase the risk of suicidal crises and self-harm behaviours. These kinds of bereavement risks are quite grave and require a solid mitigation plan. Recognizing these bereavement risks is crucial for developing effective support systems to help individuals manage the complexities of grief.

Community support, professional counselling, and culturally sensitive practices play vital roles in assisting bereaved parents in coping with their loss and rebuilding their lives (Njeru et al., 2026). Online psychosocial support programs can also provide a safe space for parents to express grief, share experiences, and receive psychological support. However, access to these services remains limited in parts of Kenya. Millennials are increasingly using online support platforms to navigate bereavement after losing a child (Omunyin, 2024). However, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the perception of Millennials in Kenya on the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in dealing with bereavement. It is against this background that the current study seeks to explore participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating the risks of bereavement, drawing on participants from Still a Mom, Zuri Nzilani Foundations, Lari Support Group, and Psych-Rescue.

The following online grief support groups have been actively supporting parents in Kenya who are grieving the loss of their children. Still a Mum is a nonprofit organization that runs an online program supporting parents who have experienced preterm and infant loss (Atkins et al., 2023) (https://www.facebook.com/stillamum/). Zuri Nzilani Foundation is a Kenyan organization that teaches expectant women about the possible dangers of high blood

pressure during pregnancy and supports women who have gone through preterm and infant loss (https://zurinzilanifoundation.org/). Psych-Rescue is a nonprofit organization that focuses on perinatal mental health, baby loss support, and mental health advocacy (https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=psych-rescue). Lari Support Group, on the other hand, is a community-based group that encourages older Christian women to mentor younger counterparts on motherhood (Bludworth, 2024). It focuses on motherhood and offering support to young widows and women grieving the loss of a child, to help such parents navigate the grieving process after the loss of a loved one.

Statement of the Problem

Millennials in Kenya grew up in a period of relative social stability, where families and communities support each other during grief (Kathuri-Ogola & Kabaria-Muriithi, 2024). By the time they got into adulthood, economic difficulties disrupted community, physical, and social bonds, as people started migrating to different parts of the country, with some migrating outside the country. Again, millennials are raising children and taking care of old parents, bearing the most burden when they lose a member of the community. As a result, Kyalo et al. (2024) noted that millennials in Kenya spend prolonged periods with grief-related psychological problems, such as depression, more than ever before. That prolonged grief among millennials, who are forced into an individualistic rather than a collectivist culture, is dangerous is shown by a study in the USA (an individualistic culture), where it is estimated that 20.4% of adults suffered from prolonged grief, exposing them to physical, mental and emotional health complications (King & Carter, 2022). The study added that this is more than 10% of the global average of prolonged grieving. In realisation of the void left by the dwindling physical support, online/social media

grieving support is slowly being adopted, especially in burn centres. While social media now serves as an important platform for expressing grief, there remains limited research on the effectiveness of these online psychosocial support programmes in the Kenyan context. The lack of understanding of the perceived effectiveness of these platforms creates a gap in designing responsive, relevant bereavement support for this demographic. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the perception of the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programmes in mitigating bereavement risks as a case study of Millennials in online support groups in Kenya.

Studies where online psychosocial support programs have been used are limited. For example, Muriithi (2023) focused on psychology as a tool for psychoeducation for supporting students having psychological problems. The descriptive study design established, which was conducted using 120 students, found that only 9% of the participants utilised online resources to address depression. Similarly, guided by phenomenological study design, Gitonga and Muthoni (2026) explored online life stories as a tool for helping young people overcome suicidal ideation. The study, which was conducted using 15 people aged between 17 and 26 years, found that online counselling programmes helped the youth to freely share their suicidal ideation without the fear of stigma and isolation. Thus, the two highlighted studies have focused on online programmes as tools for counselling; thus, the findings may not be used in modelling mitigation for bereavement risks among millennials.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in online support groups in Kenya. The study investigated psychosocial programs through the lens of informational, emotional, and instrumental support.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the various bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya.
2. To examine the influence of the effectiveness of informational support programs on bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya.
3. To evaluate the influence of the effectiveness of emotional support programs on bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya.
4. To investigate the influence of the effectiveness of instrumental support programs on bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya.
5. To establish the influence of strategies that enhance the utilization of online psychosocial support programs on bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya.

Research Questions

1. What are the various bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya?
2. What ~~is~~ are the benefits of informational support programs useful in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya?
3. To what extent are emotional support programs as effective in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya?

4. How useful are the instrumental support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya?
5. What strategies can enhance the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in online child loss support groups in Kenya?

Assumptions of the Study

The study assumed that the participants recruited from Still a Mom, Zuri Nzilani Foundation, Lari Support Group, and Psych-Rescue used online psychosocial support programmes to mitigate bereavement risks. Specifically, the study presumed that the participants used informational support programmes, emotional support programmes and instrumental support programmes to mitigate bereavement risks. The study assumed that the participants' strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of the online support programmes would mitigate bereavement risks. It was also assumed that the participants were honest. These assumptions foregrounds the justification for having undertaken the study.

Justification of the Study

Millennials are a unique generational cohort who have experienced both the pre-digital and digital eras (Lissitsa, 2025). Their life is shaped by a fast-paced, technology-driven lifestyle that limits the time for meaningful social interactions more than that of the previous generation. Meanwhile, technology presents new opportunities for social connection by enabling access to diverse online content and communities, often extending beyond traditional support networks and geographical boundaries (Nah et al., 2021). For this reason, in the context of grief, online psychosocial support programs remain a viable option for compensating for the loss. Understanding how Millennials perceive and engage with online psychosocial support

programs, especially in the context of child loss, is therefore essential to ensuring that these interventions are both relevant and effective.

The need to establish effective and accessible tools of interventions has been explored largely within the physical platform. However, increasing population mobility, driven by the search for better opportunities, has weakened the traditional family and social structures that typically offer support during grief. This shift underscores the need to explore alternative support models, particularly through online platforms (Omunyin, 2024). The adoption of digital tools and platforms across various domains can offer significant advantages, including convenience and accessibility (Smith et al., 2022). If these interventions are explored, they could provide a vital solution to the anguish experienced by those who currently lack access to physical or digital intervention platforms, as highlighted by Johnson and Lee (2021).

Despite the growing availability of online psychosocial support programs, there are still important gaps in the literature on online bereavement support. Much of the existing research on grief interventions focuses on structured therapeutic or clinically guided approaches. In contrast, less attention has been given to peer-based online support communities (Finucane et al., 2024). However, online platforms have increasingly become spaces where bereaved individuals can share experiences, receive empathy, and get practical coping advice from others facing similar losses. Additionally, many studies examine only single aspects of social support rather than how different types of support interact in online environments.

Significance of the Study

Still a Mom, Zuri Nzilani Foundation, Lari Support Group, and Psych-Rescue were formed with the objective of enabling their members to support each other

through difficult times, including grief. The organisations have largely been responding to the need and the fact that economic pressure has largely disintegrated the social connection people had by introducing online psychosocial support programs to help their members manage risks. The fact that the study demonstrated that online psychosocial support programmes, especially emotional support, were effective in mitigating bereavement risks among them suggests the organisations may use the findings to manage bereavement risks.

The adaptation of online counselling and therapeutic programs is not as successful in Africa compared to the developed world (Choga & Ganya, 2025). The cautious approach is informed by the fact that Africans thrive on relationships; thus, counselling programmes which do not include physical contact are avoided. This study has proved the online counselling programmes are viable platforms for delivering therapeutic support for needy people. Again, with the social disruption brought about by economic difficulties and the opportunity provided by the internet, this study encourages counsellors to develop therapeutic programmes that are custom-made for mitigating bereavement risks. For this specific study, counsellors may use the evidence to improve online psychosocial support programmes in order to reduce bereavement risks among Millennials in online support groups. Future academicians may also exploit the gaps in this study to advance future knowledge. For one, the current study limited itself to millennials, thus future researchers may want to focus on other generations who have unique grieving needs which can be address through online therapy.

Scope of the Study

The study explored perceptions of the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating the risks of bereavement. This study explored

participants' perceptions of the benefits of informational support programs, the perceived effectiveness of emotional support programs, and the usefulness of instrumental support programs in mitigating the risks of bereavement. The study also assessed strategies for enhancing online psychosocial support programs to mitigate bereavement risks among Millennials. This means the study was limited to examining online psychosocial support programs specifically focused on mitigating bereavement risks within the scope of the four study variables. The psychosocial support programs are considered exclusively related to bereavement.

The study specifically targeted Millennials in four online support groups in Kenya. These are: Still a Mom, Zuri Nzilani Foundations, Lari Support Group, and Psych-Rescue. These psychosocial support programs are specifically for parents who have experienced miscarriage, stillbirth, and child loss at any age. As such, organizations that provide in-person grief support, such as churches and other community groups, were not included. By focusing on these groups, the study aimed to generate context-specific insights that can inform the development of more responsive and effective digital bereavement support for grieving Millennials in Kenya.

This study focused exclusively on Millennials who are grieving the loss of children and who are receiving support from the four identified online support programs. The Millennial population is considered suitable for this research because they are actively engaged in parenting and represent the most active demographic in online communities addressing perinatal and infant loss in contemporary Kenyan society. As such, the study excluded all other age groups, as well as individuals grieving other types of losses, such as the death of extended family members or friends. Additionally, only cases where grief support is provided through online

platforms within the selected organizations were considered. This focus ensured that the study remained specific, relevant, and aligned with its core objective: understanding online bereavement support among grieving Millennial parents in Kenya.

Limitations

Pilcher and Cortazzi (2024) define limitation as the constraints and factors that may affect the validity and generalizability of the study's findings. The study was anchored on a convergent-parallel mixed-method design. This means the study was limited to the simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, which may not capture evolving experiences over time. This approach also restricts the study to self-reported data from selected online support groups, thus limiting the generalizability of findings to offline contexts. Another limitation might be financial constraints in organizing online interviews and reaching participants. This was countered by encouraging the respondents to participate voluntarily. In case of an intellectual barrier due to the respondent’s inability to interpret the content of the research instruments correctly, the researcher invited a research assistant who was with the respondents to clarify and explain the questions respondents were asking during the interview.

Methodologically, many studies rely on clinical samples or intervention-based designs. This leaves fewer studies that explore participants' real experiences in peer-led online psychosocial support groups. Moreover, most researches have taken place in Western contexts, with minimal focus on African settings or on millennial parents grieving the loss of a child. This study addresses these gaps by examining how emotional, informational, and instrumental support in online child-loss communities in Kenya helps reduce bereavement risks among millennials.

Delimitation of the Study

Building on these considerations, it is essential to define the study's boundaries clearly. Nind (2021) describes delimitation as the set of parameters established by the researcher to determine the scope of the study. In this context, the study focused exclusively on millennials accessing online psychological support groups in Kenya, excluding groups based in other countries, even if they include Kenyan members. Furthermore, only Millennials, defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996, who have participated in online psychosocial support programs for bereavement, were included, thereby excluding older and younger generations. The study acknowledges that Millennials are not the only people who find support from online platforms. Nonetheless, the study was limited to grieving Millennials being supported through online support groups. However, Millennials are privileged because part of their lives was lived pre-online, and the second part was lived during the explosion of online platforms (Gurunathan & Lakshmi, 2023).

To facilitate the study, the researcher has conceptualized psychosocial support as including informational, emotional, and instrumental support programs. The study is also theoretically delimited to Social Support Theory and Cognitive Behavioural Family Theory. The two theories together provide a focused lens for understanding how emotional, informational, and instrumental support delivered through online platforms influences coping mechanisms among bereaved Millennials. However, the study acknowledges that psychosocial support programs are not limited to the four mentioned. The study acknowledges that psychosocial support may extend beyond selected theoretical frameworks.

Chapter Summary

The chapter focused on the background of the study to help the reader to understand grief in general and its impact on the individuals affected. The chapter also identified the research problem, presented the study's intended purpose, research objective, and research questions. In addition, the chapter explained the study's assumptions, justification, scope, and delimitations. The next chapter reviews relevant literature related to the research questions and presents the research gap and conceptual framework.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presents a literature review of studies conducted on the phenomenon under investigation. The chapter begins with a critical review of the empirical literature. Specifically, the review covers informational support programs, emotional support, instrumental support programs, and strategies for enhancing online psychosocial support programs in mitigating physical, social, and psychological child loss bereavement risks among the Millennials. The chapter also discusses theories underpinning the study. Finally, the study's conceptual framework is illustrated in a diagram.

General Literature Review

Online psychological support refers to actions that address the social and psychological needs of individuals, families, and communities through online platforms (Weber et al., 2020). Psychosocial support facilitates the repair of social infrastructure and cohesion by upholding individuals' and groups' autonomy, dignity, and coping strategies. It seeks to support people in their recovery from a catastrophe that has upended their lives and to improve their capacity to recover and resume normalcy following unfavorable experiences (Prewitt, 2024). In the context of bereavement, such support can play a crucial role in helping individuals' process grief, particularly when traditional, in-person support systems are unavailable. As digital platforms become more integrated into daily life, understanding their effectiveness in addressing grief-related challenges becomes increasingly important.

Online psychological support becomes particularly vital in the context of child loss, offering bereaved parents accessible avenues for expressing grief, finding peer support, and receiving professional counselling without geographical limitations

(Pelacho-Rios & Bernabe-Valero, 2023). Such platforms can play a critical role in helping grieving families to process trauma, rebuild emotional resilience, and navigate the long-term journey of healing after the profound loss of a child (Lenferink et al., 2021). They also help create a safe space for grieving parents to vent their experiences without fear of stigma, making them feel valued and validated (Wray et al., 2022). Online platforms are particularly significant in cultures that discourage open expression of grief by providing the much-needed privacy and emotional freedom (Qureshi et al., 2024). Furthermore, they allow grieving parents to access continuous, on-demand access to support during times of emotional distress when immediate help is needed.

Bereavement after the loss of a child by a parent makes parents face deep psychological challenges in adjusting to their grief over time. It is acknowledged that losing a child significantly upsets and challenges the usual sequence of parents' events in life. There is therefore a need for an effective, well-tested intervention system. Li et al. (2021) in their study in the USA postulate that there are high rates of stress, anxiety, depression, complicated grief, mood disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder in parents whose children passed away suddenly and unexpectedly. However, some parents may gradually adapt to life after their loved one's death (Maier & Lachman, 2020). The differing outcomes are due to context-specific interventions to address varying grief trajectories.

Guldin and Leget (2023) assert that bereavement risk is the process of grieving and mourning a loved one, involving a range of emotional, psychological, physical, and social challenges. The complexity of bereavement is shaped by the individual's response to loss, which can manifest in various forms (Testoni et al., 2020). These bereavement risks can be assessed through physical indicators such as fatigue and

sleep disturbances, psychological indicators like anxiety and depression, and social indicators such as isolation or withdrawal. If the conditions are not addressed, they can lead to prolonged grief, exposing grieving individuals to grief disorder or other long-term mental health conditions (Al-Beltagi et al., 2025). Understanding these dimensions is essential for designing effective support interventions tailored to the needs of the bereaved.

Understanding and addressing the diverse needs of bereaved parents is crucial for promoting healing and resilience in the face of such devastating loss (Pelacho-Rios & Bernabe-Valero, 2022). Toomey et al. (2025) postulates that there is a strong link between the loss of a child and signs of psychosocial discomfort, anxiety, and depression, as well as heightened grieving in comparison to losing other family members. Wray et al. (2026) holds that psychosocial support can help grieving parents from child loss to adapt and cope with the stigma associated with child loss. While the journey through grief is highly individual, access to comprehensive support and resources can significantly mitigate these risks and help parents navigate their loss (Anuyah et al., 2023). However, assessing the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks to the parents involves examining several key factors

Building on this foundation, technology plays a pivotal role in modern society, particularly as a widely utilized tool for communication. Web-based bereavement care has emerged as an effective resource for individuals coping with grief (Wagner et al., 2020). In this study, the focus was on online psychosocial support programs, specifically informational support programs, emotional support programs, and instrumental support programs, and their role in mitigating the physical, social, and psychological child loss bereavement risks among Millennials in online psychosocial

support groups. These programs offer accessible, flexible, and timely support options that align with Millennials' digital habits (Schoonover et al., 2022). By evaluating their perceived effectiveness, the study seeks to contribute to the growing discourse on digital mental health interventions in grief care.

Rheingold et al. (2024) conducted a study examining grief and mental health outcomes within the community in the United States of America (USA), highlighting the numerous challenges that parents encounter, which profoundly impact their psychological well-being. For many parents, the death of a child encompasses various losses, including the loss of social connections, marital instability, and stigma from their cultural communities. The study found that parents experience difficulties in connecting with others and adapting to change, which further complicates the grieving process and contributes to prolonged distress (Yadav & Dubey, 2025). Similarly, Abdelhamid et al. (2023) reports that, in developed nations like Germany, the loss of a child presents an intensely painful experience for parents. These studies collectively suggest that child loss creates complex and multifaceted grief experiences that often require targeted psychosocial support interventions to mitigate long-term mental health consequences.

The traditional African social life has been disrupted by urbanisation and the growing pressure for individuals to seek employment in different regions or abroad (Smith, 2023). Consequently, technology, much like in Western societies, has emerged as a vital tool for mourning and grief support (Maviza & Thebe, 2025). Online psychosocial support programs are digital platforms designed to provide emotional and psychological support to individuals experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one (Zuelke et al., 2021). These programs may provide educational resources, including articles and webinars, to help bereaved parents understand the grieving

process and develop effective psychosocial coping strategies (Werntz et al., 2023). Online psychosocial support programs, such as informational, emotional, and instrumental support, may be offered as a variety of services, including online counselling, support groups, forums, and resources aimed at helping individuals cope with their loss (Leah et al., 2024).

McNeil et al.'s (2022) study on the psychological impact of child loss on parents in Malawi found that about 70% of parents have experienced grief from child loss, with around 9% meeting the criteria for complicated grief, the bereaved parents are faced with an elevated risk of developing other psychiatric disorders. This can escalate into a major mental health crisis, highlighting the urgent need for timely psychosocial interventions. Without effective support mechanisms, victims remain highly vulnerable. Therefore, it is necessary to subject intervention strategies to systematic research to verify their effectiveness. Traditional in-person counselling and support groups are often inaccessible and insufficient for addressing the grief needs of this population, prompting a shift toward online psychosocial support programs, designed to assist individuals coping with various emotional and psychological challenges (Njeru at al., 2026). This is complicated by the fact that the African model of mourning is no longer tenable due to cultural mixing and the modern economic model, which encourages migration, leaving individuals alienated from their community (Haider & Zaman, 2022). Bereaved parents also face a higher risk of developing psychiatric disorders, highlighting the necessity for effective preventive interventions. Comprehensive psychosocial interventions are essential to promote retention in care and foster resilience through self-care practices and positive coping strategies.

Bereavement, especially in the millennial demographic, represents a significant concern in Kenya, as this group experiences unique stressors and coping mechanisms (King & Carter, 2022). Where traditional support systems are often constrained by geographical and social factors, online informational, emotional, and instrumental support programs in Kenya have become an alternative avenue for providing psychosocial assistance (Mbuthia et al., 2022). However, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the perception of the effectiveness of these online support programs in addressing bereavement risks specifically among Millennials in Kenya. This knowledge gap hampers the development of customized empirically supported interventions for this demographic. Therefore, it is essential to explore how Millennials perceive and interact with these digital support mechanisms to enhance their relevance and impact.

In Kenya, Mugo and Muthoni (2020) conducted a study on the role of mobile technology in enhancing healthcare service delivery in rural Kenya. The study used a cross-sectional research design. The results showed that mobile phone technology improved subscribers' access to health services and affected the delivery of health services. The researcher recommended that the Kenyan government equip healthcare facilities and hospitals with mobile devices, including internet-enabled communication devices, to connect providers with patients and provide free health information. Interactive features allow users to connect with others experiencing similar losses, which is crucial for Millennials who may seek emotional support outside traditional office hours. The study by Mugo and Muthoni (2020) only focused on the incorporation of mobile technology into healthcare services, not on reducing the risk of bereavement among Millennials.

Types of Bereavement Risks

Parents' Psychosomatic Illness. Losing a child affects the parents so much so that they suffer from deteriorating health that is associated with more illnesses and deaths. Parents suffering from the death of a child often become unwell, with some evidence pointing to an increased prevalence of illnesses such as hypertension and autoimmune disorders (Pelacho-Rios et al., 2022). It has been evidenced that parents who have lost their children are more frequent attendees of healthcare services and report higher days taken off work than parents who have not lost a child (Birgisdóttir et al., 2023). This not only influences their physical and psychological health but also places additional pressure on the healthcare infrastructure and economic productivity. Identifying and considering these effects is central to designing effective psychosocial support interventions for bereaved parents.

The stress caused by the death of the child may lower the parents' immunity, making them vulnerable to further health complications or to behaviours which are detrimental to health, such as substance misuse and poor hygiene (Dias et al., 2021). Besides, parents who have lost a child have high chances of dying at an early age, particularly among women and parents who lose their children in violent circumstances (Kochen et al., 2020). From these results, it is easy to understand why bereaved parents have high levels of stress and need several different interventions. From these results, it is apparent that bereaving parents experience elevated stress levels and require a variety of tailored interventions. Without adequate support, the compounded psychological and physical strain can significantly impair their overall quality of life and long-term well-being.

Psychological Health and Well-Being. The loss of a child is a deeply traumatic experience for parents, significantly impacting their psychological well-

being. Parents who experience the death of a child often undergo prolonged complex grief, which can include symptoms such as yearning for the deceased child, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Dias et al., 2021). A study on parental grief conducted by Birgisdóttir et al. (2023) revealed that six months after the death of their child, 60% of parents continued to show signs of complicated grief, with 40% of them still exhibiting these symptoms even 18 months later. This extended psychological distress can hamper day-to-day functioning and drain relationships within the family and community. Therefore, apt and suitable psychosocial support is critical to help bereaved parents circumnavigate the long-term emotional repercussions of child loss.

Psychologically, the consequences are so severe for mothers to the extent of increased medical care-seeking habits and a probable risk of psychiatric admission (Dutta et al., 2022). These findings suggest a more acute problem, as overwhelming feelings among such parents have been shown to interact with assistive technologies aimed at addressing the parents' grief (Kochen et al., 2020). This study, therefore, endeavoured to examine how online psychological programs have been useful in mitigating psychological risks and overall parental well-being. Consequently, this study examined how online psychological support programs have been valuable in mitigating these psychological risks and improving overall parental well-being. By concentrating on the lived experiences of bereaved parents, the study intends to inform more responsive, tech-enabled interventions tailored to their unique needs.

Parental Mortality. The death of a child is one of the most significant public health problems faced by parents. Recent research suggests that bereaved parents in general are at an increased risk of mortality, especially during the first years following the child's death. A recent meta-analysis confirmed that losing a child increased the

risk of dying compared to individuals who were parents but did not experience this loss (40% higher odds; Pelacho-Rios et al., 2022). Such elevated risk can be associated with burdens of protracted grief, depression and stress-related health problems (Huo et al., 2023). The study of these dynamics is essential for the development of targeted interventions to best support bereaved parents (Ainscough et al., 2022).

Social Well-Being and Parental Functioning. Parental social well-being and functioning are other areas that are severely affected after the loss of a child, posing great psychological distress to the parents and altering the structure of the family. Ainscough et al. (2022) contend that early in the grieving process, parents seem to be bereaved with insufficient social support around them, leading to more psychological trauma and other issues. Empirical evidence supports that this is especially the case for mothers as caregivers because they, in most instances, shoulder more emotional strain than fathers (Huo et al., 2023). Furthermore, the loss challenges couples' relationships, as many report- an increase in divorce rates and, subsequently, family disorganization (Zhao et al., 2020). Addressing these issues with appropriate support services is important for improving parents' mental health in the future (Li et al., 2021).

Millennial Parents

Millennials is a name often attached to Generation Y, the population following Generation X and before Generation Z. This generation includes people born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s (Lucero et al., 2022). This generation category is known to prioritize mental well-being relative to others by seeking purpose-oriented employment, often working remotely for relationships and community, with a focus on social and ethical purposes (King & Carter, 2022). They are also more open to

discussing emotional struggles and are likely to engage with digital mental health resources (Woernder et al., 2022). As digital natives, Millennials are uniquely positioned to benefit from online psychosocial support systems, especially during periods of emotional distress such as bereavement.

Tucciarone (2021) established that the millennial generation assumes the responsibilities of post-adult life sooner but faces different challenges due to limited financial growth and changing family and career structures in the environment. Furthermore, the research explains that the younger generations are also found looking for psycho-social support services using online platforms due to the need for mental health services (Naslund et al., 2020). These programs sometimes incorporate evidence-based practices (e.g., treatment for bereaved millennial parents) that target and enhance specific behavioural and emotional areas of concern (Huo et al., 2023). In the same way, internet support groups are noted to also assist with feelings of isolation and improve the ability to cope with bereavement (Alcón Nájera et al., 2023). Considering the current trends in the use of technology in addressing the mental health needs of bereaved Millennials, these resources are, however, indispensable.

Empirical Literature Review

This section reviews empirical, evidence-based literature relevant to studies conducted in similar contexts. The review is structured according to the study's research objectives. The first objective, synthesizing literature informing the perception of the benefits of informational support programs, is useful in mitigating bereavement risks. The second objective examines literature confirming the effectiveness of the emotional support programs helpful in mitigating bereavement risks. The third objective explores studies on the usefulness of instrumental support

programs in mitigating bereavement risks. Finally, the last objective discusses useful strategies for enhancing online psychosocial support programs to mitigate bereavement risk.

Empirical Literature Review

This section discusses empirical literature underpinning the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks. The section is organized into four areas: online informational support programs, online emotional support programs, and instrumental support programs, all of which aim to mitigate bereavement risks. The last part of the section synthesizes literature informing strategies that enhance online psychosocial support programs for mitigating bereavement risks.

Informational Support Programs in Mitigating Bereavement Risks

Informational support involves providing guidance to the bereaved, helping them make decisions ranging from raising burial support to procuring services and settling a will (Plaud & Urien, 2022). The objective of informational support is to provide clarity and direction, thereby reducing confusion and potential loss in such situations (Barnard et al., 2025). Informational support is particularly important to the grieved, as they may not have the emotional energy to collect and process information (Tkáčová, 2024). It also goes deeper, as it helps resolve issues that would otherwise be difficult to deal with (Korai et al., 2022). It therefore removes uncertainty and anxiety, making the grieved confident and empowered, albeit with their loss (Pelacho-Ríos et al., 2025).

In the USA, Holmgren (2022) conducted a mixed-methods study involving 350 households that had lost a parent to assess the use of online psychological support among individuals experiencing grief. The study findings revealed that these families

utilized grief support packages, including information letters and online peer support networking groups, particularly by sharing virtual autobiographies in discussion forums. These findings underscore the potential of online platforms in providing accessible and meaningful support for individuals navigating grief. Participants reported that these groups provided them with valuable information about available support resources and services. The study acknowledged peer support as one of the various forms of online psychosocial support services used as a coping strategy to mitigate the risks associated with bereavement. The findings were validated by Näppä and Björkman-Randström (2020) who noted that online informational support helped in alleviating grief. However, it is important to note that Holmgren (2022) explored specifically the loss of maternal parents, rather than child death, which is the primary objective of this current research.

Longest and Kang's (2022) research also focused on young adults aged 18-25 in the U.S., examining how social media use and online informational support influenced their grief during the COVID-19 pandemic. The methodology involved a mixed-methods approach with surveys and interviews to assess the use of online support programs and their effect on mental health, specifically depression. A sample of 350 young adults was selected using stratified random sampling. The study found that while online informational support programs were beneficial in providing resources and coping strategies, they did not reduce depression symptoms as effectively as offline support. King and Carter (2022) yielded a contrary finding, noting that online mourning was hypocritical and contributed to the emotional problems experienced by such people. Longest and Kang (2022) are relevant to understanding the intersection of online informational support and mental health, but they highlight gaps in conceptualizing contextual differences in bereavement,

especially in non-Western contexts such as Kenya, where family and community structures may influence the effectiveness of online support.

In Denmark, Andalibi (2021) investigated pregnancy-related mobile apps that most potential mothers used for information on Facebook. The objective of the study was to explore the experiences of online social support among Danish families who had lost a child, focusing on the perceptions of bereaved adults with dependent children. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research collected both quantitative and qualitative data through an online survey completed by 87 participants, predominantly women (93%), recruited from a mutual bereavement support group. It was established that most pregnancy apps did not consider loss of a pregnancy as a direct or potential outcome of the pregnancy. The findings contrast with Holmgren (2023), who noted that the support provided was needed, since it created an aura of presence, and access to information through advice, which the participants found beneficial. This demonstrates that the reinforcement linear, normative narrative in relation to pregnancy loss is not only harmful but also leads to marginalization.

Zhong et al. (2021) conducted an online survey of 320 participants to assess the mental health toll of the coronavirus pandemic, focusing on their social media use. Individuals reported using social media more frequently and experiencing improved emotional and informational support, which helped mitigate depressive symptoms as they increasingly viewed social media as a valuable resource. The study found that social media use helped respondents stay informed about health issues and maintain peer connections during lockdowns, with a significant link between social support networks and depression-related social media use. It recommended using engaging content, such as live Q&A sessions, to foster social connections and strengthen support networks.

Additionally, technology integration enables individuals to easily access health resources, such as virtual fitness classes and telehealth appointments, from the comfort of their homes, promoting well-being and support during challenging times. Since death during COVID-19 meant immediate interment of the deceased, not allowing people sufficient time to mourn, Akhter and Sopory (2022) found that informational support was key in stabilizing families who had lost their loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which created a contextual gap that the present study addressed, as the entire population faced a crisis.

Joo et al. (2022) studied the effectiveness of peer support networks in improving mental health among grieving African youth. The study used qualitative methods, conducting 43 semi-structured interviews across seven peer support programs in healthcare and community settings. Findings showed that peer networks boosted youth engagement in mental health discussions, increasing awareness and normalizing mental health issues during grief. Participants felt more comfortable sharing their challenges with peers than with professionals. The study recommended using digital platforms to establish online peer support groups, especially to reach youth in remote areas. Morrissey et al. (2024) found the same results, noting that informational support helped youth nurture a deep emotional connection, enabling them to tell their stories without fear of being judged. This enabled them to process their loss. However, since Joo et al. (2022) focused on drug addiction among youth in informal settlements, the present study filled the conceptual and contextual gap by focusing on grieving Millennials.

In Kenya, Kaburu et al. (2024) explored the effect of perinatal loss on the mental health of women. A descriptive phenomenological study design was used

comprising 22 women. The study used face-to-face engagement meetings to collect data, which were then recorded on audio devices. Research in Kenya showed that bereavement experience has profound physical, emotional, and psychological effects on individuals. Understanding the risks of bereavement is crucial for developing effective support systems to help individuals navigate the complexities of grief. Ummel et al. (2022) noted that online families provided educational training and online commemoration, among dispersed families. Kaburu et al. (2024) did not include online informational support programs to mitigate grief, which the current study has addressed. Again, the study was limited to women who had experienced perinatal loss, thus suggesting a contextual gap that the present study filled by investigating the online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials.

Online Emotional Support Program in Mitigating Bereavement Risks

Emotional support refers to the provision of empathy, care, reassurance, and encouragement to individuals facing challenging situations, helping them feel understood and valued (Wang et al., 2021). It involves showing empathy to the bereaved, helping them feel valued and understood (Bailey, 2022). This support fosters a sense of belonging, assuring them that despite their loss, there are people who genuinely care. Emotional support programs play a significant role in mitigating the physical, social, and psychological risks associated with child loss bereavement among Millennials in online support groups (King & Carter, 2022). The key components of emotional support include active listening, expressions of empathy, validation of feelings, and offering a safe space for individuals to share their emotions (Bradshaw et al., 2022).

Strand et al. (2020) concur with this argument, describing online peer support as a valuable resource for sharing emotional support, as it helps individuals build connections and alleviate emotional distress by sharing experiences with others facing similar grief, such as child loss. Online grief support helps recreate the sense of communal presence found in traditional African mourning practices, filling the gap in large urban centers where family members are often absent to support the bereaved (Taladay-Carter, 2025). In less formal settings, grieved people express their feelings online, and one of their friends charts them and provides a one-on-one, private therapeutic session, helping them go through grief (Aeschlimann et al., 2022). Beyond these, online friends are given the opportunity to give unsolicited support, which may evolve into a more structured relationship (Cook, 2025). In some cases, the grieved person may contact competent personnel to help them through the process (Lenferink et al., 2021).

According to Wang et al. (2021), emotional support serves as a protective factor, reducing the risk of adverse health outcomes and promoting resilience and well-being. Their study examined the link between social support and mental health among Shidu parents in China, using a sample of 1,750 bereaved parents who had lost their only child. Given the death taboo rooted in Chinese culture, the availability of community services for the elderly was used as an instrumental variable in the study. The findings showed that, among Shidu parents, social support and mental health were positively correlated. The results showed that to reduce the mental stress of Shidu's parents, it was essential to assist spouses and friends in developing suitable grief counseling apps that allow parents to access emotional support whenever needed. The finding is supported by Afita and Nuranasmita (2023), who noted that emotional support helped build resilience, thereby promoting mental well-being. The

study, however, was conducted in China; the findings may not be generalized to the Kenyan context, hence the current study.

In the Netherlands, Lenferink et al. (2021) did a study on online grief counseling after a devastating loss during a lapse in bereavement care: Online bereavement support needs and use after traumatic loss. This randomized waitlist-controlled trial evaluated the efficacy of a 12-week internet-delivered cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) program for individuals experiencing prolonged grief following traumatic loss. Forty Dutch adults bereaved through traffic accidents were randomly assigned to the study. The intervention incorporated CBT techniques, including exposure therapy, cognitive restructuring, and behavioural activation. Because many participants accepted the use of online grief treatment, the study did not examine which types of online mental health support programs were used, which is the focus of the current study. The study concluded that online grief counselling significantly affected the emotional well-being of those experiencing traumatic losses. Kaiser et al. (2022) found that online emotional support through CBT reduced warning signs of lengthy grief. However, the findings by Lenferink et al. (2021) suggested the importance of improving accessibility and increasing the acceptability of online treatments for bereaved individuals.

In Turkey, Mazaheri et al. (2024) analysed the impact of a bereavement support program on Turkish parents of departed babies. The study's objectives were to determine how a grief support program helps bereaved parents cope with the death of their infant. Using a systematic review guided by PRISMA, the researchers analysed 23 studies. The study revealed that the grief support program was helpful in addressing the parents' grief responses. Specifically, emotional support, a core component of the program, played a significant role in mitigating the parents' intense

emotional distress. Emotional support, including empathy, active listening, and expressions of understanding, helped parents feel less isolated in their grief. The study established that program interventions, such as providing parents with their child's picture, served as an emotional bridge between grieving parents and their deceased child, fostering a sense of closure and maintaining an ongoing bond—an essential aspect of emotional support. Tang et al. (2021) replicated the findings, noting that the online support programs helped in reducing higher levels of loneliness, emptiness, and detachment. Mazaheri et al. (2024) relied on secondary data to draw conclusions, thereby creating a methodological gap that the current study bridged by using primary data.

Garriott et al. (2023) conducted a study on emotional and stress management interventions to support grief management in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast. The study used de-identified program data and paired t-tests to assess changes in psychological distress and social support among participants who completed two ESMI sessions. A total of 1,412 adults and adolescents participated, with 1,350 completing follow-up assessments. Results showed that participants experienced reduced psychological distress and improved social support, demonstrating ESMI's potential for providing psychosocial and mental health assistance during a pandemic. The study also found that online debriefing programs helped ease guilt, anger, and sadness, reducing depression and anxiety risks. The study's findings concur with those of Esplen et al. (2022), who observed that emotional support improved confidence and emotional resilience among the grieved. While some findings align with the current study, Garriott et al. (2023) focused on stress management in West Africa, whereas the current study addresses how online emotional support programs

reduce bereavement risks among Millennials in Kenya, highlighting a clear contextual gap.

In Kenya, Kathomi et al. (2022) investigated the impact of emotional support on widows' well-being. The study was conducted by interviewing 105 participants, including 8 clergy. The study found that most of the participating widows felt isolated and culturally stigmatized. The study also established that the widows who had interacted with trained counseling personnel had been equipped with adequate information that helped them process their pain and cope with their loss. Jopp et al. (2021) replicated the findings, noting that counseling support was effective in reducing depressive symptoms, which may hinder recovery from loss. Despite the findings, the study targeted widows and did not focus on online emotional support, thus creating a contextual and conceptual gap. The present study bridged the gap by establishing the sense of effectiveness of the emotional support programs helpful in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya.

Online Instrumental Support Programs in Mitigating Bereavement Risks

Instrumental support includes practical assistance provided to individuals to help them navigate difficult situations and maintain normal functioning (Arnold & Harris, 2025). It assumes that individuals who have been immobilized by stressors may experience a decline in physical activity and thus require external help (Schultz et al., 2022). In the online context, instrumental support takes the form of mobilizing resources through fundraising, allowing the affected individual to engage others in tasks they may be unable to manage on their own (Arnold & Harris, 2025). Within the context of this study, grieving individuals can use such mobilized resources to access

essential services, such as professional caregivers, counseling, transportation, and catering, during the mourning process (Taladay-Carter, 2025).

Online grief support also provides informational assistance, helping the individual navigate challenges immediately after losing a child, as well as when life must continue (Cacciatore et al., 2021). In the immediate aftermath of a death, online friends can share practical information to help the bereaved make important decisions related to the funeral and interment of their loved one (Crowley & Kirst, 2025). After the burial, as the person begins to adjust, online connections can offer guidance on decisions that support the family's stability (Murphy et al., 2025). For instance, if there are young people, new arrangements may be necessary, for example, suggesting schools if the family is relocating (Crowley & Kirst, 2025). In cases where inheritance needs to be sorted out, an online lawyer offers initial steps before finding a settlement and physical meetings for the formal execution of a will or for addressing other legal matters (Aeschlimann et al., 2022).

In this study, the instrumental support programs reviewed include financial aid, food donations, and material support. The researchers seek to find out the role they play in helping mitigate the physical, social, and psychological risks associated with child loss bereavement among Millennials in online support groups (Kirkbride et al., 2024). The grievers who are instrumentally oriented are more active, based rather than emotion-based (Kaspersen et al., 2022). This is achieved using problem-solving mechanisms to manage bereavement (Scott et al., 2020). They tend to process their concerns logically and focus on controlling their emotions. As a result, they are more likely to seek practical support rather than emotional assistance (Kaspersen et al., 2022).

In Australia, Obst et al. (2021) conducted research on the elements that influence men's grief after losing a pregnancy and a newborn. The study utilized an online survey methodology, gathering responses from 228 Australian men. It was found that men may experience intense sadness after miscarriage or the death of a newborn, and they need support and validation from their coworkers, families, and other friends, as well as from all medical professionals. Tailored support, including financial aid, food donations, and material support, is needed to address male-specific requirements, such as striking a balance between the urge to support and to be supported. These study findings are supported by Tognela et al. (2025), who noted that instrumental support helped the bereaved to cope, relieving them of the burden of distress. However, Obst et al. (2021) did not examine the perceived effectiveness of online instrumental psychosocial support programs in mitigating the bereavement risks of Millennials in Kenya. That forms the basis of the current study with the population of Millennials in Kenya.

As Liu and Shorey (2021) opine, not having to worry about meal preparation reduces physical exhaustion and allows the orphans to conserve energy for other aspects of their healing process. The study employed a systematic review and meta-analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions in reducing depression, anxiety, and grief among parents who have experienced perinatal loss. The study included 17 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in the systematic review and 15 RCTs in the meta-analysis, encompassing various psychosocial interventions, including counselling, support groups, and cognitive-behavioural therapy. Social support, therefore, played a critical role in helping the orphans process grief and trauma. The findings are supported by Widener et al. (2021), who noted that instrumental support helped manage time pressure, allowing the bereaved to

concentrate on more important activities. Although Liu and Shorey (2021) sought to explain how social support affects psychological health in China, it is evident that instrumental support programs, such as food donations, play a crucial role in mitigating psychosocial risks associated with parent loss and bereavement.

In Africa, Ayebare et al. (2021) investigated the role of culture in mitigating bereavement risks among women with stillbirth in Kenya and Uganda. The study involved 134 grieving women, with data collected through face-to-face interviews. Findings revealed that family members and close relatives provided the greatest support to the grieving parents. The study also showed that culture played a significant role in shaping and regulating grieving behaviours in both countries. This suggests that mourning could only be fully understood within the cultural boundaries of each society. This finding is support by O'Sullivan et al. (2021), who averred that the instrumental support stretching from the sick, death, and burial of their loved one helped to have a dignified time while mourning. However, Ayebare et al. (2021) focused solely on women with stillbirth, while the present study addressed this gap by examining how online instrumental support groups help Millennials in Kenya cope with child loss bereavement.

In Rwanda, Uchida et al. (2022) investigated the role of instrumental support in mitigating psychological distress among Rwandan orphans. The study employed quantitative research methodology, using a questionnaire-based approach. The study examined the relationships between instrumental support and well-being and mental distress, as well as the relative value of perceived food donations from peers, adults, and community members. The findings indicated that compared to children in other living situations**,** food donations ensure that orphans receive nutritious meals, which is crucial for maintaining physical health during bereavement. Proper nutrition supports

overall well-being and can help mitigate the physical effects of stress. This finding aligns with DeLacey et al.'s (2021) view that providing meals alleviates hunger, thereby preventing additional strain that could otherwise complicate the mourning and grief process**.** However, Uchida et al. (2022) concentrated primarily on Rwandan orphans, whereas the current study focused on Millennials in online support groups. The present study specifically addresses the loss of children by millennial parents and the role of online psychosocial support in helping them navigate the grief process.

In Kenya, Arisi (2021) investigated the impact of perinatal losses on emotional well-being and self-esteem among mothers in Nairobi County. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the study surveyed 65 mothers through stratified random sampling, employing instruments such as the Perinatal Grief Scale, Psychological Well-being Scale, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The study found that perinatal loss significantly affects emotional well-being. This study recommended that psychosocial support be instituted immediately after bereavement and continued for a specified period, with a psychiatrist as part of the care team. The study also noted that material support, such as household items, clothing, and hygiene products, can be provided to grieving mothers to reduce the stress of managing daily needs, allowing them to focus on their health and well-being. The findings align with those of Benkel et al. (2024), who emphasized that instrumental support eases the burden of cooking and maintaining household hygiene, thereby allowing grieving individuals to focus on the mourning process. Although Arisi (2021) focused on perinatal loss and bereavement, it did not address the components of online psychosocial support programs, which is the focus of the current study.

Strategies Useful in Enhancing Online Psychosocial Support Programs Use in Mitigating Bereavement Risks

Online psychosocial support programs are strategies designed to help manage the severity of grief (Zuelke et al., 2022). Grief management is essential to address heightened distress and prevent complicated grief, which, if left unattended, can negatively impact the health and well-being of affected individuals (Werner & Wick, 2024). Online support programs vary in effectiveness and benefits depending on the context and needs of the bereaved. Informational support programs, such as those studied by Holmgren (2022) and longest and Kang (2022), offer valuable resources, coping strategies, and awareness of available services, yet their impact on emotional healing appears limited, especially when compared to in-person interactions. Consequently, online psychosocial programs must be enhanced to ensure their effectiveness.

Emotional support programs, as highlighted in studies by Wang et al. (2021), Lenferink et al. (2021), and Mazaheri et al. (2024), demonstrate stronger effectiveness in enhancing resilience and emotional well-being through empathy, active listening, and validation, making them particularly vital for those experiencing intense grief. Meanwhile, instrumental support programs, such as those explored by Obst et al. (2021), offer practical relief, including financial aid, food, and material assistance – all of which are critical for alleviating the physical and social strains of bereavement, particularly among populations that value action-oriented coping mechanisms. Both forms of support play complementary roles, with emotional support addressing psychological and relational needs, while instrumental support eases tangible burdens. Studies suggest that integrating these approaches can lead to more comprehensive grief recovery. Online platforms are increasingly being used to deliver both types of

support, making them more accessible to Millennials. This trend highlights the need to explore the effectiveness of digital interventions in managing bereavement risks.

Yao et al. (2025) investigated the strategies used to enhance online psychological support programs in mitigating grief among adults who have lost their loved ones. The study was conducted in China, and conclusions were drawn through a systematic review and meta-analysis of the selected articles. The study found that offering a range of psychosocial support services makes the support accessible to more people, anytime and anywhere. The flexibility of psychosocial support also ensures a concentrated impact for each person and benefits those who can afford it. The study also established that blending online modalities with established therapeutic methods, such as CBT and psychodynamic therapy, enhances therapeutic outcomes. This finding is consistent with that of Dominguez-Rodriguez et al. (2023), who noted the efficacy of web-based CBT in reducing the severity of grief. Despite the findings, Yao et al. (2025) drew conclusions based on a systematic review and meta-analysis, thereby creating a methodological gap. The present study bridged the gap by using primary data.

Finucane et al. (2025) explored the efficacy of online interventions in supporting bereaved families. The study was conducted in the UK, and conclusions were drawn by synthesizing 35 pieces of literature. The study found that online intervention programs can be enhanced by incorporating self-guided online modules. The study also noted that online programs can be promoted by group-based forums or peer support, fostering a sense of community and emotional connection. However, the study also observed that group activities may hinder healing, as some group members may make insensitive comments. Wagner et al. (2022) supported the findings, affirming that online intervention programs significantly reduced symptoms of

posttraumatic avoidance and intrusion, as well as general psychopathological symptoms, showing that it had therapeutic value for trauma-related distress. Despite the findings, those of Finucane et al. (2025) relied on extant literature to draw conclusions, thereby opening a methodological gap. The present study bridged the gap by using primary data.

Wadden et al. (2020) explored the impact of online mental health conversations on enhancing psychological health outcomes. The study was conducted in the UK and concluded by analyzing 7,000 online health conversations and 700,000 online messages. The study found that open mental health discussions helped with improvements in psychological health outcomes of the bereaved. The study observed that user engagement helped create a safe environment where people candidly shared mental health challenges. The study also noted that linguistic coordination helped build trust, so that the affected can seek help without fear of being victimized. The findings are consistent with Burrell and Selman (2022), who demonstrated that engagement in funeral planning, after death rituals, helped them to process the death of their loved ones. Despite the findings from their analysis, Wadden et al. (2020) used online health conversations as data, thus opening a methodological gap. The present study conducted direct interviews with the beneficiaries of online grief programs.

In a study of chronic patients, online single-intervention groups were found to reduce negative emotions such as pain, anxiety, and depression in chronic patients (Ziadni et al., 2021). The study aimed to evaluate the enhancement of online psychosocial support to improve the "Empowered Relief" (ER) intervention in reducing pain-related outcomes among adults with grief during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that involving family members reduced pain-related

outcomes among adults with chronic pain during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a randomized controlled trial involving 104 participants aged 18–80. The ER group attended a single 2-hour Zoom session, and outcomes were assessed at 2 weeks and 1-, 2-, and 3-month post-intervention. They found that a single online group psychological counseling session that also involved family members effectively provided psychological support for the public and relieved psychological pressure more than if only the treatment were delivered to the people who had COVID-19. Furthermore, the study revealed that online group intervention reduced negative emotions and provided psychological support to participants. The findings are consistent with those of Srivastava et al. (2025), who noted that CBT and Empowered Relief improved, with the latter praised as an efficient and sustainable intervention for grief management. Ziadni et al. (2021) did not control respondents' context, a gap that the present study sought to address by focusing on participants in Kenya.

In Sweden, Klarare et al. (2020) conducted a study on online peer support for bereaved mothers of children with congenital heart disease. In the study, a sample of 8 mothers, aged 33 to 62 years, was used. The participants were members of a private Facebook community for parents who had experienced the loss of a child due to a heart condition, as well as parents whose children were suffering from a heart condition. The study revealed that participating in an online peer support group helped to alleviate feelings of isolation and provide a sense of belonging. This support can contribute to resilience and help individuals move forward. Smit et al. (2021) also reported similar results, noting that internet-based support groups helped affirm healthy emotions, promote a sense of belonging, and foster empowerment. Klarare et al.'s (2020) study was specific to women who have lost children due to congenital heart defects, suggesting a narrower context. The present study widened the scope by

investigating online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials.

Situmorang (2020) asserted that online therapies are useful in helping people cope with mental health issues by lowering symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression, corroborated this finding. The research provided a comprehensive examination of online counselling, including its historical context, foundational concepts, therapeutic dynamics, advantages and disadvantages, ethical considerations, and implications for counsellor training curricula during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the period, the internet provided online/cyber counselling services to help people navigate the health threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that Christian education has largely been affected by information and communication technology. Callaghan et al. (2025) supported the findings, noting that online counselling and online therapeutic relationships and processes helped in navigating health problems. However, Situmorang's (2020) study was conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and not in dealing with millennial parents who have lost their children.

Cofield (2024) conducted a study on engagement among African Millennials. The study used interpretive phenomenological analysis, guided by Critical Race Theory and Black Masculinity frameworks, through semi-structured interviews with participants from a metropolitan city in North Carolina. Findings showed that culturally tailored mental health programs significantly boosted participation and engagement among African Millennials. The study recommended using technology, such as social media and mobile apps, to enhance accessibility and engagement with mental health resources for the bereaved. This suggests that preventive interventions for those who have lost a loved one can help reduce grief risks. It also highlights the

need to examine whether online psychosocial support programs can effectively mitigate bereavement risks by assessing psychological, physical, and social well-being, especially given the lack of research on this subject among bereaved parents in local contexts. The findings are consistent with those of Lestienne et al. (2022), who noted social media engagement tools that helped improve the mental and psychosocial health of grieving individuals. The study by Cofield (2024) was limited to interpretive phenomenological analysis, thus opening a methodological gap. The present study bridged the gap by using a convergent parallel mixed-method design.

Barnett and Jaguga (2023) conducted a narrative review to identify effective training practices for non-specialist providers delivering mental health interventions, drawing on four case studies from Kenya, Ethiopia, and the USA. The study utilised an explanatory multiple-case study design, analysing training protocols, field notes, and evaluations from each case to identify common themes. The study established that equipping facilitators with the skills to gather and analyse participant feedback enables these programs to continuously adapt to meet evolving user needs. This dynamic approach not only enhances the quality of support provided but also promotes overall well-being and resilience during the grieving process, fostering a more supportive and responsive mental health environment. The findings are consistent with those of Cook (2025), who noted that digital technology and online support were more valuable than traditional bereavement support. However, Barnett and Jaguga (2023) focused on the efficacy of technology in supporting patients with mental health challenges, thereby opening a conceptual and a contextual gap. The present study filled the gaps by understating the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework is a structure that guides an empirical enquiry by providing a clear explanation of the theories and concepts relevant to the research problem. It facilitates the establishment of the link between the research variables and grounds the investigation within an existing body of knowledge (Babbie, 2020). By drawing from established theories, the research offers a lens through which data can be interpreted, assumptions formulated, and findings discussed. It also safeguards research unity by aligning research questions, methodology, and analysis with a documented theoretical base (Bryman, 2021). This study was guided by Social Support Theory as the primary framework. This was complemented by Cognitive Behavioural Family Theory to directly measure the relevant variables.

Social Support Theory

Social support theory is a wide and influential framework in psychology and sociology that emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships in promoting well-being and managing stressors. This theory was developed by Cullen (1994), Thoits (1995), and Chamlin (1999). They defined social support as a social resource an individual can rely on to meet life's challenges. The theory is preferred as it provides a strong framework for understanding how both informal and formal support systems, through online platforms, can buffer the psychological impact of bereavement among Millennials (Dong et al., 2024). This is particularly relevant for its stress on the role of supportive relationships, which aligns with the study's focus on evaluating the perceived effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating grief-related risks (Zhao et al., 2022). Moreover, the theory's flexibility allows it to be adapted across diverse cultural and technological contexts, making it suitable for studies involving online interventions.

Guldin and Leget (2023) assert that bereavement risk is the process of grieving and mourning a loved one, involving a range of emotional, psychological, physical, and social challenges. The complexity of bereavement is shaped by the individual's response to loss, which can manifest in various forms (Silverman et al., 2021). These bereavement risks can be assessed through physical indicators such as fatigue and sleep disturbances, psychological indicators like anxiety and depression, and social indicators such as isolation or withdrawal (Alvis et al., 2023). Additionally, Social Support Theory accounts for behavioural distortions that arise from continuous reinforcement or punishment, which can shape how individuals respond to grief and support (Jin & Jiang, 2025).

Similarly, Calhoun et al. (2022) emphasize that social support theory primarily focuses on informational, instrumental, and emotional support, which significantly reduces the likelihood of misconduct and emotional instability. This view is further reinforced by Yıldırım et al. (2023), who explain that social support can take the form of informational, instrumental, or emotional assistance. Emotions are shaped by an individual's subjective interpretation in a social context (Acoba, 2024). Emotions have two key characteristics: subjectivity and social nature. Subjectivity means emotions are deeply personal and intuitive, making them difficult to fully understand or replicate in others (Hu et al., 2022). Their social nature suggests that emotions are expressed within relationships, where individuals influence and shape one another's feelings. Emotional support is measured using indicators such as online memorials, bereavement support videos, online debriefing programs, peer support telephone calls, and support from healthcare personnel (Finucane et al., 2025).

Informational support helps build resilience and smooth the journey for people facing difficulties by providing clear, relevant guidance (Ngai et al., 2021; Nicolini et

al., 2021). Its effectiveness depends on mutual trust and the accuracy of the information, especially when provided by a professional (Ngai et al., 2021). Self-efficacy-oriented message support focuses on the extent to which beneficiaries can apply the information, whereas response efficacy-oriented message support concerns the perceived usefulness of the information in addressing the challenge (Na-Allah & Ahmad, 2022). As people disperse in search of economic opportunities and reduce traditional face-to-face interactions, technology has become a vital tool for maintaining connections and offering emotional support (McCoy & Ciolfi, 2024; Tognela et al., 2025; Wright et al., 2023). Within online space, informational support takes multiple forms, such as online resources, grief support packages, and virtual memoirs (Cook, 2025).

Instrumental support involves removing obstacles by providing practical support through tangible aid (Ayebare et al., 2021). It involves raising support for members through platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook (Ulla & Perales, 2021). These online forums have been used to cover funeral expenses, including food and other burial-related costs (Whitley et al., 2021). In some instances, online communities have also participated in virtual fundraising events to support grieving families. The online dimensions of instrumental support, such as financial aid, food donations, and material support (Yang et al., 2022).

Thus, numerous studies have examined how social assistance directly and indirectly affects individual well-being factors (Ayebare et al., 2021; Carter & Davis, 2021; Johnson & Lee, 2019; Smith et al., 2020). Employing social support theory, this study aims to measure the different types of online psychosocial support programs, namely, informational, instrumental, and emotional psychosocial support programs, provided to parents who have lost a child. Since online psychosocial support directly

or indirectly affects the well-being of individuals, this theory is applicable in this study since it examines how effective it is in reducing the risk of bereavement for parents who have lost a child (Maier & Lachman, 2020). These bereavement risks were examined by measuring the indicators of bereavement, either physical, psychological, or social indicators. This approach enabled the assessment of the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating the risks associated with grief.

Social Support Theory provided the primary framework for explaining the relationship between perceived effectiveness of informational support, emotional support, instrumental support, and strategies enhancing utilization of online psychosocial support programs and the bereavement risk among Millennials in online child loss support groups. The theory posits that supportive social relationships buffer stress and promote psychological well-being. In this study, the three support dimensions form the key constructs of online psychosocial support: informational support provides grief-related knowledge and guidance, emotional support offers empathy and comfort, and instrumental support delivers practical or material assistance. The theory explains that as the effectiveness and accessibility of these support programs increase, bereavement risk.

The Cognitive Behavioural Family Therapy Theory

Cognitive behavioural theory was developed by Beck (1979) (Carona, 2023). Cognitive Behavioural Family Therapy (CBFT) is an approach adapted to address various challenges, including grief and loss in family contexts (Sitota & Tefera, 2023). When a parent suffers a loss such as the death of a child, such a death can have a profound impact on the parent's life dynamics. The central concepts of cognitive-behavioural family therapy theory are that an individual can access their own thoughts

by practicing internal observations of their personal conversations, ingrained beliefs, and the meaning they ascribe to their life and experiences (Samar et al., 2023). This theory contrasts with individuals relying on practitioners' interpretations of their experiences (Nakao et al., 2021).

Cognitive Behavioural Family Therapy (CBFT) views people, especially in a family context, as interconnected in their thoughts and emotions (Sitota & Tefera, 2023). However, during bereavement, emotional stability is distorted so that guilt, self-blame, or feelings of abandonment lead to maladaptive behaviours, including withdrawal, unresolved conflict, or avoidance of grief triggers (Samar et al., 2023). In modern times, when family members settle in different places, online mourning, expressed through social media tributes, virtual memorials, and digital support groups, has become a new avenue for expressing grief (Çınaroğlu, 2024). However, despite the apparent convenience, online mourning has challenges such as misinterpretation of others' online responses or overexposure to emotionally triggering content (Gomez & Tadros, 2024). CBFT helps individuals identify and challenge unhelpful cognitions, replace them with balanced perspectives, and guide them in engaging in healthy, constructive online mourning behaviours (Sitota & Tefera, 2023).

CBFT also strengthens online relationships if managed intentionally (Van Noppen et al., 2021). Online friends and family members can engage in structured digital rituals, such as collaborative tribute pages or curated photo albums, which reinforce shared memories and meaning-making and encourage them to process their loss (Golboni et al., 2023). The facilitators can assign different roles to different people, thereby fostering teamwork and reducing conflict (Gomez & Tadros, 2024). While this is happening, therapists may help by creating healthy boundaries so that

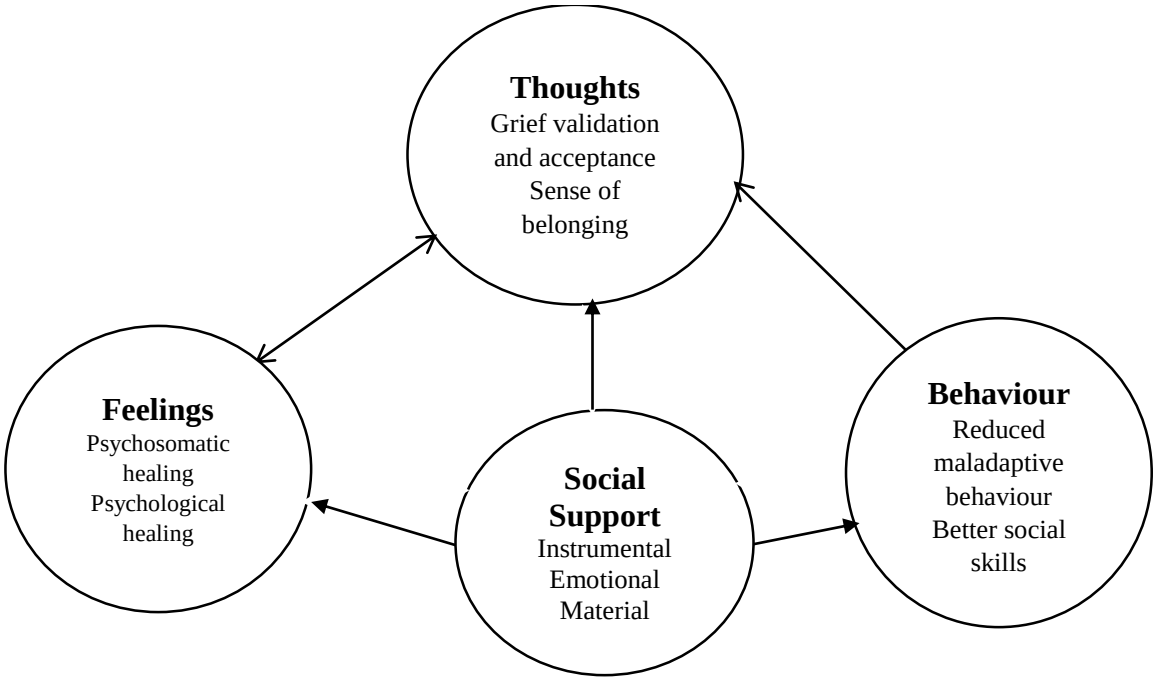
the affected parties are not overwhelmed by constant exposure to grief content while keeping meaningful connections alive (Fuller et al., 2021).

Cognitive-behavioural family therapy emphasizes the therapist's role in tracking parents' progress to help manage challenges such as dysfunctional thoughts and behaviours (Jafari et al., 2025). It therefore helps in creating a digital platform that becomes a place for healing rather than tension (Nakao et al., 2021). The theory helps reframe negative thoughts, encourages adaptive coping behaviours, and maintains open family communication; CBFT supports both individual and collective resilience (McDowell, 2023). This approach allows the affected to benefit from the connectivity and support of online platforms while preserving emotional balance and respecting diverse grieving styles.

This study sought to examine the perception of the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks, a case study of Millennials in online support groups in Kenya. The theory was chosen for this study because it helped measure the bereavement risk variables, which are the study's dependent variables (Wagner et al., 2022). It made it possible to identify the cognitive biases, ingrained beliefs, and schemas resulting from operant conditioning and maladaptive behaviour that one is likely to engage in to cope with the loss of a child (Hussein Ramadan Atta et al., 2025). The theory also helped measure interactions among the family's subsystems, which could be a factor in misunderstandings or cognitive biases. Similarly, this theoretical framework guided the analysis of how online support interventions may influence both individual coping strategies and family relationship dynamics during bereavement. CBFT therefore explained the relationship between the study variables by showing how effective online interventions can modify maladaptive thoughts, improve coping strategies, strengthen

relational support systems, and ultimately reduce bereavement risks among Millennials. Figure 1 illustrates how online social support is situated within the overarching dynamic of CBFT.

Figure 1 *CBFT and Social Support Model Integration*



Source: Researcher (2025)

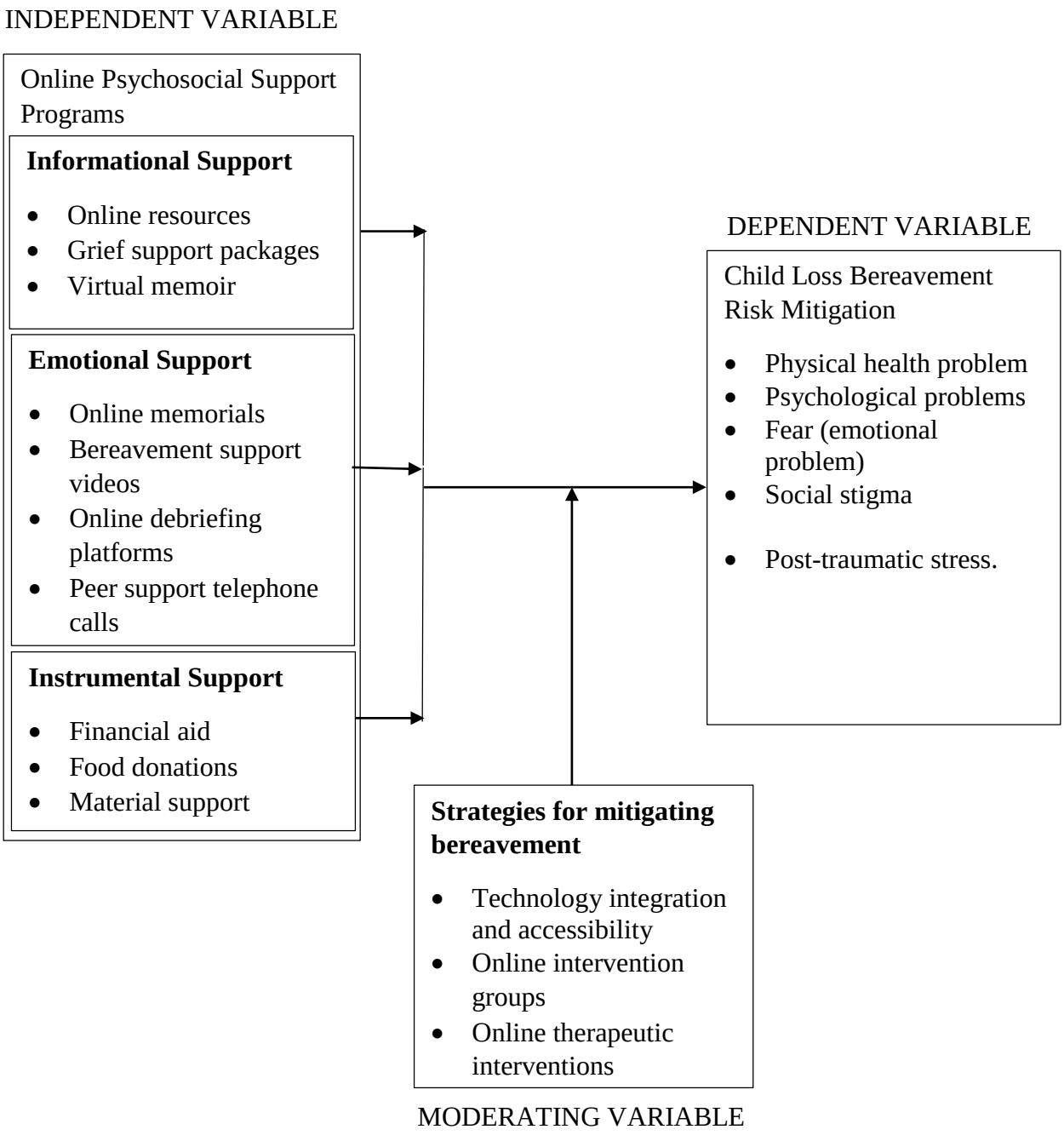
Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a symbolic illustration of an abstract idea. It uses diagrams to depict the relationship between independent and dependent variables (van der Waldt, 2020). It may also serve as the foundation for breaking down the phenomenon under investigation in the research question and guiding the analysis and interpretation of data. It helps clarify the expected relationship between independent and dependent variables and provides guidance for interpreting research findings. In this study, the conceptual framework explains how online psychosocial support programs influence the mitigation of bereavement risks among millennials who have experienced child loss. Contemporary grief research indicates that access to psychosocial support significantly improves coping capacity and reduces emotional

distress following bereavement (Zuelke et al., 2021). Understanding these relationships is therefore essential for evaluating the effectiveness of online psychosocial interventions.

This study uses online psychosocial support programs as the independent variable and child bereavement risks as the dependent variable. The relationship was moderated by intervention programs that promote the adoption of healthy behaviours to reduce the risk of bereavement. The conceptual framework for this study is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 *Conceptual Framework*



Source: Researcher (2025)

Figure 2 illustrates how online programs are expected to influence parents' risk of bereavement, with strategies that moderate relationships. The diagram envisages that online psychosocial support programs, including informational, emotional, and instrumental support, directly mitigate the risks of bereavement. The study has categorized informational support programs to include online resources, grief support packages, and virtual memoirs; online emotional support programs encompass online memorials, bereavement support videos, online debriefing platforms, and peer support telephone calls, and instrumental support dimensions include financial aid, food donations, and material support.

The conceptual framework in this study emphasizes three primary forms of psychosocial support: informational, emotional, and instrumental. Informational support involves providing knowledge, advice, and guidance to help bereaved individuals understand the grieving process and identify coping strategies. This aligns with the first objective namely, to examine the influence of the effectiveness of informational support programs on bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya. Emotional support encompasses empathy, reassurance, and opportunities for emotional expression, which help individuals feel understood and validated during grief. This is linked to the second objective of the study, which was to evaluate the influence of the effectiveness of emotional support programs on bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya. Instrumental support consists of practical

assistance or resources that address challenges associated with bereavement. This is linked to the third objective, namely, to investigate the influence of the effectiveness of instrumental support programs on bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya. Research suggests that integrating these support forms can enhance psychological adjustment and resilience among bereaved individuals (Kaiser et al., 2022; Lenferink et al., 2023).

The dependent variable, child loss bereavement risk mitigation success, is further broken down into dimensions such as psychosomatic healing, better social skills with reduced isolation, psychological healing with improved coping skills, reduced maladaptive behaviours, grief validation and acceptance, and a sense of belonging with strong support systems. Bereavement risks may include emotional distress, prolonged grief reactions, social isolation, and difficulties adjusting after the loss of a child. Research shows that psychosocial interventions can significantly reduce bereavement risk symptoms such as prolonged grief and improve emotional functioning among bereaved individuals (Bryant et al., 2024). Effective psychosocial support, therefore, plays an important role in strengthening coping mechanisms and promoting psychological recovery after loss.

The study also envisages that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables was moderated by strategies employed to mitigate the severity of bereavement. These strategies include technology integration and accessibility, online intervention groups, and online therapeutic interventions. Research indicates that therapist-assisted web-based grief interventions can significantly reduce prolonged grief symptoms and improve psychological well-being among bereaved individuals (Kaiser et al., 2022). When implemented effectively, these supportive strategies strengthen the delivery and impact of psychosocial support within online grief

communities. Therefore, the conceptual framework demonstrates how psychosocial support mechanisms and intervention strategies interact to mitigate bereavement risks among millennials who have experienced child loss. This is linked to the fourth objective, namely, to establish the influence of strategies that enhance the utilization of online psychosocial support programs on bereavement risks among millennials participating in online child loss support groups in Kenya.

Chapter Summary

The literature review chapter outlines the relevant literature for the study. The first section provided an empirical literature review, organized around the four objectives. Empirical literature has critically discussed the past studies on online psychosocial support and bereavement risks. Several gaps in the conceptual, contextual, and methodological literature have been identified as opportunities for further research. The second section detailed the theoretical framework upon which the present study is anchored. This was followed by the conceptual framework and finally, a synthesis of the research gaps. The next chapter discusses the methodology deemed appropriate for the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology that was employed in the study. It is structured into various sections, each focusing on a critical component of the research process. These sections are the research design, target population, sampling techniques, sample size, pre-testing procedures, and data collection methods. Additionally, the chapter discusses the research's trustworthiness and credibility, the approach to data analysis, and the ethical considerations that guided the study. Each of these elements plays a crucial role in ensuring the rigor, validity, and ethical integrity of the research. Justification for each element is provided, along with the rationale for its selection.

Research Design

Research design is a strategy a researcher uses to effectively address the research problem (Tenny et al., 2022). The study employed a convergent parallel mixed methods design to draw conclusions. A convergent parallel mixed-method design is one in which both qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously and then analysed independently using qualitative and quantitative research techniques (Dahinden, 2021). The data are then integrated into one, the researcher noting the areas of convergence and divergence, faithfully recording them, and drawing conclusions (Patton, 2020; Tenny et al., 2022). If there is divergence, the researcher re-examines the data and may even collect additional data to augment the findings.

This design is suited for this study as it allows for a comprehensive exploration of the perception of the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in online support groups

for child loss in Kenya (Shahab et al., 2021). This design is particularly advantageous because it facilitates faster data acquisition. Quantitative data provided information that helped establish relationships among variables, while qualitative data addressed complex questions from multiple perspectives, providing a fuller picture of the support programs' effectiveness (Matović & Ovesni, 2023). Additionally, the convergence of findings from both qualitative and quantitative data strengthened the reliability of the conclusions, offering a more robust understanding of how these programs impact bereavement risks (Vu, 2021). The integration of both data types also enhanced the study's credibility and its ability to inform future interventions and policy decisions aimed at supporting bereaved Millennials.

Target Population

Population is defined as the entire set of items that share specific characteristics, which the researcher aims to investigate in a study (Babbie, 2020). A population, in the words of Chivanga and Monyai (2021), is a whole collection of people, things, or events that have certain observable features. The target population for this study were individuals who fit the criteria of millennial parents grieving the loss of a child. This study focused on four recognized online psychosocial support programs: Still a Mom, Zuri Nzilani Foundations, Lari Support Group, and Psych-Rescue. These programs have way over 900 Millennials, primarily those born between 1981 and 1996, as defined by the Pew Research Center (2022). The individuals in this population have suffered the loss of a child, including miscarriage, stillbirth, or postnatal loss, and formed the basis for the study's investigation. Table 1 shows population distribution.

Table 1: *Population Distribution*

Online Psychosocial Programs	Population	Percentage (%)
Still a Mom	500	55.6%
Zuri Nzilani Foundations	100	11.1%
Lari Support Group	100	11.1%
Psych-Rescue	200	22.2%
Total	900	100.0%

Sampling Technique

Sampling technique is critical in selecting participants who can provide detailed information about the phenomenon under study (Mangi & Baloch, 2021). In this study, a stratified sampling technique was used. Stratified sampling entails dividing the population into distinct subgroups (strata) based on shared characteristics, such as membership in specific programs, and then drawing a representative sample from each stratum (Ainscough et al., 2022). This is done proportionally, ensuring that each subgroup is adequately represented in the final sample (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). This method enhances the accuracy and generalizability of the findings by reducing sampling bias and ensuring that key subgroups are not underrepresented (Guest et al., 2020). In the context of this study, stratified sampling was appropriate because it enabled fair representation of members from each online psychosocial program, thereby capturing the unique perspectives and experiences within each group while maintaining the overall integrity and diversity of the sample.

The study used purposive sampling to select participants for the qualitative strand. Purposive sampling was preferred because it allowed the researcher to deliberately select participants most likely to provide relevant and insightful information needed to answer the research questions (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2024). In

this study, the researcher interviewed four group leaders from each participating organization: Still a Mom, Zuri Nzilani Foundations, Lari Support Group, and Psych-Rescue. Criterion sampling was used to select mothers who were between 30 and 45 years old. The remaining participants were sampled from the most recent beneficiaries of the online therapeutic services.

Sample Size

Sample size refers to a subset of units within a population used to analyze the characteristics of the population's members (Althubaiti, 2022). Participants are deemed sufficient if they possess the necessary information or traits relevant to the study (Lohr, 2021). Furthermore, including the entire population of interest can present significant challenges, making it difficult to complete the study due to high costs, lengthy data collection, and potential inefficiencies in data gathering (Bryman, 2021). Sample size is determined using statistical formulas. In this study, the sample size is calculated using the Yamane formula as follows:

$n=N/1+N\ (e)^2$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (900)

e = margin of error (commonly 0.05 for 95% confidence level)

Therefore,

$n=900/1+900\ (0.05)^{\ 2}$

n=277

The sample size was distributed across the four online programs as follows:

Table 2 *Sample Size Distribution*

Online Psychosocial Programs	**Population**	**Sample Size**	**Percentage (%)**
Still a Mom	500	154	55.6%
Zuri Nzilani Foundations	100	31	11.1%
Lari Support Group	100	31	11.1%
Psych-Rescue	200	61	22.2%
Total	900	277	100.0%

According to Braun and Clarke (2021), qualitative data collection typically requires fewer participants than quantitative research, as the aim is to reach data saturation—the point at which no new themes or insights emerge from additional data. Typically, a traditional empirical study involves a sample size of 10-30 participants (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). For this reason, the study also collected qualitative data from 30 participants, which is the upper limit set. This was used to provide assurance of data saturation – the point at which additional data collection no longer yields new insights. The 30 participants were drawn from the total sample of 277.

Types of Data

In keeping with a convergent-parallel mixed methods design, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative types of data. Quantitative data entails numeric data that can be subjected to statistical manipulation (Bryman, 2020). In the present study, quantitative data were collected to estimate the effect of online support programs on the risk of bereavement. The research also collected qualitative data through in-depth interviews (Davis et al., 2022). Qualitative data comprises non-

numeric data that represent respondents' views, experiences, and perceptions regarding online psychosocial support services (Saunders et al., 2022).

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are tools used to gather data from respondents to answer research questions or test assumptions (Guest et al., 2020). These instruments can be qualitative or quantitative and include questionnaires and interviews. The choice of suitable instruments for research depends on the research design and research objectives (Saunders et al., 2022). These instruments are either developed by the researcher or adopted from past studies (Bryman, 2020). Data was collected using structured questionnaires and key informant interviews.

Questionnaire

Quantitative data were gathered using structured questionnaires based on a rating scale as provided in Appendix III. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher due to lack of a suitable standardised tool on bereavement risk and online psychosocial support programs. The rating scale enables a researcher to express the intensity of their experiences or perceptions (Heidari et al., 2022). The rating scale also enables the researcher to gauge attitudes, emotions, or behaviours within qualitative themes (Acoba, 2024). Moreover, it helps researchers identify patterns, trends, and contrasts as they explore detailed narratives (Acoba, 2024). The rating scale also facilitates measurable indicators while still allowing for open-ended responses that provide deeper context (Heidari et al., 2022). Consequently, the researcher categorized themes into high, moderate, or low levels of agreement, satisfaction, or intensity (Campbell et al., 2021).

The questionnaire is divided into six sections. The first section, labelled Section A, seeks a demographic profile of respondents, including age, gender, highest

level of education, and duration of membership in the online bereavement group. Section B contains a 5-item Likert-scale statement to measure information support programs, rated from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Section C also contains 5 items in which respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements about the effectiveness of emotional support programs on a 5-point scale. Section D similarly comprises 5 items to measure instrumental support programs, rated on a 5-point scale. Section E comprises 9 items for measuring Strategies for Enhancing Online Psychosocial Support Programs. Section F comprises 5 items to measure the level of bereavement risk experienced on a 5-point scale, where 1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a bit, 5 = Extremely.

Key Informant Interviews

Interviews allow participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and emotions in a confidential and unrestricted manner (Susanto et al, 2024). The researcher can probe more deeply into responses, seeking clarification and elaboration on key issues (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). Interviews are useful when the aim is to distil the phenomenon, as they show participants making sense of the event themselves (Wainstein et al., 2023). Interviews are mostly semi-structured or free in style, which enhances the participants' storytelling (Guest et al., 2020). This is rightly aligned with the goal of investigating commonalities, themes, and patterns across individuals' accounts of diverse experiences (Hoffding et al., 2022). Further, these interviews are flexible, taking the form of video, audio, or electronic oral communications. In this study, participants were millennial parents who had lost a child, who would otherwise not be more available for the study (Topping et al., 2021).

Pilot Testing

A pilot study was conducted prior to actual data collection to assess the instrument's accuracy. The process is defined as the trial administration of a research instrument to identify faults or flaws in a research tool, so that corrections can be made before it is used in the actual study (Beets et al., 2020). The researcher conducted a pilot study in one of the online psychosocial support programs that was not part of the actual study. It involved 28 participants, which translates to 10% of the sample size. However, participants for the pilot study were drawn from members of an online support program rather than selected for the main study. According to Mchopa (2021), 10% of the sample anticipated for the actual study is adequate for piloting. The pre-test investigation is vital for assessing the instrument's trustworthiness and credibility and helps make any necessary modifications before the final study. Additionally, it enabled the identification of the limitations that the researcher is likely to face in the field during the main study. In this study, the results of the pilot study was used to identify, simplify, and enhance the clarity of questions that were ambiguous or complex.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected with the help of a research assistant. First, the research assistant underwent training to clarify any unclear questions and to serve as the conduit through which the anonymous interview guide was collected and later sent to the researcher for analysis (Jordan et al., 2021). Secondly, the researcher sought research permits from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the Pan-African Christian University, as well as from the moderators of the various online psychosocial grief support groups. Data collection was administered solely by the researcher. Prospective respondents were first

informed about the purpose of the study before being given informed consent forms to sign. After completing the consent forms, participants were invited to an online meeting where the study's purpose, ethical guidelines, and participant expectations were explained in detail. They were assured of confidentiality, meaning their views and identities were not disclosed to any third party, and all participants remained anonymous throughout the study. The information provided was used strictly for academic purposes and within the context of this research.

Instrument Reliability

Instrument reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of a research instrument in measuring what it is intended to measure (Sundram & Romli, 2023). For the questionnaire on online bereavement support programs, internal consistency reliability, which evaluates the extent to which items within each section measure the same construct, was tested using Cronbach's alpha. A high Cronbach's alpha (≥ 0.70) indicated that these items are reliably measuring that dimension (Roebianto et al., 2023). One construct did not exceed this threshold but was at the acceptable margin. The instrument was considered adequate because the results were to be triangulated with qualitative data. Table 3 presents the internal consistency reliability of the study constructs as assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

Table 3 *Reliability Statistics*

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Information Support Programs	.874	5
Emotional Support Programs	.735	5
Instrumental Support Programs	.504	5
Strategies for Mitigating Bereavement Risks	.870	9

Child Loss Bereavement Risk Mitigation Success	.827	5

The results in Table 3 indicate that Information Support Programs (α = .874), Emotional Support Programs (α = .735), Strategies for Mitigating Bereavement Risks (α = .870), and Child Loss Bereavement Risk Mitigation Success (α = .827) demonstrated acceptable to high levels of reliability, exceeding the recommended threshold of α =.70. In contrast, Instrumental Support Programs yielded a low reliability coefficient (α = .504), suggesting weak internal consistency. The findings suggest that all constructions except Instrumental Support Programs were reliable. Table 4 presents the item–total statistics for the Instrumental Support Programs scale, providing insight into each item's contribution to the overall reliability of the measure.

Table 4 Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
I received or observed financial assistance provided to bereaved members	14.71	8.238	.333	.408
Food donations were made available to bereaved families in need	14.00	8.000	.289	.452
The group facilitated the provision of material support e.g., clothes	13.57	10.952	.090	.562
Instrumental support helped reduce the stress of practical needs during bereavement	13.14	10.143	.415	.394
The support received was timely and relevant to my immediate needs	12.57	10.619	.409	.413

The corrected item–total correlations ranged from .090 to .415, indicating poor item homogeneity. The Cronbach’s alpha values, if items were deleted, ranged from .394 to .562, suggesting that removing individual items would not substantially improve the overall internal consistency of the scale. Together, the findings indicate

that the items measuring instrumental support lacked adequate coherence, thereby explaining the low overall reliability of the construct and underscoring the need for item revision to enhance scale reliability. Accordingly, the items were revised as follows shown in Section D of Appendix III.

Instrument Validity

Instrument validity pertains to the degree to which a questionnaire or measurement tool accurately measures what it is intended to measure. It addresses the truthfulness and appropriateness of inferences made from the instrument's results (Kapiszewski & Karcher, 2021). In this study, content validity ensures that the instrument comprehensively covers all aspects of the construct (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). This was assessed through expert review by the research supervisor to confirm that the items adequately represent informational, emotional, and instrumental support, as well as the assessment of risk and enhancement strategies.

Construct validity assesses whether a questionnaire truly measures the theoretical constructs it purports to assess, such as emotional support or bereavement risk (Christou, 2022). This has been ensured in this study through the definition, operationalization, and measurement of the construct. Face validity assesses whether, at a glance, the instrument appears to measure what it is intended to, as determined by participant feedback during piloting. According to Nyirenda et al. (2020), trustworthiness in qualitative research requires that the collected data be credible, dependable, transferable, and confirmable. Johnson et al. (2020) explain credibility in qualitative research as equivalent to validity. Credibility gives insight into aspects of truth values, prolonged, persistent observation, and triangulation. In this study, transparency was maintained by detailing the data collection process, specifying the

methodology, and outlining the analysis procedures so that it is clear how the conclusions were derived (Kapiszewski & Karcher, 2021).

Consequently, the researcher kept accurate documentation of the whole process, including selection, interview protocols, and thematic analysis steps (Christou, 2022). This may also detail the biases that may have affected the study, further strengthening transparency (Kapiszewski & Karcher, 2021). In terms of credibility, the study triangulated data by cross-checking and validating information from multiple sources. In this study, credibility is ensured by verifying responses with participants and cross-checking themes across multiple data sources (Naeem et al., 2021). This ensured that the study's results truly represent the respondents' voices.

In terms of dependability, the study maintained an audit trail of all processes, recording research decision points, data collection procedures, and analysis steps (O'Sullivan et al., 2025). The researcher also detailed research logs, and seeking external review strengthens the reliability of findings (Naeem et al., 2021). To ensure authenticity, the researcher allowed the participants' voices to shape the study (Kapiszewski & Karcher, 2021). The recorded message included rich, verbatim quotes from participants. The study, therefore, accurately and fairly represents diverse viewpoints and participants' experiences (O'Sullivan et al., 2025).

In this study, credibility was used to assess whether respondents are telling the truth (Kapiszewski & Karcher, 2021). For instance, it helped determine whether they are giving more than is imagined, use rhetorical language in a positive way, or are detached from reality (Heidari et al., 2022). Credibility was achieved through the researcher's rephrasing of questions and paraphrasing of statements. This helped clarify any unclear or ambiguous statements and capture the whole truth. The

researcher additionally acquired credibility in this study by applying active listening techniques to both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 27). The process entailed first generating mean and standard deviation scores, as well as percentage frequencies, which gives a feel of the data. To analyse the perceived effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating the risks of bereavement, the researcher conducted correlation and regression analyses. Regression analysis is a statistical method that facilitates the quantification of the association between independent and dependent variables, with the aim of estimating effect sizes (O'Sullivan et al., 2025). These techniques enabled the researcher to draw appropriate statistical inferences. This was expressed using the following regression equation:

$$BRm = \beta 0 + \beta 1x\text{InfoSP} + \beta 2x\text{EmoSP} + \beta 3x\text{InstSP} + \varepsilon$$

Where:

BRm = Bereavement Risk Mitigation

β0 = Constant

InfoSP = Informational Support Programs

EmoSP = Emotional Support Programs

InstSP = Instrumental Support Programs

ε = Standard error

Agazu et al. (2022) assert that all data collected must be authentic and accurately represent participants' responses without modification. The researcher ensured rigor in the qualitative research process by carefully sorting the gathered data to identify and correct any inaccuracies. This process enhances the research's

trustworthiness and credibility. Qualitative data were analyzed to address the research objectives, using Atlas.ti version 15 software for efficient management and analysis. An audio recording of participants' responses was conducted, and the recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure an accurate representation of participants' views.

Following transcription, thematic analysis was performed, allowing the researcher to identify and analyse key patterns and themes in the data. This approach ensures a rigorous and thorough examination of the findings, contributing to the overall credibility and validity of the study. Kiger and Varpio (2020) highlight that thematic analysis is a widely used method for analysing qualitative data, with the interpretation and presentation of findings guided by the research questions. Thematic analysis, which aided in identifying recurring themes and patterns, was used to attain a clear understanding of the research objectives. In addition, the researcher carefully coded the data to ensure that subtle but significant insights are captured and reflected in the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher aimed to maximize the benefits of the research and minimize the potential harm to participants (Sin et al., 2021). This study considered all ethical issues involved in research at each stage of its implementation, and the ethical principles for research involving humans, as follows: A clearance letter was sought from the University to introduce the researcher to the responsible authorities for the provision of a research permit. This was done by the country's institutional organ, the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Thereafter, the researcher organized to deliver a letter to Still a Mom, Zuri Nzilani Foundations, Lari Support Group, and Psych-Rescue requesting permission to interview their members for this study. The meeting also sought to clarify any

concerns the organizations may have and to find ways to address issues related to participant involvement, confidentiality, and data handling.

Also, the researcher sought participants' consent before inviting them to take part in the study. Prior to the participants' involvement, the privacy and confidentiality of their information were guaranteed. The participants were assured that the information provided for the study would be treated confidentially. Thus, anonymity was carefully observed by not disclosing the participants' identities. To ensure data privacy and confidentiality during the reporting stage, the researcher informed participants that their names would not appear on any paper and implemented a coding and anonymization process. This involved assigning unique identifiers to each participant and removing all personally identifiable information.

The researcher shielded the participants from any potential harm resulting from their participation in the study. Given the sensitive nature of child loss and bereavement, respondents were informed of their right to skip questions, pause, or withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Data collection was conducted with sensitivity and respect, avoiding unnecessary probing into traumatic experiences. Respondents who experienced distress were encouraged to seek psychosocial support services available through their online support groups.

Respondents were also encouraged to ask questions when necessary and to withhold any personal information they might not want to provide to the researcher without suffering any repercussions. The researcher was assisted by a qualified counsellor in conducting the debriefing. Finally, all sources were properly cited to avoid plagiarism and acknowledge the contributions of other researchers. Additionally, if the researcher encounters participants who may have difficulty

expressing themselves in English, the researcher or a research assistant who is conversant with the interview guides will assist with translation.

After data collection, the researcher stored the collected data in a safe room accessible only to the researcher and authorised personnel. To protect the data, the researcher used a personal laptop with the data stored in an encrypted folder for data analysis. The researcher ensured that participants' real names and other sensitive personal details were not revealed. Instead, pseudonyms were assigned to replace real names. To further safeguard the data, the researcher permanently deleted the encrypted folder and securely destroyed the completed questionnaires after the study concluded, preventing unauthorized access or misuse.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has articulated the research methodology. In this endeavour, the chapter has explained the chosen research design, which is a convergent-parallel mixed methods design. The chapter has gone ahead to explain the study population and provide the population matrix. The chapter details that both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. These were achieved through the use of structured questionnaires and an in-depth interview guide. The chapter has also detailed how instrument validity and reliability were achieved. The chapter has also described data collection procedures, including instrument pre-testing and data analysis plan, as well as ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This chapter analyses, reports, and discusses the study's results. The chapter is organized into five sections. The first section entails a descriptive analysis and discussion of the response rate and respondents' demographic profile. The rest of the chapter proceeds in line with the four specific objectives which were: to explore the participant's perception on the benefits of informational support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya, to establish the sense of effectiveness of the emotional support programs helpful in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya, to find out how useful the instrumental support programs are in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya, and to assess strategies useful in enhancing online psychosocial support programs use in mitigating bereavement risks among the Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya.

Response Rate

Table 5 presents the response rate for the study participants.

Table 5 *Response Rate*

Respondent category	Frequency	Percent
Successfully responded	218	78.7%
Non-respondents/Incomplete responses	59	21.3%
Total	277	100.0%

Of the 277 respondents targeted, 218 successfully completed and submitted the questionnaires, representing 78.7% of the sample, while 59 either did not respond or submitted incomplete questionnaires, accounting for 21.3%. Therefore, the

response rate was very high and considered adequate for data processing and analysis. The high response rate obtained in this study is consistent with a review by Holtom et al. (2022), which found that a response rate of 70% or higher is excellent. The response rate, therefore, assures the reliability of statistical estimates.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

This section of the chapter analyses the response rate and the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, highest level of education, and duration in the online bereavement support group.

Table 6 *Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Level of Education*

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	21	9.7%
Female	197	90.3%
Total	218	100.0%
Please indicate your highest level of education		
Secondary education	127	58.3%
College education	69	31.7%
University education	22	10.0%
Total	218	100.0%

Out of the total 218 respondents, 21 were male, representing 9.70% of the sample, while 197 were female, accounting for 90.3%. The findings, therefore, indicate that the majority of respondents were female. This means that the female voice was overrepresented in the study, while the male voice was underrepresented, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings to female respondents only. This may be explained by the fact that the majority of bereavement support groups are

dominated by women, which is consistent with empirical research by Maccallum et al. (2025), where female respondents accounted for 96.3%. The high percentage of female participants might suggest that women are more likely to seek emotional and social support through networks and groups after losing a loved one. Research has shown that women often express grief more openly and are more likely to use available support systems when dealing with loss (Benkel et al., 2024).

The low number of male respondents suggests that men may be less inclined to join online grief support communities. Studies have found that men often use more private coping strategies and may face social or cultural barriers that deter them from seeking help (Maccallum et al., 2025). Given these findings, it is suggested that organizations providing online psychosocial support programs use strategies that include everyone and encourage male involvement. These strategies could include targeted awareness campaigns, varied support formats, and creating environments that reduce the stigma around seeking emotional help. This is in line with the recommendations of research by Obst et al. (2021) in Australia, which suggests the need for tailored support to address male-specific requirements, such as striking a balance between the urge to support and to be supported. This means that bereavement is a gendered issue and, as such, gender dynamics can be the subject of further empirical enquiry to establish associated nuances.

Table 6 shows that 58.3% of respondents completed secondary education, 31.7% have a college education, and 10% have a university education. These outcomes suggest that most participants have moderate levels of formal education, with most having finished at least secondary school. This indicates that individuals with basic formal education can access and join online psychosocial support groups. Finding mirrors the statistics reported by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

(2022), which indicates that the majority of Kenyans have attained a secondary level of education, while those with a university level of education constituted the 9% of the population. The results suggest that the majority of the respondents had the level of literacy needed to engage with digital grief support platforms. This is in line with previous research by Naslund et al. (2020), which showed that people with moderate educational levels are more likely to use digital mental health resources because they have the literacy and digital skills needed to navigate online platforms. Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for respondents' age.

Table 7 *Descriptive Analysis of the Age of Respondents*

			Statistic	Std. Error
Age in years	Mean		36.05	.355
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	35.35	
		Upper Bound	36.75	
	5% Trimmed Mean		36.12	
	Median		38.00	
	Variance		27.436	
	Std. Deviation		5.238	
	Minimum		30	
	Maximum		46	
	Range		16	
	Interquartile Range		6	
	Skewness		-.455	.165
	Kurtosis		-.407	.328

Table 8 shows that the mean age of the respondents was 36.05 years (SD = 5.238). The median age was 38 years, and the age range was 30 to 46 years (range = 16). This finding suggests that the average respondent was a middle-aged adult. The distribution showed slight negative skewness (-.455) and kurtosis (-.407), indicating a moderately left-skewed and somewhat peaked distribution. The finding is comparable to a study in Sweden where Klarare et al. (2020) conducted a study on online peer

support that involved middle-aged bereaved mothers who were middle-aged. This may be explained by the fact that it is in middle age that most people are in the childbearing age and so are exposed to child-loss related bereavement risks.

Descriptive Analysis of Bereavement Risk

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they experienced bereavement-related risks following child loss. Participants rated their agreement with a set of statements on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Table 9 presents the descriptive statistical analysis output. This comprises a percentage frequency distribution for each response category. Table 9 also indicates the mean and standard deviation scores.

Table 8 *Descriptive Analysis of Bereavement Risks*

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have experienced physical health issues (e.g., fatigue, sleep problems) due to grief.	*f*	34	20	23	77	64	3.54	1.401
	%	15.6%	9.2%	10.6%	35.3%	29.4%		
I have struggled with my psychological wellbeing (e.g., anxiety, sadness, irritability).	*f*	35	22	29	76	56	3.43	1.390
	%	16.1%	10.1%	13.4%	35.0%	25.8%		
The loss has made me fear for my own life or that of other family members.	*f*	29	23	42	73	51	3.43	1.315
	%	13.3%	10.6%	19.3%	33.5%	23.4%		
My ability to socialize or parent (if applicable) has been significantly affected.	*f*	30	24	50	72	42	3.33	1.291
	%	13.8%	11.0%	22.9%	33.1%	19.3%		
I have experienced symptoms	*f*	38	20	33	62	65	3.44	1.443

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
associated with post-traumatic stress (e.g., flashbacks, numbness).	%	17.4%	9.2%	15.1%	28.4%	29.8%		

The statement “I have experienced physical health issues (e.g., fatigue, sleep problems) due to grief” recorded the highest mean score of 3.54 (SD = 1.401). A combined 64.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 24.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates that physical health challenges are a prominent bereavement risk among the respondents. The finding is in line with Lund and Moser (2021), who argued that bereavement exposes individuals to physical health complications alongside psychological distress. It also agrees with Uchida et al. (2022), who noted that bereavement can manifest through physical outcomes linked to depression and prolonged grief disorder. This finding implies that the psychological impact of child-loss bereavement has outward manifestations in the physical health of the bereaved parent.

Similarly, respondents reported struggling with their psychological well-being (e.g., anxiety, sadness, irritability), with a mean of 3.43 (SD = 1.390). A total of 60.8% agreed or strongly agreed that they had experienced such struggles, compared to 26.2% who disagreed. This finding highlights the substantial emotional and mental health impact of child loss. The finding is consistent with Zhou et al. (2022), who described child loss as psychologically devastating, with sorrow as a dominant emotional response. The finding suggests that bereavement is a psychologically devastating experience, with extended implications for the psychological functioning

of Millennials. This means that Millennials were generally exposed to child-loss bereavement risks.

Regarding the statement that the loss has made me fear for my own life or that of other family members, the mean score was 3.43 (SD = 1.315). About 56.9% expressed agreement, while 23.9% disagreed. This suggests heightened vulnerability and fear perceptions among more than half of the respondents. The finding resonates with Semple et al. (2021), who noted that bereaved parents may experience profound psychological pain and heightened vulnerability following child loss. This finding also agrees with Arias and Xu (2022), who reported increased psychiatric risks among bereaved parents, particularly mothers, even years after the loss. It means that bereavement exposes millennials to psychological vulnerability, underscoring the need for programs that can mitigate exposure to bereavement risks.

The item assessing whether the ability to socialize or parent (if applicable) has been significantly affected yielded a mean of 3.33 (SD = 1.291). Slightly over half (52.4%) agreed or strongly agreed, whereas 24.8% disagreed. The finding suggests that bereavement affected their ability to socialize or effectively discharge their parenting duties. Over half of the respondents reported impaired ability to socialize, or parents agree with Schmidt (2023), who argued that unresolved grief can impair social and professional functioning. The finding is also in line with McNeil et al. (2021), who emphasized that bereavement involves significant social challenges. Cacciatore et al. (2021) further explained that grief may complicate interpersonal relationships and daily functioning. The finding implies that bereavement risks had spill-over effects on the respondents' social functioning.

Lastly, respondents indicated experiencing symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress (e.g., flashbacks, numbness), with a mean score of 3.44 (SD = 1.443).

A total of 58.2% agreed or strongly agreed, while 26.6% disagreed. This finding suggests that post-traumatic stress was a feature of bereavement, which potentially exacerbates the psychological well-being of millennials. That most of the respondents experienced post-traumatic stress symptoms such as flashbacks and numbness agrees with Muriithi and Mbiti (2020), who identified post-traumatic stress disorder and depression as significant bereavement risks among Kenyan parents. This finding also agrees with Ng'ang'a (2021), who documented recurrent intrusive thoughts and vivid flashbacks among parents who lost a child. Similarly, Uchida et al. (2022) and Mayland et al. (2020) explained that prolonged grief disorder may involve severe psychological and trauma-related symptoms that impair daily life. McNeil et al. (2022) further noted elevated risks of psychiatric disorders among bereaved parents in African contexts. This finding implies that bereavement affects a substantial share of the population and should be treated as a public health issue, given its pervasiveness and its long-term effects on the psychological functioning of the bereaved. The next sections present the results in line with the study's objectives.

Participant's Perception of the Benefits of Informational Support Programs

The first objective of the study was to explore the participants' perception of the benefits of informational support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. This section of the chapter presents both a quantitative analysis of respondents' perceptions of the benefits of informational support programs and a qualitative analysis of in-depth interview data. As pertains to the quantitative dimension of the study, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with statements related to respondents' perception of the benefits of informational support programs on a 5-point scale. The scale ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Table 9

presents the percentage frequency distribution of the responses. It also includes the mean and standard deviation scores for each item.

Table 9 *Respondents' Perception of Benefits of Informational Support Programs*

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
Online grief-related articles and blogs have helped me understand my grieving process	*f*	31	34	42	66	45	3.28	1.336
	%	14.2%	15.6%	19.3%	30.3%	20.6%		
Grief support packages (e.g., toolkits, manuals) shared in the group were useful.	*f*	31	42	41	77	27	3.12	1.266
	%	14.2%	19.3%	18.8%	35.3%	12.4%		
Access to structured online grief resources has improved my coping skills.	*f*	35	40	43	63	37	3.12	1.337
	%	16.1%	18.3%	19.7%	28.9%	17.0%		
Virtual memory spaces (e.g., tribute pages, digital scrapbooks) helped me process my loss.	*f*	34	29	56	69	30	3.15	1.269
	%	15.6%	13.3%	25.7%	31.7%	13.8%		
The group shares reliable, evidence-based information.	*f*	31	28	47	70	42	3.29	1.308
	%	14.2%	12.8%	21.6%	32.1%	19.3%		

Table 9 shows that online grief-related articles and blogs recorded a mean score of 3.28 (SD = 1.336). A combined 50.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that such materials helped them understand their grieving process, while 29.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that online written resources play a meaningful role in enhancing grief awareness among a substantial number of

millennials in online support groups. This finding concurs with Plaud and Urien (2022) and Barnard et al. (2025), who observe that informational support provides clarity and direction to the bereaved, reducing confusion during loss. The moderate-to-high agreement observed in the present study is consistent with Pelacho-Ríos et al. (2025), who argue that informational support reduces uncertainty and anxiety while empowering individuals. In this regard, online grief-related articles and blogs appear to make the theoretical function of informational support described in the literature more practical.

Respondents moderately agreed that grief support packages (e.g., toolkits and manuals) were useful (Mean = 3.12, SD = 1.266). The distribution of responses revealed that nearly half of the respondents (47.7%) agreed, compared to 33.5% who disagreed. Although beneficial to many, the relatively high level of disagreement among a subset of respondents indicates variability in perceived usefulness. This finding is consistent with Holmgren (2022), whose mixed-methods study in the USA found that bereaved families utilized grief support packages, including information letters and online peer networking resources, and perceived them as helpful in navigating loss. The validation by Näppä and Björkman-Randström (2020) further supports the positive contribution of structured informational support in alleviating grief. However, the variability observed in the current study aligns with Longest and Kang (2022), who reported that although online informational programs offered coping strategies, they were less effective at mitigating bereavement risks than offline support.

Regarding whether access to structured online grief resources improved coping skills, the mean score was 3.12 (SD = 1.337). A total of 45.9% agreed or strongly agreed, while 34.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that

structured informational content contributes positively to coping, though its impact may not be experienced uniformly. This result supports the findings of Zhong et al. (2021), who established that increased use of social media for informational purposes improved emotional support and mitigated depressive symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Akhther and Sopory (2022) found that informational support was critical in stabilizing families who had lost loved ones during COVID-19. However, the moderate level of agreement observed in the present study may reflect the contextual limitations noted by Longest and Kang (2022), who established that online support did not reduce depressive symptoms as effectively as offline mechanisms. Therefore, the findings underscore the contextual differences between crisis-specific settings and broader bereavement experiences among Millennials.

The statement on virtual memory spaces (e.g., tribute pages, digital scrapbooks) yielded a mean of 3.15 (SD = 1.269), with 45.5% agreement and 28.9% disagreement. This indicates that digital memorialization tools moderately assist participants in processing their loss. This finding aligns with Holmgren (2022), who reported that sharing virtual autobiographies and engaging in online discussion forums provided meaningful support to grieving families. It also resonates with Ummel et al. (2022), who noted that online families facilitated educational engagement and commemoration among dispersed relatives. However, the moderate level of agreement in the current study aligns with Andalibi (2021), who highlighted that some digital platforms fail to adequately acknowledge certain forms of loss, potentially leading to marginalization. Thus, while the findings largely align with prior studies on the benefits of digital memorialization, they also highlight the limitations of some online environments.

The highest mean score (3.29, SD = 1.308) was observed for the statement that the group shares reliable, evidence-based information. In terms of percentage distribution, 51.4% of respondents agreed compared to 27% who disagreed and 21.6% who neither agreed nor disagreed. This finding suggests a comparatively strong level of trust in the informational credibility of the support groups. This finding aligns with Joo et al. (2022), who found that peer support networks enhanced engagement and normalized discussions of grief. This is especially implied by the fact that respondents perceived the shared information as credible and relatable. The present findings, therefore, extend existing knowledge by demonstrating that most Millennials in online support groups not only access informational support but also perceive it as reliable.

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis of qualitative data yielded three salient themes.

Education and enhanced understanding of the grief process. One of the most salient themes emerging from the qualitative responses is education and enhanced understanding of the grief process through accessible online resources. Respondents emphasized that websites, reviewed journals, grief e-workbooks, and social media platforms (such as Instagram and Facebook pages) provided valuable information that helped them better understand their grief and cope more effectively. Words such as “education,” “encouragement,” “giving information,” and “supportive” were frequently mentioned. This underscored the perceived role of informational resources in normalizing experiences and strengthening coping capacity. The following are some of the verbatim excerpts:

> “These provided me with a great understanding of the grief process that helped me to cope better” (Respondent#1).

> "The support group has a website, Instagram, and Facebook pages, which provide access to the public who are interested in joining the grief support group. These also provide guidelines for joining the support group and the expectations for members. This gives easy access to the bereaved millennials who are searching for grief" (Respondent #4).

> "Yes, resources are very important, and people can go back to read and share with others" (Respondent #6).

The theme suggests that informational support primarily functions as a psycho-educational tool. The emphasis on education and clarity agrees with Calhoun et al. (2022) and Yıldırım et al. (2023), who identified informational support as central to emotional stabilization. Additionally, the finding agrees with Ngai et al. (2021) and Na-Allah and Ahmad (2022), who asserted that accurate and well-structured informational messages enhance resilience and self-efficacy. The reliance on websites and social media platforms aligns with McCoy and Ciolfi (2024) and Wright et al. (2023), who noted that technology has become essential for sustaining emotional and informational support in modern contexts. This finding implies that making sense of the grief process is key to mitigating bereavement risk among Millennials.

Structured grief support package. Another salient theme emerging from the qualitative responses is the structured and educational value of the grief support package in guiding the bereavement journey. Respondents highlighted the "Heri Comfort Package" as a structured curriculum that provides information letters, coping strategy materials, and year-long guidance at a subsidized rate. The emphasis on

"education," "information," "resources," and "encouragement" suggests that respondents view the package primarily as an organized psycho-educational tool. This implies that the online grief support programs provided clarity, direction and accountability in the grieving process. The following are the verbatim expressions:

> "Grief Support package is available, and it is named "Heri comfort package". It's a structured curriculum that guides members and provides information to support their grief journey. This is given at a subsidized rate of 2500 per year to the parents joining the program. This helps create clarity and accountability on the content to be used through the 1-year program" (Respondent#2).
>
> "It also provides information around grief and how the parents can overcome it" (Respondent#7).

The identified educational value theme indicates that structured informational materials help reduce uncertainty and confusion often associated with grief. This is reflected in the testimony by one respondent that it created clarity and accountability on the content to be used. This agrees with Ngai et al. (2021), who argued that informational support is most effective when it is structured and trustworthy. This finding also concurs with Calhoun et al. (2022) and Yıldırım et al. (2023), who maintained that organized informational support reduces emotional instability by providing clear direction. This finding reinforces the notion that access to structured and credible information functions as a cognitive resource that mediates adaptive coping during grief.

Memorialization and multisensory healing practices. A third theme was the symbolic and therapeutic value of memorialization and multisensory healing practices in fostering emotional comfort and connection. Respondents emphasized candle-

lighting ceremonies, shared memoirs, music therapy, journaling, and remembrance sessions as meaningful tools that promote healing and coping. Although some respondents noted limited accessibility to virtual memoirs, many associated memorial activities with “comfort,” “healing,” “support,” and “coping.” This theme suggests that, beyond purely informational content, structured remembrance and expressive tools enhance emotional processing of grief. The integration of symbolic rituals, creative expression (journaling, music), and community commemoration appears to reduce feelings of isolation, validate emotional experiences, and strengthen resilience among bereaved Millennials. The following are the verbatim excerpts:

> “Several online calls and in-person grief therapy sessions are held with the proprietor/leader. This is extremely beneficial as it allows the parents to process their grief and work toward emotional stability. They also invite health care professionals, such as doctors and nurses, to provide psychoeducation to members about various medical aspects of pregnancy, childbirth, delivery, and overall well-being. They also invite like-minded mental health professionals for additional assistance” (Respondent#3).

> “Provision of Mother’s Day candle lighting ceremony, wall of remembrance is incorporated, Tea and connect sessions with the parents where professionals are invited to enlighten the mothers, where they also share their grievances, such as grievances around how disposal of their deceased children happened, maternal support, all aimed at offering emotional support. Another support provided includes, at the end of all sessions, parents are given

> pedants – such as hearts, footprints, a lighthouse, useful to help them commemorate the demise of their children" (Respondent#9).

The finding that memorialization practices and multisensory healing activities foster emotional comfort and connection agrees with Finucane et al. (2025), who identified online memorials, professional support, and debriefing sessions as key indicators of emotional support. This finding also aligns with Yıldırım et al. (2023), who emphasized that emotional support within social relationships helps stabilize distressing emotions. The structured remembrance rituals agree with Golboni et al. (2023), who highlighted collaborative digital rituals as mechanisms for meaning-making and shared healing. Further, the involvement of professionals in guiding emotional processing agrees with Sitota and Tefera (2023) and McDowell (2023), who explained the salience of informational support in facilitating emotional regulation, cognitive reframing, and adaptive coping during grief. The finding underscores the role of professionally guided interventions as pathways that enhance meaning-making, emotional regulation, and collective healing processes.

In sum, the quantitative findings indicate that a majority of Millennials experience significant bereavement risk while also moderately benefiting from informational support programs. These results are reinforced by qualitative findings, which describe grief as emotionally overwhelming yet somehow manageable through accessible resources and structured guidance. Both data strands converge in showing that informational support enhances understanding of grief, thereby helping to stabilize distress and improve coping capacity. Quantitative evidence of moderate agreement on the usefulness of blogs, support packages, and memorial tools is reinforced by qualitative insights that emphasize psychoeducation, clarity, and structured guidance as thematic benefits. In addition, the descriptive statistics

indicated persistent distress, aligning with qualitative insights highlighting the need for multidimensional restoration programs beyond information alone. The data have shown that while bereavement risks are, integrated informational and psychosocial interventions provide a useful, albeit non-uniform pathway toward coping.

Participants' Perception of Effectiveness of Emotional Support Programs

The second objective of the study was to establish the sense of effectiveness of the emotional support programs helpful in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. Quantitative analysis is first presented, followed by qualitative analysis. For the quantitative aspect of the study, respondents were asked to rate relevant statements on a 5-point scale. The scale ranged from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. Table 11 presents the percentage distribution of responses for each item. It also provides the mean and standard deviation scores.

Table 10 *Respondents' Perception of Effectiveness of Emotional Support Programs*

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
Participating in online memorials gave me emotional comfort.	*F*	30	48	41	70	29	3.09	1.274
	%	13.8%	22.0%	18.8%	32.1%	13.3%		
Watching bereavement support videos helped me feel understood and less alone.	*F*	30	28	47	83	30	3.25	1.246
	%	13.8%	12.8%	21.6%	38.1%	13.8%		
Online debriefing sessions allowed me to express and process grief safely	*F*	32	33	38	79	36	3.25	1.307
	%	14.7%	15.1%	17.4%	36.2%	16.5%		
Peer support calls	*F*	29	34	34	89	34	3.28	1.283

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
(phone/video) offered a genuine connection and encouragement	%	13.3%	15.6%	15.6%	39.9%	15.6%		
Health care professionals in the group offered valuable emotional guidance	*F*	33	29	37	65	54	3.36	1.381
	%	15.1%	13.3%	17.0%	29.8%	24.8%		

The statement “Participating in online memorials gave me emotional comfort” recorded a mean score of 3.09 (SD = 1.274), the lowest among the items. A combined 45.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 35.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that although online memorials provide comfort to many participants, their effectiveness is not universally experienced. Regarding watching bereavement support videos, the mean score was 3.25 (SD = 1.246). A total of 51.9% agreed or strongly agreed that such videos helped them feel understood and less alone, compared to 26.6% who disagreed. This indicates that multimedia resources play a meaningful role in fostering emotional validation and reducing isolation. The findings agree with Taladay-Carter (2025), who argued that online grief platforms recreate communal mourning spaces that foster emotional belonging.

Similarly, the statement that online debriefing sessions allowed safe expression and processing of grief yielded a mean of 3.25 (SD = 1.307). Over half (52.7%) expressed agreement, while 29.8% disagreed. This finding highlights the importance of structured virtual spaces for emotional expression. This finding affirms the results of a previous study by Garriott et al. (2023), who found that online debriefing programs reduced psychological distress, guilt, anger, and sadness among participants. It also agrees with Bradshaw et al. (2022), who identified safe emotional

expression and active listening as key elements of emotional support interventions. Similarly, Esplen et al. (2022) noted that emotional support interventions enhance emotional resilience and confidence among the bereaved. However, the moderate mean and mixed responses reflect Lenferink et al.'s (2021) observation that while online grief interventions are beneficial, their accessibility and acceptability vary among bereaved individuals.

Further, the item assessing whether peer support calls (phone/video) offered a genuine connection and encouragement recorded a mean of 3.28 (SD = 1.283). A total of 55.5% agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 28.9% who disagreed. This suggests that direct interpersonal interaction enhances emotional connection within online support frameworks. The finding concurs with Strand et al. (2020), who described online peer support as an effective avenue for building connections and alleviating emotional distress through shared experiences. It also agrees with Aeschlimann et al. (2022), who noted that one-on-one online interactions can evolve into therapeutic support relationships. The results demonstrate that synchronous, personalized interactions remain essential to fostering emotional connection and therapeutic benefit even within technologically mediated environments.

The highest mean score (3.36, SD = 1.381) was observed for the statement that health care professionals in the group offered valuable emotional guidance, with 54.6% of respondents agreeing. This reflects relatively stronger confidence in professional-led emotional support compared to peer- or media-based interventions. This finding agrees with Wang et al. (2021), who established that emotional support promotes resilience and mental well-being by reducing psychological distress. The finding also agrees with Bailey (2022) and Bradshaw et al. (2022), who emphasized that empathy, validation, and reassurance are central components of emotional

support. Furthermore, Tang et al. (2021) reported that online support programs reduce loneliness, emptiness, and detachment, which aligns with participants' experiences of feeling less isolated. The present study's results imply that therapeutic programs provided online play a significant role in mitigating bereavement risks. This is in line with Lenferink et al. (2021), who established that internet-delivered cognitive behavioural therapy significantly improved emotional well-being among bereaved individuals. It also agrees with Kaiser et al. (2022), who reported that online cognitive-behavioural therapy reduced prolonged grief symptoms.

On the other hand, the qualitative data yielded a single overarching theme, namely, funeral attendance and collective presence. Participants frequently used phrases such as "emotional support," "sense of belonging," "comfort," and "standing in the gap," reflecting the symbolic importance of communal mourning. Attending funerals and offering structured remembrance opportunities were perceived as enhancing closure and healing. This indicates that shared rituals not only validate individual grief but also reinforce social cohesion during times of loss. Moreover, the presence of others during bereavement appeared to mitigate feelings of isolation and emotional distress. This was evident in the following verbatim expressions:

> "Great support that should be well structured as a support system for the bereaved parents" (Respondent #2).

> "In most cases, the parents will have buried their children, but members have received support from fellow group members, particularly those who needed to return for better closure, especially if they felt their babies were buried hurriedly or after the sessions, and they wanted a better closure or just a way to commemorate their deceased child" (Respondent #12).

> "Yes, we have attended funerals and stood in the gap with families" (Respondent #23).

The finding aligns with Crowley and Kirst (2025), who noted that practical support in funeral-related decisions helps bereaved individuals navigate immediate post-loss challenges. It also agrees with Murphy et al. (2025), who emphasized that ongoing guidance after burial supports family stability, and with Cacciatore et al. (2021), who found that online grief support aids individuals in navigating both immediate and long-term adjustment. The results suggest that collective participation in funeral rites functions as a protective social mechanism, strengthening belongingness and emotional validation, thereby reducing psychological distress and social disconnection among bereaved Millennials in online psychosocial support groups. The findings highlight the complementary role of both physical and virtual support systems in sustaining grief recovery processes over time. The integration of communal rituals with continuous support structures appears to create a more holistic framework for coping with loss. This underscores the importance of designing bereavement interventions that incorporate both immediate practical assistance and sustained psychosocial engagement.

The descriptive results indicate moderate but consistent effectiveness of online emotional support programs, with professional guidance, peer calls, and debriefing sessions showing relatively higher impact than memorials and videos. These results suggest that structured, interactive, and relational forms of support are more effective in mitigating bereavement risks than passive or symbolic interventions. At the same time, the qualitative data emphasize funeral attendance and collective presence as deeply meaningful sources of emotional comfort, belonging, and closure. The convergence of these findings shows that both virtual and physical forms of support

play complementary roles in addressing grief. While online platforms provide continuous, accessible, and psychologically supportive environments, communal mourning rituals reinforce social connection and shared healing. Together, the two data streams reveal that effective bereavement support requires an integration of personalized interaction, professional input, and collective social practices to holistically reduce emotional distress among bereaved Millennials.

Participants' Perception of How Instrumental Support Programs are Mitigating Bereavement Risks

The third objective of the study was to find out how useful the instrumental support programs are in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. In this section, both the qualitative and quantitative results exploring the objectives are presented. The quantitative data presents the distribution of respondents' perceptions of related items on a 5-point scale. Each item represents a dimension of respondents' perceptions of how instrumental support programs are mitigating bereavement risk. Table 12 shows how the responses were distributed in terms of percentage frequencies. The Table also presents the mean and standard deviation scores for each item.

Table 11 *Participants' Perception of How Instrumental Support Programs are Mitigating Bereavement Risk*

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
I received financial assistance from the group during the bereavement period	F	45	42	42	65	24	2.91	1.326
	%	20.6%	19.3%	19.3%	29.8%	11.0%		
The group provided food	F	38	42	43	69	26	3.01	1.300

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
support that met my household's immediate needs during bereavement.	%	17.4%	19.3%	19.7%	31.7%	11.9%		
The group provided practical material support (e.g., clothing or household items) during bereavement	F	45	50	32	70	21	2.87	1.325
	%	20.6%	22.9%	14.7%	32.2%	9.6%		
The practical support I received from the group reduced my financial and household burden during bereavement	F	38	46	46	61	27	2.97	1.300
	%	17.4%	21.1%	21.1%	28.0%	12.4%		
The practical support I received from the group was timely and appropriate to my immediate needs	F	34	44	45	67	28	3.05	1.285
	%	15.6%	20.2%	20.6%	30.7%	12.8%		

The statement "I received financial assistance from the group during the bereavement period" recorded a mean of 2.91 (SD = 1.326). A combined 39.9% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 40.8% agreed or strongly agreed, with 19.3% neutral. This near balance suggests that participants did not consistently experience financial assistance. This finding aligns with Arnold and Harris (2025), who argued that online instrumental support often depends on the successful mobilization of resources, such as fundraising, which may not reach all affected individuals equally. This variability also aligns with Taladay-Carter (2025), who noted that mobilized resources can help bereaved individuals access essential services,

but such support is context-dependent and not automatically guaranteed. Related findings regarding food support meeting household immediate needs, the mean score was 3.01 (SD = 1.300). About 43.6% agreed or strongly agreed, while 36.7% disagreed. This indicates that food assistance was helpful to some respondents but not universally accessible. The moderate mean score suggests that such support may not consistently reach all members, as also implied by the cross-contextual differences noted by Uchida et al. (2022).

The item assessing whether practical material support (e.g., clothing or household items) was provided yielded the lowest mean score of 2.87 (SD = 1.325). Nearly 43.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared to 41.8% who agreed or strongly agreed. This suggests that tangible material support was limited or unevenly distributed among members. This is consistent with Arisi (2021), who recommended providing household items and hygiene products to reduce daily stress among bereaved mothers, suggesting that such support is necessary but not always adequately provided. Similarly, the statement that practical support reduced financial and household burden recorded a mean of 2.97 (SD = 1.300). While 40.4% agreed, 38.5% disagreed, and 21.1% remained neutral. This indicates only a modest perceived impact of instrumental support on alleviating economic strain. This finding aligns with Kirkbride et al. (2024), who noted that instrumental support mitigates psychosocial risks but may not eliminate economic strain. The finding may be explained by the fact that financial support is not the primary objective of online bereavement support groups.

Respondents rated whether practical support was timely and appropriate to immediate needs, with a mean of 3.05 (SD = 1.285) – the highest among the instrumental support items. A total of 43.5% agreed or strongly agreed, compared to

35.8% who disagreed. This is in line with Schultz et al. (2022), who argued that individuals immobilized by stress require external assistance to maintain functioning, particularly when support is delivered at the right time. Although slightly positive, perceptions of timeliness and appropriateness remain moderate. The moderate rating suggests room for improvement, echoing the contextual limitations observed by Ayebare et al. (2021). The finding implies that the effectiveness of instrumental support in mitigating distress is contingent not only on its availability but also on its contextual responsiveness and timing.

The neutral or near neutral scores across all items suggest that instrumental support was minimal. To test the differential effect of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks, a multiple regression analysis was performed. This was done by regressing bereavement risks on informational, emotional, and instrumental support. Table 13 presents the output, beginning with the model summary. This is followed by ANOVA results. Lastly, the regression coefficients are presented. The statistical significance is depicted in the p-values.

Table 12 *Regression of Bereavement Risks on Online Psychosocial Support Program*

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.618[a]	.382	.373	.95964

a. Predictors: (Constant), Instrumental Support, Informational Support, Emotional Support

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	121.675	3	40.558	44.042	.000[b]
	Residual	197.073	214	.921		
	Total	318.748	217			

a. Dependent Variable: Bereavement Risks
b. Predictors: (Constant), Instrumental Support, Informational Support, Emotional Support

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.

		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.229	.212		5.798	.000
	Informational Support	-.009	.104	-.008	-.086	.932
	Emotional Support	.680	.116	.619	5.853	.000
	Instrumental Support	.009	.075	.008	.114	.909

a. Dependent Variable: Bereavement Risks

Table 13 shows that online bereavement programs significantly explained 38.2% of the variability in bereavement risks, R2 = .382, F(3, 214) = 44.04, p < .01, indicating that the three dimensions of online bereavement programs jointly explained a significant proportion of the variance in bereavement risks. Examination of individual predictors showed that emotional support was a significant protective factor, β = .619, *t* = 5.85, *p* < .01. However, informational support (β = −.008, *t* = −0.09, *p* >.05) and instrumental support (β = .008, *t* = 0.11, *p* >.05) were not statistically significant factors. These results are consistent with Mburuga's (2020) perspective, which emphasizes the central role of psychological and community-based support in helping bereaved parents cope and rebuild their lives. Furthermore, the significance of emotional support is consistent with Ng'ang'a (2021) and Muriithi and Mbiti (2020), who highlighted the severity of depressive symptoms, trauma-related distress, and heightened psychological risks following child loss, thereby underscoring the importance of emotionally responsive interventions. The results suggest that online support programs are instrumental in mitigating emotional challenges occasioned by bereavement.

Qualitative analysis revealed three key themes.

Financial Relief. A salient theme emerging from the qualitative data was financial relief, particularly in offsetting medical and hospitalization bills. Participants frequently mentioned “paying bills,” “treatment,” “medical support,” and “contributions,” indicating that, when available, financial aid helped reduce

immediate economic strain associated with child loss. However, several responses noted that financial aid was either limited or could be improved, especially for families facing substantial hospital expenses. Some respondents indicated that delays in accessing funds further compounded their distress during critical moments. Others emphasized the need for more structured and transparent financial support systems to ensure equitable distribution of resources. While financial assistance was valued, its adequacy and consistency remained key concerns among bereaved families. These perspectives are reflected in the following verbatim views:

> "This can be improved further, especially for those who incur huge hospitalization bills" (Respondent #1).
>
> "Rarely, but for acts of kindness to the community, the members engage in giving to charity. Another way is for members to promote each other's businesses internally. Case example: members support those in the baking industry, where all cakes used in the sessions are bought from the members" (Respondent #5).
>
> "We haven't actively provided financial aid" (Respondent #10).

This finding aligns with Taladay-Carter (2025), who noted that mobilized resources can facilitate access to essential services, such as transport and caregiving, during mourning. Furthermore, the respondents' emphasis on financial gaps aligns with the observations by Obst et al. (2021) and Tognela et al. (2025) that while instrumental support relieves distress, its effectiveness depends on its adequacy. These findings suggest that instrumental support plays a buffering role against physical and psychological stressors linked to bereavement. This occurs by alleviating economic pressure, although its reach and consistency were constrained. The

buffering capacity of instrumental support in bereavement is conditional upon its sufficiency and sustained accessibility.

Logistical Support. Respondents expressed that material and logistical support – especially transportation and burial assistance emerged as a recurring theme. Many participants repeatedly cited "transport," "logistics," and provision of clothes for deceased infants as meaningful forms of support. Such assistance was described as making the grief journey more bearable and fostering "a sense of never walking alone." This form of support also reduced the immediate practical burdens that families face during periods of acute emotional distress. It enabled relatives to coordinate funeral arrangements more efficiently, particularly in moments when they were overwhelmed by shock and grief. That is, logistical assistance contributed to a sense of dignity and collective solidarity in the mourning process. The following are examples of verbatim responses:

> "A great idea, but was absent" (Respondent #3).
>
> "Those members who are yet to bury their deceased children receive a package of clothes donated by the group leaders in conjunction with hospitals as a way to support them in giving their deceased babies a decent sendoff. These offer the members support and make their grief journey bearable. A sense of never walking alone" (Respondent #11).
>
> "We have visited parents and carried some shopping for the house" (Respondent #13).

The finding is consistent with Taladay-Carter (2025), who highlighted the role of mobilized resources in facilitating essential services during mourning. It also agrees with Ayebare et al. (2021), who underscored the importance of culturally embedded support systems during bereavement, and with O'Sullivan et al. (2021), who noted that instrumental support from sickness through burial enables dignified mourning. This indicates that tangible, action-oriented support reduces social isolation and physical strain, particularly during funerals and hospital visits. By addressing immediate logistical challenges, material support mitigates both social and psychological risks of bereavement. In particular, visiting bereaved parents provides emotional reassurance and reinforces social connectedness at a time when individuals often feel isolated and overwhelmed. In like manner, assisting with household shopping helps stabilize daily functioning by ensuring basic needs are met, thereby reducing cognitive overload associated with grief. These forms of support ease the transition through acute bereavement by restoring a sense of normalcy and shared responsibility within the family system.

The quantitative and qualitative findings showed both convergence and divergence regarding the effectiveness of online bereavement programs in mitigating bereavement risks. Quantitatively, online bereavement programs significantly explained a substantial proportion of variance in bereavement risks, with emotional support emerging as the only significant predictor, while informational and instrumental support were not statistically significant. This converges with the qualitative findings in that participants consistently emphasized the value of emotional connectedness, reassurance, and the sense of "not walking alone" during grief, suggesting that the emotional dimension of support is central to psychological adjustment after child loss. However, a point of divergence emerged around

instrumental support. Although quantitative findings indicated that instrumental support did not significantly predict reduced bereavement risk, qualitative data revealed that financial relief and logistical assistance such as help with medical bills were perceived as meaningful and helpful in easing practical burdens.

The discrepancy suggests that while instrumental support may not directly reduce psychological bereavement risk in measurable ways, it may function indirectly by buffering situational stressors and enhancing emotional stability, particularly during acute phases of grief. This reinforces the relevance of the Social Support Theory, particularly its assertion that different forms of support contribute uniquely to coping and adaptation. The prominence of emotional support supports the theory's proposition that affective reassurance, empathy, and belonging are the most critical resources for managing emotionally distressing experiences such as bereavement. At the same time, the divergence implies that emotional support may serve as the primary therapeutic mechanism, while informational and instrumental support function as secondary or complementary resources whose effectiveness depends on adequacy, timing, and accessibility.

Strategies Useful in Enhancing Online Psychosocial Support Programs

The fourth objective of the study was to assess strategies useful in enhancing the use of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among the Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. This section presents both quantitative analysis and thematic analysis of qualitative data. The quantitative aspect of the analysis comprises the mean and standard deviations related to each strategy dimension. These are: technological integration and accessibility, online peer support programs, and online regular monitoring. Table 15 presents the

percentage distribution of the responses, along with the mean and standard deviation scores for technology integration and accessibility items.

Table 13 *Technology Integration and Accessibility*

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have accessed online psychosocial support through mobile-friendly platforms.	*F*	40	47	28	73	30	3.03	1.357
	%	18.3%	21.6%	12.8%	33.5%	13.8%		
The use of video conferencing tools (e.g., Zoom) has improved my participation in support sessions	*F*	35	56	49	56	22	2.88	1.247
	%	16.1%	25.7%	22.5%	25.7%	10.1%		
Data costs have influenced how often I access online support programs	*F*	30	34	49	74	31	3.19	1.259
	%	13.8%	15.6%	22.5%	33.9%	14.2%		

The statement “I have accessed online psychosocial support through mobile-friendly platforms” recorded a mean score of 3.03 (SD = 1.357). A combined 47.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 39.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that although nearly half of the participants could access support via mobile platforms, a significant proportion experienced challenges with mobile accessibility. The reported access barriers reflect Molebatsi et al. (2021)’s observation that resource constraints in developing contexts limit the full potential of online mental health interventions. The distribution of responses suggests a need for improvement in mobile optimization and accessibility, as the fact that 39.9% of the

respondents disagreed indicates that informational support is not yet universally accessible. This means that reducing this gap is essential to make mobile-based informational support more consistently effective across users.

Regarding whether the use of video conferencing tools (e.g., Zoom) has improved participation in support sessions, the mean score was 2.88 (SD = 1.247) – the lowest among the items. Approximately 35.8% agreed or strongly agreed, whereas 41.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 22.5% remained neutral. This indicates that video conferencing tools have not consistently enhanced participation, possibly due to technological or connectivity barriers. This finding disagrees with Ziadni et al. (2021), who found that structured online group sessions delivered via Zoom significantly reduced negative emotions and enhanced psychological support. It also diverges from Srivastava et al. (2025), who reported that online CBT and Empowered Relief interventions were efficient and sustainable for grief management. The findings suggest that informational support remains weak in video-based formats, and improvements are necessary in connectivity support and platform usability, as the dominance of negative and neutral responses over positive ones shows that current systems are not effectively facilitating participation.

The statement “Data costs have influenced how often I access online support programs” recorded the highest mean of 3.19 (SD = 1.259). Nearly 48.1% agreed or strongly agreed that data costs affected their access frequency, while 29.4% disagreed. This finding highlights the significant role of financial and infrastructural constraints in shaping engagement with online psychosocial support. The finding agrees with Molebatsi et al. (2021), who highlighted the scarcity of adequate mental health resources and infrastructural constraints in developing contexts. It further supports Yao et al.’s (2025)assertion that accessibility determines the reach and effectiveness

of online psychosocial programs. This means that although online platforms increase flexibility and availability, financial limitations can restrict consistent engagement. The results imply that informational support cannot achieve full effectiveness unless affordability barriers are addressed, as the clear statistical dominance of agreement demonstrates that financial constraints are a primary limiting factor in consistent engagement with online support services.

Online Peer Support Programs

Table 16 presents the percentage distribution of the responses, along with the mean and standard deviation scores for online peer support program items.

Table 14 *Online Peer Support Program*

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have participated in peer-led support sessions within online bereavement groups	*F*	33	40	45	73	27	3.10	1.272
	%	15.1%	18.3%	20.6%	33.5%	12.4%		
Peer-led groups have helped me feel emotionally supported during my grieving process	*F*	34	32	41	75	36	3.22	1.318
	%	15.6%	14.7%	18.8%	34.4%	16.5%		
I have benefited from shared experiences during online peer support interactions	*F*	32	40	25	82	39	3.25	1.346
	%	14.7%	18.3%	11.5%	37.7%	17.9%		

Table 16 shows that the statement “I have participated in peer-led support sessions within online bereavement groups” recorded a mean of 3.10 (SD = 1.272). A

combined 45.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 33.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 20.6% remained neutral. This suggests moderate participation levels in peer-led initiatives, though engagement is not universal. This agrees with Finucane et al. (2025), who observed that group-based forums enhance online interventions by fostering community and shared connection, though engagement may vary across participants. The statistics suggest that informational support needs strengthening through more structured peer engagement strategies. The relatively narrow gap between agreement and disagreement and the high scores of neutral respondents indicate that current peer-led systems are not consistently reaching or retaining all users.

Regarding whether peer-led groups have helped me feel emotionally supported during my grieving process, the mean score was 3.22 (SD = 1.318). Approximately 50.9% agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 30.3% who disagreed. This indicates that peer-led sessions provide meaningful emotional support for about half of the participants. That about half of the participants agree with Wang et al. (2021), Lenferink et al. (2021), and Mazaheri et al. (2024), who demonstrated that emotional support interventions enhance resilience and emotional well-being. The results imply that informational support is moderately effective in emotional terms but still requires improvement to reduce the sizeable gap between those who benefit and those who do not. This signal a need for more tailored peer support approaches to enhance consistency of emotional impact.

The highest mean score (3.25, SD = 1.346) was recorded for the statement “I have benefited from shared experiences during online peer support interactions.” A total of 55.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 33.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This finding underscores the value of shared lived experiences in

fostering understanding, connection, and mutual encouragement among bereaved individuals. It aligns with Klarare et al. (2020), who reported that online peer communities reduce isolation and strengthen a sense of belonging. It also aligns with Smit et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of affirmation and empowerment through shared narratives. These findings suggest that informational support is most potent when it is experience-based, but improvements are still needed to reduce the percentage of respondents who did not benefit. This indicates that peer sharing mechanisms should be made more inclusive and engaging to ensure broader and more consistent impact.

Online Regular Monitoring

Table 17 presents the percentage distribution of the responses, along with the mean and standard deviation scores for online regular monitoring items.

Table 15 *Online Regular Monitoring*

Item		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have received regular check-ins from facilitators or group leaders.	*F*	35	40	45	71	27	3.07	1.284
	%	16.1%	18.3%	20.6%	32.6%	12.4%		
Online platforms I use for support have provided opportunities for mental health check-ins.	*F*	32	40	40	74	32	3.16	1.296
	%	14.7%	18.3%	18.3%	33.9%	14.7%		
I have given or received feedback that helped improve the quality of support sessions.	*F*	41	26	42	71	38	3.18	1.370
	%	18.9%	12.0%	19.4%	32.9%	17.5%		

The statement “I have received regular check-ins from facilitators or group leaders” recorded a mean score of 3.07 (SD = 1.284). A combined 45.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 34.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 20.6% remained neutral. This suggests that regular facilitator follow-up occurs for many participants, though not consistently across the group. The finding agrees with Barnett and Jaguga (2023), who emphasized the importance of facilitator training and adaptive feedback mechanisms in enhancing the responsiveness of mental health programs. It also aligns with Cook (2025), who observed that digital support systems can be more responsive when structured and monitored effectively. The findings suggest that informational support requires improvement in facilitator consistency and follow-up frequency.

Regarding whether online platforms provided opportunities for mental health check-ins, the mean score was 3.16 (SD = 1.296). Approximately 48.6% agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 33.0% who disagreed. This indicates that nearly half of the respondents perceived structured opportunities for mental health monitoring within the platforms they use. This finding agrees with Situmorang (2020), who found that online counselling reduces stress, anxiety, and depression through accessible digital platforms. It is further supported by Callaghan et al. (2025), who noted that online therapeutic relationships effectively support mental health navigation. The results suggest that informational support is moderately effective but still needs improvement in reach and consistency.

The highest mean score (3.18, SD = 1.370) was recorded for the statement “I have given or received feedback that helped improve the quality of support sessions.” A total of 50.4% agreed or strongly agreed, while 30.9% disagreed. This finding suggests that feedback mechanisms contribute moderately to improving the quality

and responsiveness of support sessions. The finding is consistent with Ng'ang'a (2021), who found that feedback enhances user engagement in online mental health interventions. It also aligns with Barnett and Jaguga (2023), who underscored the importance of equipping facilitators with skills to gather and analyse participant feedback to continuously improve program delivery. The statistics suggest that current feedback mechanisms do not consistently reach or benefit all users, limiting their full potential for improving service quality. This signals the need for strengthened informational support by standardizing feedback processes and ensuring wider participation

From the in-depth interviews, the overarching theme emerging was the need for structured, professionalized, and community-integrated support systems to strengthen online psychosocial programs. Respondents emphasized better program structuring, consistent facilitation, inclusion of mental health professionals, and subsidized therapy sessions to enhance psychological support. They also highlighted blended approaches combining physical and online meetings, gender-sensitive sessions for mothers and fathers, and partnerships with healthcare facilities to improve psychoeducation and cultural sensitivity. These findings suggest that Millennials perceive effective mitigation of physical, social, and psychological bereavement risks as requiring a coordinated, multi-prong strategy that integrates professional expertise, structured programming, and active community engagement. The following were some of the verbatim excerpts:

> “Better structured support, consistent provision of professionals to help the members walk through the journey would be much appreciated” (Respondent #1).

> "Physical presence, meeting up physically at least once a month, support for therapy sessions (we have had virtual group therapy sessions to subsidize the cost). Having professionals as part of the online admins for the group to answer technical questions" (Respondent #3).

The foregoing finding agrees with Cognitive Behavioural Family Therapy principles, which emphasize the therapist's role in guiding cognitive reframing, monitoring progress, and strengthening adaptive coping. It also aligns with Nakao et al. (2021) and McDowell (2023), who highlighted the importance of professional guidance in reshaping maladaptive thoughts and fostering resilience within family systems. The respondents' call for professional oversight on online platforms reflects the emphasis in the literature on intentional therapeutic programs to transform online bereavement groups into healing spaces. Integration of professional and peer support suggests that structured guidance can enhance both emotional safety and intervention effectiveness in online settings. It further implies that bereavement programs are most impactful when they combine clinical expertise with community-based participation. This approach underscores the need for hybrid models that balance accessibility with psychosocial care delivery.

In terms of integration, the quantitative findings indicate that barriers such as data costs and inconsistent video-conferencing participation highlight persistent technological limitations that reduce overall program reach. At the same time, peer support and regular monitoring demonstrate relatively stronger effectiveness, particularly where shared experiences and feedback mechanisms are involved. The qualitative data reinforce these findings by underscoring the need for structured, professionalized, and community-integrated systems that combine both online and

physical engagement. Most respondents called for greater professional involvement, blended support models, and improved program organization to strengthen emotional safety and therapeutic impact. Together, the two data streams show that while online psychosocial support has potential, its effectiveness is optimized when technological accessibility, peer engagement, and professional oversight are simultaneously strengthened within a coordinated hybrid care framework.

Discussions

The first objective of the study was to explore the participants' perception of the benefits of informational support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. The quantitative and qualitative data reveal both convergence and divergence in understanding the benefits of these interventions among Millennials in online child loss support groups in Kenya. Quantitatively, respondents moderately agreed that online grief-related articles, blogs, structured support packages, and digital memorialization tools enhanced their understanding of grief, provided coping strategies, and offered credible information. These findings align with prior literature (Holmgren, 2022; Joo et al., 2022), indicating that informational support reduces uncertainty, improves coping, and empowers the bereaved.

The qualitative analysis complements and expands on the quantitative findings by providing deeper insights into how participants experience informational support. Thematic analysis identified three major themes: (1) education and enhanced understanding of grief, emphasizing accessible online resources such as websites and social media. The finding is consistent with prior studies by Calhoun et al. (2022) and Ngai et al. (2021). The second theme was structured and educational value of grief support packages, which, according to Yıldırım et al. (2023), provide clear guidance,

accountability, and coping strategies. The third theme was therapeutic value of memorialization and multisensory healing practices, which in the view of Finucane et al. (2025) and Golboni et al. (2023), foster emotional comfort, community connection, and adaptive coping. These qualitative insights converge with the quantitative results in showing that informational support improves understanding and coping, but they also reveal additional psychosocial dimensions, such as emotional stabilization, symbolic rituals, and creative expression, that the quantitative measures could not fully capture.

The quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated strong convergence regarding the benefits of informational support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in online child loss support groups in Kenya. Quantitatively, respondents moderately agreed that online grief-related articles, blogs, structured support packages, and digital memorialization tools enhanced their understanding of grief, improved coping strategies, and provided credible information for navigating loss. These findings were reinforced by the qualitative data, where respondents described informational support as valuable in increasing grief literacy, normalizing bereavement experiences, and equipping them with practical coping mechanisms. These nuanced experiences suggest that informational support extends beyond knowledge transmission to include meaning-making and emotional processing.

The second objective of the study was to establish the sense of effectiveness of the emotional support programs helpful in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. The quantitative and qualitative analyses of participants' perceptions of emotional support programs reveal both alignment and nuanced differences in understanding their effectiveness in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in online child loss support groups in

Kenya. Quantitatively, respondents moderately agreed that online memorials, bereavement support videos, debriefing sessions, peer support calls, and professional guidance provided emotional comfort, validation, and coping assistance. While peer and professional support received relatively higher agreement, online memorials had the lowest perceived effectiveness, indicating variability in impact across different modalities. These results align with Taladay-Carter (2025), who suggested that emotional support interventions reduce psychological distress and foster a sense of belonging.

The qualitative findings deepen the understanding of these results by highlighting funeral attendance and collective presence as an overarching theme of emotional support. Participants emphasized that attending funerals, offering structured remembrance, and being physically or symbolically "present" for grieving families provided a sense of belonging, closure, and emotional validation. Expressions such as "standing in the gap," "comfort," and "emotional support" underscored the protective social function of collective mourning. This thematic insight converges with the quantitative data in showing that emotional support is effective, particularly when it involves relational, participatory, and guided interactions. This aligns with literature (Crowley & Kirst, 2025; Cacciatore et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2025) emphasizing the psychosocial benefits of structured grief support. Divergence arises in the observation that purely online or virtual interventions, such as memorials and videos, may not fully replicate the depth of comfort experienced through collective presence.

The third objective of the study was to find out how useful the instrumental support programs are in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. The quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal both points of convergence and divergence in understanding their role in mitigating

bereavement risks among Millennials in online child loss support groups in Kenya. Quantitatively, responses indicate moderate agreement on receiving financial assistance, food support, material aid, and logistical help. However, variability in responses suggests that such support is unevenly experienced. This finding aligns with Arnold and Harris (2025) as well as Taladay-Carter (2025) and Uchida et al. (2022), reflecting challenges in mobilizing and distributing resources online. Statistical analysis further shows that, unlike emotional support, instrumental support was not a significant predictor of reduced bereavement risks ($\beta = .008$, $p > .05$), underscoring its limited protective role relative to emotional interventions. These findings are consistent with prior research (Kirkbride et al., 2024; Mburuga, 2020; Maier & Lachman, 2020), indicating that while instrumental support addresses practical needs and alleviates short-term stress, its effectiveness depends heavily on resource availability, access, and context.

The qualitative analysis enriches the foregoing understanding by highlighting four key themes: financial relief, food donations, logistical support, and material assistance. Participants described financial aid, meal provision, and help with transportation, clothing, and burial logistics as alleviating immediate economic and physical burdens, thereby indirectly supporting emotional well-being and social connectedness. However, many respondents emphasized limitations in the availability and consistency of such support, reflecting the context-dependent and often ad hoc nature of instrumental aid. These qualitative insights converge with the quantitative findings in demonstrating that instrumental support has a buffering role but is not uniformly accessible, aligning with Taladay-Carter (2025), Ayebare et al. (2021), and Liu and Shorey (2021). Divergence is observed in the perceived impact: while quantitative results suggest limited significance in mitigating bereavement risks,

qualitative accounts reveal that when instrumental support is available, it meaningfully reduces immediate stress, fosters communal bonding, and enhances coping capacity. Together, both analyses affirm that instrumental support complements emotional and informational interventions, but its inconsistent availability limits its broader protective effectiveness, as noted in the literature. of

The fourth objective of the study was to assess strategies useful in enhancing the use of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among the Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. The quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal both convergence and divergence in understanding their effectiveness for mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in online child loss support groups in Kenya. Quantitatively, participants reported moderate engagement with mobile-friendly platforms, video conferencing tools, peer-led sessions, and regular facilitator check-ins. While peer support and shared experiences received relatively higher agreement, mobile accessibility and video participation were more limited, signalling technological, connectivity, and financial barriers as revealed in past studies (Cofield, 2024; Molebatsi et al., 2021). Despite these challenges, participants acknowledged meaningful emotional support, resilience-building, and a sense of belonging through peer-led interactions and regular monitoring, consistent with prior studies (Callaghan et al., 2025; Finucane et al., 2025; Klarare et al., 2020, emphasizing the psychosocial benefits of structured online interventions. However, lower scores on access and video engagement suggest divergence from the literature by Ziadni et al. (2021) and Srivastava et al. (2025) advocating the universal effectiveness of online psychosocial interventions.

The qualitative analysis elaborates on quantitative findings by emphasizing the need for structured, professionalized, and community-integrated support systems.

Participants highlighted that effective online psychosocial programs require consistent facilitation, inclusion of mental health professionals, blended online and physical meetings, culturally sensitive programming, and subsidized therapy options. These themes converge with the quantitative results in showing that structured support and interactive engagement are key for meaningful emotional and psychological benefits. Qualitative data also extend the quantitative findings by highlighting strategies that can mitigate technological and accessibility barriers, such as combining online and offline sessions, involving professionals in moderation, and providing community-based partnerships. This aligns with Cognitive Behavioural Family Therapy principles and prior literature (McDowell, 2023; Nakao et al., 2021) emphasizing professional guidance, cognitive reframing, and active monitoring to foster resilience and adaptive coping. The results suggest that while online psychosocial support programs offer moderate benefits, their optimal impact depends on structured, professionally guided, and community-integrated implementation, highlighting the critical interplay of accessibility, professional input, and participatory engagement.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the research findings. This comprised descriptive statistical analysis and inferential testing as well as thematic analysis of qualitative data. The results have been presented and interpreted in line with the study's specific objectives. The findings have been presented using relevant figures and tables, while qualitative analysis has been supported by verbatim excerpts. The results showed that online psychosocial support programs are moderately effective but with room for improvement. In the next chapter, the key findings are summarized and conclusions drawn.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Introduction

The study examined Millennials' perception of members of online support groups in Kenya on the effectiveness of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks. The study explored psychosocial programs through the lens of informational, emotional, and instrumental support. This concluding chapter begins by summarizing the study's major findings. The summary is presented for each specific objective. Conclusions are then drawn based on the findings for each objective. This is followed by recommendations for both practice and policy. The final section of the chapter acknowledges the study's limitations and proposes areas for further research.

Summary of Findings

The first objective of the study was to explore the participants' perception of the benefits of informational support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. The findings showed modest agreement, with over half (50.9%) of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that online grief-related articles and blogs helped them understand their grieving process (M = 3.28, SD = 1.336), while 47.7% found grief support packages useful (M = 3.12, SD = 1.266). This is consistent with Plaud and Urien (2022) and Barnard et al. (2025), who observe that informational support provides clarity and direction to the bereaved, reducing confusion during loss. Similarly, 45.9% reported that structured online grief resources improved their coping skills (M = 3.12, SD = 1.337). In addition, 45.5% agreed that virtual memory spaces helped them process their loss (M = 3.15, SD = 1.269), and 51.4% believed the group shared reliable,

evidence-based information (M = 3.29, SD = 1.308), which recorded the highest mean score. The results align with Joo et al. (2022), who found that peer support networks enhanced engagement and normalized discussions of grief.

Regression analysis revealed that the influence of informational support programs on bereavement risks was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.008$, $t = -0.09$, $p > .05$). This is in contrast to Näppä and Björkman-Randström (2020), who highlighted the positive contribution of structured informational support in alleviating grief. However, the qualitative responses showed that structured education and the educational value of the grief support package were useful in guiding the bereavement journey, and the symbolic and therapeutic value of memorialization. This finding aligns with Taladay-Carter (2025), who noted that mobilized resources can facilitate access to essential services, such as transport and caregiving, during mourning. The contrast between inferential results and qualitative insights signify that while statistical analysis did not detect a measurable effect of informational support on bereavement outcomes, participants' lived experiences indicate that such support still holds perceived practical and emotional value that may not be fully captured by quantitative measures.

The second objective of the study was to establish the sense of effectiveness of the emotional support programs helpful in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. A small majority of respondents perceived emotional support programs as moderately effective in mitigating bereavement risks. Specifically, 51.9% agreed or strongly agreed that watching bereavement support videos helped them feel understood and less alone (M = 3.25, SD = 1.246), while 52.7% agreed/strongly agreed that online debriefing sessions allowed them to express and process grief safely (M = 3.25, SD = 1.307).

Similarly, 55.5% perceived peer support calls as offering genuine connection and encouragement (M = 3.28, SD = 1.283). The finding agrees with Strand et al. (2020), who described online peer support as an effective avenue for building connections and alleviating emotional distress through shared experiences.

The highest rating was recorded for healthcare professionals' emotional guidance, with 54.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing (M = 3.36, SD = 1.381). This finding affirms the results of Wang et al. (2021), which showed that emotional support promotes resilience and mental well-being by reducing psychological distress. The lowest rating was the view that participating in online memorials gave them emotional comfort (M = 3.09, SD = 1.274), with 45.4% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Regression analysis showed that the influence of emotional support programs on bereavement risk was statistically significant ($\beta = .619$, $t = 5.85$, $p < .01$). These results are consistent with Mburuga's (2020) perspective, which emphasizes the critical role of community-based support in helping bereaved parents cope and rebuild their lives. This was corroborated by the qualitative insights that highlighted multisensory healing practices in fostering emotional comfort and connection.

The third objective of the study was to find out how useful the instrumental support programs are in mitigating bereavement risks among Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. Descriptive analysis revealed mixed, generally lower perceptions of the usefulness of instrumental support programs. A total of 40.8% agreed or strongly agreed that they received financial assistance during bereavement (M = 2.91, SD = 1.326), while 43.6% reported receiving food support that met immediate household needs (M = 3.01, SD = 1.300). This indicates that there were more than 50% of the respondents who did not benefit from instrumental support. These results align with Arnold and Harris (2025), who argued that online

instrumental support often depends resource mobilization, which may not reach all affected individuals equally.

Similarly, 41.8% acknowledged receiving practical material support, such as clothing or household items (M = 2.87, SD = 1.325), and 40.4% agreed that this support reduced their financial and household burdens (M = 2.97, SD = 1.300). Slightly more (43.5%) perceived the practical support as timely and appropriate to their needs (M = 3.05, SD = 1.285). This suggests that tangible material support was limited or unevenly distributed among members. This is consistent with Arisi (2021), who recommended providing household items and hygiene products to reduce daily stress among bereaved mothers, suggesting that such support is necessary but not always adequately provided. Regression analysis showed that the influence of instrumental support on bereavement risks was not statistically significant ($\beta = .008$, $t = 0.11$, $p > .05$). Qualitative analysis revealed that financial aid was either limited or could be improved, especially for families facing substantial hospital expenses, food support was not consistently available, though funeral attendance and collective presence was a form of emotional and social support. The respondents' emphasis on financial gaps aligns with the observations by Obst et al. (2021) and Tognela et al. (2025) that while instrumental support relieves distress, its effectiveness depends on its adequacy.

The fourth objective of the study was to assess strategies useful in enhancing the use of online psychosocial support programs in mitigating bereavement risks among the Millennials in the online child loss support groups in Kenya. Results showed that 50.9% agreed/strongly agreed that peer-led groups helped them feel emotionally supported during their grieving process (M = 3.22, SD = 1.318). The results also showed that 55.6% agreed/strongly agreed that they benefited from shared

experiences during online peer support interactions (M = 3.25, SD = 1.346). The finding further shows that 50.4% agreed/strongly agreed that giving or receiving feedback improved the quality of support sessions (M = 3.18, SD = 1.370). That at least half of the respondents viewed peer-led groups positively aligns with Lenferink et al. (2021) and Mazaheri et al. (2024), who demonstrated that emotional support interventions enhance psychological well-being. The results signal room for improvement to reduce the gap between those who benefit and those who do not.

From the in-depth interviews, the overarching theme emerging was the need for structured, professionalized, and community-integrated support systems to strengthen online psychosocial programs. Participants emphasized better program structuring, consistent facilitation, inclusion of mental health professionals, and subsidized therapy sessions to enhance psychological support. They also highlighted blended approaches combining physical and online meetings, gender-sensitive sessions for mothers and fathers, and partnerships with healthcare facilities to improve psychoeducation and cultural sensitivity. These results affirm Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapy principles, which emphasize the therapist's role in guiding cognitive healing, monitoring progress, and strengthening adaptive coping. It also aligns with Nakao et al. (2021) and McDowell (2023), who stressed the importance of professional guidance in reshaping maladaptive thoughts and fostering resilience within family systems.

Together, the results of the study affirm Social Support Theory which posit that social support systems mitigate stress and enhance coping during bereavement in as much as the consensus is nuanced. Specifically, the statistically significant effect of emotional support programs on bereavement risk ($\beta = .619$, $p < .01$), alongside moderate positive perceptions of informational support and the qualitative affirmation

of structured and professionalized interventions, supports the theoretical claim by Strand et al. (2020) that social and cognitively guided support fosters resilience and adaptive coping. However, the non-significant effects of informational support ($\beta = -.008$, $p > .05$) and instrumental support ($\beta = .008$, $p > .05$) contradict the theory's assumption of beneficial outcomes across all support systems. Thus, the study affirms Social Support Theory by showing that emotional support has the strongest effect size on bereavement risk reduction. The addition, the findings strengthen Cognitive Behavioural Family Therapy by underscoring the salience of structured, professionally guided interventions in in the healing process following bereavement.

Conclusion

This study shows that online psychosocial support programs have shown great potential for helping bereaved parents, especially when traditional support systems are limited or hard to reach. This aligns with work by Cacciatore (2021) which highlights online psychosocial support programs as digital platforms designed to provide emotional and psychological support where traditional systems are limited. Among the three types of support considered, emotional support was the most significant factor in easing the challenges of grief for millennials in online grief support groups. This affirms Kang and Yoo (2022) who emphasize emotional support as a basic component of psychosocial interventions. Connecting with others who share similar experiences created a sense of belonging, reduced feelings of isolation, and allowed participants to process their grief in a supportive environment. This concurs with the notion advanced by Rosenblatt (2020) that online forums foster connection, reduce isolation, and help individuals cope with grief through shared experiences.

The first objective of the study was to explore how participants perceive the benefits of informational support programs in reducing bereavement risks for

millennials in online child loss support groups in Kenya. The study concludes that informational support programs play a modest role in reducing the risks of bereavement. Participants recognized the value of informational resources such as grief-related articles, blogs, structured online materials, and evidence-based content in improving their understanding of the grieving process and strengthening their coping strategies. This aligns with Zuelke et al. (2021) who identified online psychosocial support programs as platforms that provide informational resources to help bereaved individuals understand grief and cope effectively. The study highlighted the importance of educational guidance and the therapeutic benefits of memorialization in helping individuals find meaning in their loss and navigate the grieving journey.

The second objective of the study was to establish how effective emotional support programs are in reducing bereavement risks for millennials in online child loss support groups in Kenya. Emotional support programs were the most influential type of support in addressing bereavement risks. This is in accord with Rosenblatt (2020) that emotional and social support are central in mitigating grief-related distress and improving psychological adjustment after child loss. Most respondents viewed emotional support activities such as bereavement support videos, online debriefing sessions, peer support calls, and emotional guidance from healthcare professionals as helpful in encouraging emotional expression, building connections, and reducing feelings of isolation related to child loss. This agrees with Currier et al. (2020) that online counselling, support groups, and structured peer interactions enhance emotional expression and reduce isolation among bereaved individuals.

The third objective of the study was to find out the usefulness of instrumental support programs in reducing bereavement risks for millennials in online child loss support groups in Kenya. The study concluded that instrumental support programs

were somewhat less effective in addressing bereavement risks. This statement agrees with the literature (Obst et al., 2021; Tognela et al., 2025) which suggests that while instrumental support can relieve distress, its impact is often constrained when resources are insufficient or inconsistently provided. While some practical support, such as attending funerals and showing solidarity, was appreciated, the financial and material assistance provided through support groups often fell short of meeting the significant economic demands of bereavement. This aligns with Wagner et al. (2020) who highlighted that bereavement often involves significant social and economic burdens, and inadequate material support can limit the effectiveness of coping and recovery processes.

The fourth objective of the study was to evaluate strategies that help improve the use of online psychosocial support programs to reduce bereavement risks among Millennials in online child loss support groups in Kenya. The study concluded that improving the effectiveness of these programs requires creating more organized, professionally supported, and community-integrated support systems. While participants viewed peer-led interactions positively for providing emotional validation and shared experiences, they highlighted the need for better program organization, consistent facilitation, and more involvement from trained mental health professionals to enhance the quality of support services. Other strategies identified included offering subsidized therapy sessions, using blended support models that combine online and in-person engagement, and forming partnerships with healthcare institutions to enhance psychoeducation. In sum, the study showed that online psychosocial support programs can complement traditional grief counselling services, especially for Millennials who are very active on digital communication platforms. This aligns with extant literature (Cook, 2025; Maier & Lachman, 2020; Tognela et

al., 2025) which indicates that technology-based support systems are increasingly vital in maintaining social connections and providing psychosocial support in modern, digitally connected societies.

Recommendations

The study makes several recommendations as follows:

i) Recommendation to Online Bereavement Support Group Leaders: Due to the positive perception of informational resources, group leaders should focus on improving the content and delivery. Leaders should schedule psycho-educational series led by trained professionals.

ii) Online Bereavement Support Group Members: Since emotional engagement and peer connection were found to be more effective in reducing bereavement risks than informational or instrumental support, members should be encouraged to actively take part in interactive program elements.

iii) Counselling and Mental Health Professionals: Because emotional support programs showed a strong link to reducing bereavement risk, and healthcare professionals' guidance received the highest rating (M = 3.36), bereavement counsellors should take on a more central and organized role in online support settings.

iv) Recommendations for Learning Institutions: Institutions training counsellors, psychologists, and social workers should include digital mental health and online counselling skills in their programs. As online support systems become more critical in mental health care, future practitioners need the skills to manage online grief support.

v) Recommendations for the Online Support Groups: Online intervention needs to be popularized in these institutions to create awareness of the potential in online intervention to a greater population.

vi) Government: Government agencies: As policymakers, the government should develop policies that recognize and partner with online support groups to offer grief counselling services to improve education and referral options.

Areas for Further Research

Although the objectives of the study were achieved, a few limitations are acknowledged in retrospect. Firstly, the male voice was significantly underrepresented, potentially due to the relatively smaller number of male members in the online bereavement groups. Secondly, not all bereaved millennials are online: some may be in offline bereavement support groups. Thirdly, it is not clear at what stage of bereavement emotional, instrumental, and/or informational support is most effective. These limitations provide avenues for future research as follows:

i) Future research should look into the experiences and views of bereaved male Millennials in both online and offline child loss support settings. These studies should examine how men express grief, cope, and what types of psychosocial support they value most.

ii) Future research should go beyond online communities to include Millennials who are in offline bereavement support groups, faith-based networks, and informal community gatherings.

iii) Studies could also investigate if hybrid models that blend online and offline support provide additional benefits. This would help understand support methods in both digital and physical spaces and reveal any differences in how effective bereavement support programs are perceived.

iv) Future research should explore how the effectiveness of emotional, instrumental, and informational support changes at different stages of the bereavement process. Long-term studies that follow bereaved individuals in the immediate aftermath of child loss through the following months and years could show which support strategies make the most difference at each stage.

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Appendix I: Request for Research Permission

Gatura, Catherine Wamuyu
Pan Africa Christian University
Nairobi
catherine.gatura@students.pacuniversity.ac.ke
Phone: 0722 442282

Date: _____

The Director/ Chairperson
Name of Organization _____
Nairobi

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am conducting a study titled: *"Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Online Psychosocial Support Programs in Mitigating Bereavement Risks among Millennials in Kenya."* The study seeks to assess the role of online psychosocial support programs in helping bereaved parents cope with grief and to identify gaps that can inform policy and practice.

The research will involve members of existing online bereavement support programs, including *Still a Mom Program, Zuri Nzilani Foundation, Finding Purpose in Grief,* and *Mom to Mom.* Data will be collected through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. Ethical standards will be strictly observed, including confidentiality, informed consent, and use of data strictly for academic purposes.

I therefore kindly seek your permission to engage members of your organization in this study. A copy of the final report will be shared with you upon completion.

I look forward to your favorable response.

Yours faithfully,

Gatura, Catherine Wamuyu
MMFT/15925/0/19
PAC University

Appendix II: Informed Consent

Dear respondent,

The loss of a child is one of the most devastating experiences a parent can face. This study aims to understand how online bereavement programs—such as Still a Mom, Zuri Nzilani Foundations, Lari Support group, and Psych-Rescue —are perceived by Millennials in Kenya as helpful in dealing with such loss. Specifically, the study will investigate the types of informational, emotional, and instrumental support available and assess strategies to improve their effectiveness in mitigating the physical, psychological, and social risks of bereavement.

Study Procedures: If you agree to take part, you will be asked to complete a structured questionnaire, which should take about 20 to 30 minutes of your time. Some participants may also be invited to participate in a one-on-one interview lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes. These interviews will be conducted online or by phone, whichever is most convenient for you. If interviews are conducted, they may be audio recorded with your permission for accuracy and analysis. All data will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

Benefits: Although you may not receive any direct benefit from participating, your input will contribute to a deeper understanding of how online psychosocial programs can better support grieving parents. The results of this study may inform government policy, improve mental health strategies, and strengthen bereavement care in Kenya.

Risks: Please note that discussing the loss of a child may bring emotional discomfort. You have the right to skip any questions you are not comfortable answering and to stop participating at any point. If the discussion becomes distressing, you will be referred to a professional counsellor or support resources available within your bereavement support group.

Confidentiality: All the information you share will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity will not be included in any report or publication arising from the study. Any data collected will be securely stored, and only the research team will have access to it.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to take part or withdraw at any time without facing any penalties or loss of benefits. You are also free to decline to answer specific questions without providing any explanation.

Consent Statement

By agreeing to participate, you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided above. You understand that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time. You also acknowledge that your responses will be treated with confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes.

Signature: 

Date: **15th December 2025** Researcher's Name: **Catherine Wamuyu Gatura**

Appendix III: Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender:
   - Male ☐
   - Female ☐
3. Highest Level of Education:
   - Secondary education ☐
   - College education ☐
   - University education ☐
4. Duration in the online bereavement support group:
   - Less than 6 months ☐
   - 6 months to 1 year ☐
   - More than one year ☐

Section B: Informational Support Programs

5. Rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
   (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
a) Online grief-related articles and blogs have helped me understand my grieving process.					
b) Grief support packages (e.g., toolkits, manuals) shared in the group were useful.					
c) Access to structured online grief resources has improved my coping skills.					
d) Virtual memory spaces (e.g., tribute pages, digital scrapbooks) helped me process my loss.					
e) The group shares reliable and evidence-based informational content.					

Section C: Emotional Support Programs

6. Instruction: Rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
   (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
a) Participating in online memorials gave me emotional comfort.					
b) Watching bereavement support videos helped me feel understood and less alone.					
c) Online debriefing sessions allowed me to express and process grief safely.					
d) Peer support calls (phone/video) offered genuine connection and encouragement.					
e) Health care professionals in the group offered valuable emotional guidance.					

Section D: Instrumental Support Programs

7. Instruction: Rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
   (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
a) I received financial assistance from the group during the bereavement period.					
b) The group provided food support that met my household's immediate needs during bereavement.					
c) The group provided practical material support (e.g., clothing or household items) during bereavement.					
d) The practical support I received from the group reduced my financial and household burden during bereavement.					
e) The practical support I received from the group was timely and appropriate to my immediate needs.					

Section E: Strategies for Enhancing Online Psychosocial Support Programs

8. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
   (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Technology Integration and Accessibility					
1. I have accessed online psychosocial support through mobile-friendly platforms.					
2. The use of video conferencing tools (e.g., Zoom) has improved my participation in support sessions.					
3. Data costs have influenced how often I access online support programs.					
Online Peer Support Program					
4. I have participated in peer-led support sessions within online bereavement groups.					
5. Peer-led groups have helped me feel emotionally supported during my grieving process.					
6. I have benefited from shared experiences during online peer support interactions.					
Online Regular Monitoring					
7. I have received regular check-ins from facilitators or group leaders.					
8. Online platforms I use for support have provided opportunities for mental health check-ins.					
9. I have given or received feedback that helped improve the quality of support sessions.					

Section F: Bereavement Risk Assessment

9. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
   (1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a bit, 5 = Extremely)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
a) I have experienced physical health issues (e.g., fatigue, sleep problems) due to grief.					
b) I have struggled with my psychological well-being (e.g., anxiety, sadness, irritability).					
c) The loss has made me fear for my own life or that of other family members.					
d) My ability to socialize or parent (if applicable) has been significantly affected.					
e) I have experienced symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress (e.g., flashbacks, numbness).					

Appendix IV: Key Informant Interviews

1. In your opinion, how have the following types of informational support programs helped you in mitigating physical, social, and psychological child loss bereavement risks in the online support group?
    i. Online Resources (Websites, reviewed journals, Grief e-workbooks)

    _____

    _____

    _____

    ii. Grief Support packages (Information letters, coping strategies materials)

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    iii. Virtual memoirs

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    iv. Any other

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. In your opinion, how have the various types of emotional support programs been useful in aiding the alleviation of physical, social, and psychological child loss bereavement risks within the online support group?
    i. Online memorials.

_____
_____
_____
_____

ii. Bereavement support videos

_____
_____
_____

iii. Online debriefing programs.

_____
_____
_____

iv. Peer Support telephone calls.

_____
_____
_____

v. Health care personnel support.

_____
_____
_____

vi. Any other

_____
_____
_____

3. In your opinion, how have the following instrumental support programs supported you in mitigating physical, social, and psychological child loss

bereavement risks for you and other Millennials in the online psychosocial support groups

i. Financial aid

_____

_____

_____

ii. Food donation

_____

_____

_____

iii. Material support

_____

_____

_____

iv. Attending a funeral

_____

_____

_____

v. Any other

4. In your view, what are some of the strategies that can be employed in enhancing online psychosocial support programs to make them helpful in mitigating physical, social and psychological child loss bereavement risks among the Millennials in the online support groups?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix V: Ethical Clearance Certificate



Thika Road Campus | Valley Road Campus
P.O. Box 56875-00200 | +254 730955000 | +254 730955501/2
enquiries@pacuniversity.ac.ke | www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

REF: PAC/ISERC/103/10/25 Date: 21/10/2025
TO: Gatura, Catherine Wamuyu (MMFT/15925/0/19)
PAC UNIVERSITY

Dear Madam,
RE: PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN MITIGATING BEREAVEMENT RISKS: A CASE STUDY OF MILLENNIALS IN ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS IN KENYA

This is to inform you that PAC_ ISERC has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is PAC/ISERC/103/10/25. The approval period is 21st October 2025– 21st October 2026.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including (informed consent and study instruments,) will be used
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *PAC_ISERC*.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *PAC_ ISERC* within 72 hours of notification
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or the welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *PAC_ISERC* within 72 hours
v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *PAC_ ISERC*.

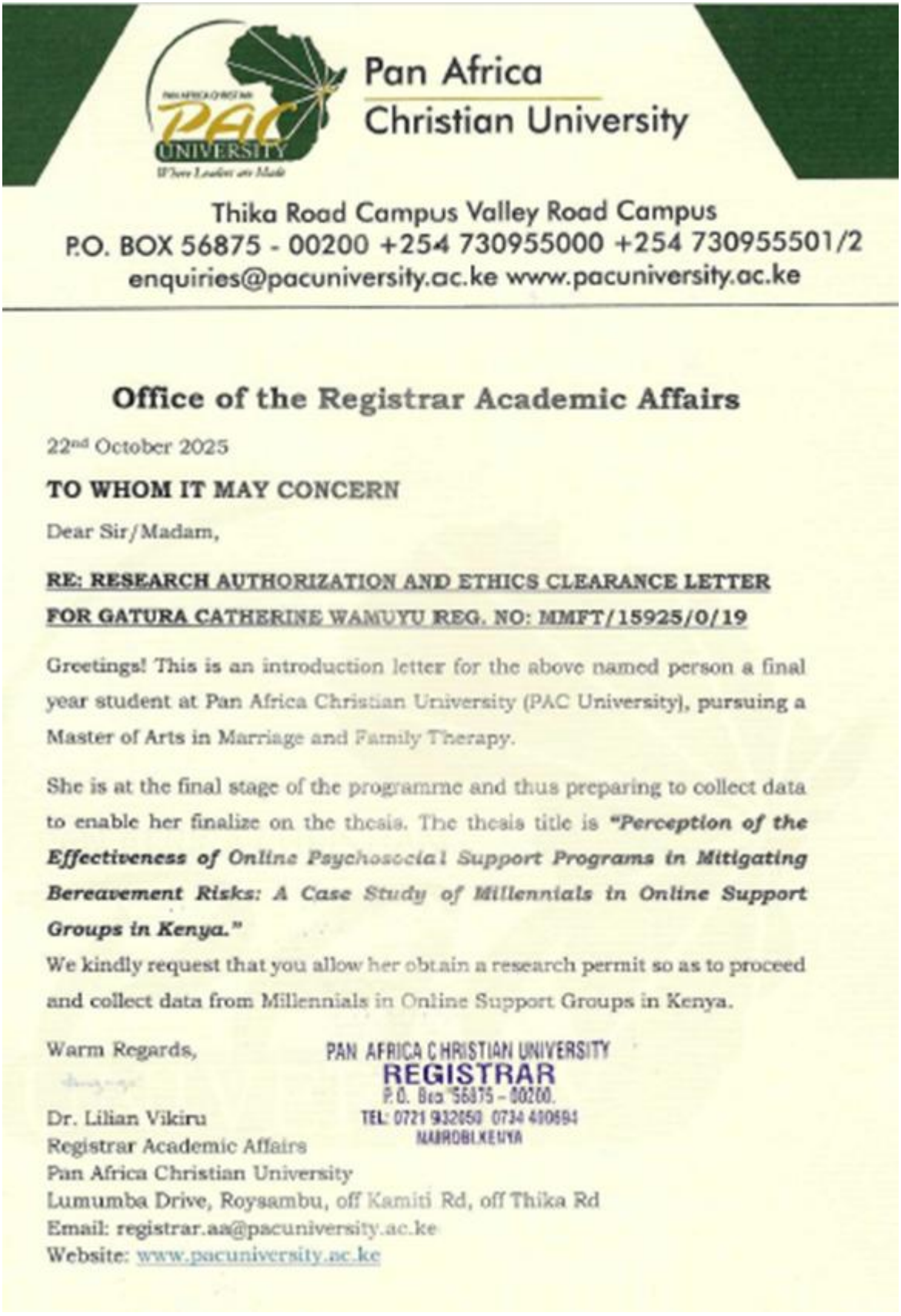
Before commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Jane Kinuthia

Chair, ISERC

Appendix VI: PAC University Research Authorization Letter



Pan Africa Christian University

Thika Road Campus Valley Road Campus
P.O. BOX 56875 - 00200 +254 730955000 +254 730955501/2
enquiries@pacuniversity.ac.ke www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Office of the Registrar Academic Affairs

22nd October 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER FOR GATURA CATHERINE WAMUYU REG. NO: MMFT/15925/0/19

Greetings! This is an introduction letter for the above named person a final year student at Pan Africa Christian University (PAC University), pursuing a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy.

She is at the final stage of the programme and thus preparing to collect data to enable her finalize on the thesis. The thesis title is ***"Perception of the Effectiveness of Online Psychosocial Support Programs in Mitigating Bereavement Risks: A Case Study of Millennials in Online Support Groups in Kenya."***

We kindly request that you allow her obtain a research permit so as to proceed and collect data from Millennials in Online Support Groups in Kenya.

Warm Regards,

PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
REGISTRAR
P.O. Box 56875 - 00200.
TEL: 0721 932050 0734 410694
NAIROBI,KENYA

Dr. Lilian Vikiru
Registrar Academic Affairs
Pan Africa Christian University
Lumumba Drive, Roysambu, off Kamiti Rd, off Thika Rd
Email: registrar.aa@pacuniversity.ac.ke
Website: www.pacuniversity.ac.ke

Appendix VII: NACOSTI Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 891175

Date of Issue: 29/October/2025

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Ms.. CATHERINE WAMUYU KITHAKA of Pan Africa Christian University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN MITIGATING BEREAVEMENT RISKS: A CASE STUDY OF MILLENNIALS IN ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS IN KENYA for the period ending : 29/October/2026.

License No: NACOSTI/P/25/4181571

891175

Applicant Identification Number

Ag. Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions

Appendix VIII: County Government of Kiambu Research Clearance Letter

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KIAMBU
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
P.O Box 2344 - 00900 Kiambu, Kenya
Tel: +254 709 877 000 Email: info@Kiambu.go.ke Website: www.Kiambu.go.ke Twitter: @KiambuCountyGov

REFERENCE: KIAMBU/HRDU/PAA/01/2026 **Date: 29/01/26**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

RE: CLEARANCE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KIAMBU COUNTY

This letter serves to confirm that the Kiambu County Health Research and Development Unit (HRDU) has received a formal request from **Catherine Wamuyu Gatura Kithaka from Pan Africa Christian University** to conduct research within Kiambu County; the research protocol title being **"Perception of the Effectiveness of Online Psychosocial Support Programs in Mitigating Bereavement Risks: A Case Study of Millennials in Online Support Groups in Kenya."**

We have duly inspected the application documents and found that the following ethical approval and NACOSTI licence required for the conduct of this research have been obtained:

- Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (ISERC) approval from the PAC_ISERC Ref: **PAC/ISERC/103/10/25** dated 21st October 2025, and valid till 21st October 2026.
- National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) research licence Ref: **NACOSTI/P/25/4181571** valid till 29th October 2026.

We have approved the same, and therefore, no further clearance from another regulatory body is required to conduct the research within the county of Kiambu till 31st October 2026.

However, the facility or facilities in which the research is being carried out must ensure that they are conversant with the remit of the study, that the study is conducted in line with their institutional norms on conducting research, and that the established charges for the research are duly received.

This note also accords the principal investigator the duty to provide feedback on their research at both the facility and county levels after completion of the study.

Kind regards,

DR. KIRAGU GEORGE
AG. COUNTY HEALTH RESEARCH OFFICER