



PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

MAY -AUG 2024 END OF SEMESTER EXAM

CAMPUS: ONLINE

DEPARTMENT: PSYCHOLOGY

COURSE CODE: MCP 508

COURSE TITLE: LOSS, GRIEF AND TRAUMA

EXAM DATE: DECEMBER 2025

DURATION: 3 HOURS

TIME: 6-9pm

SECTION A (COMPULSORY) 20 MARKS

Question one

Mary, a 38-year-old primary school teacher, lost her 10-year-old son, Brian, in a road accident six months ago. Brian was her only child. Since the incident, Mary has been struggling with overwhelming sadness, guilt, and anger. She blames herself for allowing Brian to walk to school that morning instead of driving him as she usually did. Her husband, Peter, copes differently — he has thrown himself into work, avoiding discussions about their son. This has created emotional distance between them. Mary reports feeling “alone in her grief” and has withdrawn from friends, church activities, and her students. At school, her performance has declined. She often cries in the staffroom and has taken several sick days. Her colleagues try to comfort her, but she feels misunderstood and says, “No one knows what it’s like unless they’ve lost a child.” Recently, the headteacher referred her to a counselor, as her emotional state seemed to be deteriorating. In the first session, Mary

expressed doubt about whether counseling could help. She said, “What’s the point? He’s gone, and nothing can change that.”

- a) Identify two main emotional and behavioral reactions Mary is showing in her grief (4 marks)
- b) Examine any two counseling approaches that can be used to support Mary in processing her grief. (6 marks)
- c) Discuss three ways in which a counselor can help Mary and Peter communicate and grieve together. (6 marks)
- d) As a counselor, how would you take care of yourself emotionally while handling such a case? (4 marks)

SECTION B (ANSWER ANY TWO QUESTIONS)

Question two

- a) *Aisha is a 28-year-old woman who recently relocated to a new city after surviving a road accident that claimed the lives of her husband and 4-year-old daughter. The accident occurred six months ago when the family was returning home from a wedding. Aisha was the only survivor, sustaining physical injuries and severe emotional trauma. Since the accident, Aisha has had difficulty sleeping, frequent flashbacks of the scene, and intense guilt for being the one who survived. She avoids any mention of her family and has withdrawn from her friends and relatives. She has also stopped working, citing lack of concentration and motivation. Her sister persuaded her to attend counseling, though Aisha often sits quietly during sessions, avoids eye contact, and sometimes breaks into tears when certain topics arise. The counselor notices that she flinches at loud noises and seems hypervigilant. Over the sessions, Aisha discloses that she feels “cursed” and that she keeps hearing her daughter calling out to her at night. She says she does not see the point of living anymore and sometimes wishes she had died too.*
 - A) Explain in two ways how cultural beliefs (e.g., feeling “cursed”) may affect Aisha’s healing process. (2 marks)
 - b) Examine any two symptoms which indicate that Aisha may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). (4 marks)
 - c) Discuss any two counseling techniques or therapeutic approaches which might be most effective in helping her. (4marks)

Question three

Eight-year-old Anyango lives with her father and younger brother in Nairobi. Six months ago, her mother died suddenly from complications during childbirth. Before her mother’s death, Anyango was a cheerful, playful, and top-performing student. However, since the loss, her behavior has changed noticeably. At school, Anyango has become withdrawn and easily distracted. Her teacher reports that she often stares out the window during lessons and

avoids playing with her friends during break time. At home, her father notices she frequently asks when her mother will “come back from the hospital.” Sometimes, she wakes up crying at night, saying she dreamt her mother was calling her. Her father, struggling with his own grief, often avoids discussing the death, hoping Amani will “get over it” with time. He tells her to “be strong for her little brother.” However, Anyango has begun showing signs of guilt, saying, “Maybe if I had helped more, Mommy wouldn’t have died.” The school counselor begins meeting with Anyango for grief support. During the sessions, Anyango draws pictures of her family, often leaving her mother out. Through gentle conversations, she expresses confusion about what death means and worries that her father might also die. The counselor works with her through play and storytelling to help her express feelings and understand death as permanent and not her fault.

a)) Illustrate with an example how caregivers can balance addressing their own grief while supporting a child’s grieving process. (2 marks)

b) Describe in two ways how Anyango’s understanding of death reflect her developmental stage. (4 marks)

c) Examine any two strategies that can be used to help children like Anyango understand the concept of death appropriately. (4 marks)

Questionfour

Mr. Kamau, an 82-year-old retired teacher, had been married to his wife, Esther, for 56 years. The couple lived together in their rural home in Nyeri, Kenya, and were well known in their community. Their three children all live abroad. Esther had been in declining health for several years due to heart disease, and Mr. Kamau was her primary caregiver. After a prolonged illness, Esther passed away peacefully at home. Mr. Kamau was present at the time of her death. Although he was relieved that she was no longer suffering, he soon began to feel intense loneliness. The once-busy home felt empty, and he struggled to adjust to daily life without her. In the months following the funeral, Mr. Kamau withdrew from his church group and social activities. He stopped attending men’s fellowship meetings and rarely answered phone calls from his children. His appetite declined, and he lost noticeable weight. He began complaining of persistent fatigue and lack of purpose. At times, he spoke to Esther’s photograph and said he felt her presence in the house. His neighbors grew concerned when he started neglecting his small garden and forgetting to eat. When a community health worker visited, Mr. Kamau said quietly, “I don’t know what to do now. For so many years, everything I did was for her.”

a) In what way might cultural beliefs about death and mourning affect Mr. Kamau’s adjustment. (2 marks)

- a) Examine in two ways how aging influence the grieving process compared to younger adults. (4 marks)
- a) Illustrate in two ways how community members and faith groups may play a role in supporting grieving elders. (4 marks)

b) **Question Five**

Faith, a 16-year-old high school student, lost her twin brother, Felix, in a road accident six months ago. The two were inseparable — they shared classes, friends, and hobbies like music and athletics. Since Felix’s death, Faith’s behavior and mood have drastically changed. Faith has become withdrawn and irritable. Her once excellent academic performance has declined, and she no longer participates in school activities. She avoids conversations about her brother, insisting she is “fine” when asked. Her teachers report that she sometimes stares blankly during class and has been caught crying in the restroom. At home, Faith has grown distant from her parents, especially her mother, who openly grieves. Faith spends long hours on social media, scrolling through old photos and listening to songs she used to share with her brother. Recently, she posted messages online expressing guilt for “not saving him” and saying she feels “half-dead.” Her mother has sought counseling, worried that Faith is not coping well and may be depressed.

- a) Critically analyze how confidentiality should be handled if Faith expresses suicidal thoughts online. (2 marks)
- b) Examine in two ways how adolescent development may influence her grieving process. (4 marks)
- b) Illustrate in two ways how peer relationships and social media may affect her grief experience. (4 marks)