

Attachment Theory and Quality of Life: Grief Education and Training

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Abstract : Quality of life is an important component for many. With that in mind, everyone will experience some type of loss within his or her lifetime. A person can experience loss due to break up, separation, divorce, estrangement, or death. An individual may experience loss of a job, loss of capacity, or loss caused by human or natural-caused disasters. An individual's response to such a loss is unique to them, and not everyone will seek services to assist them with their grief due to loss. Counseling can promote positive outcomes for clients that are grieving by addressing the client's personal loss and helping the client process their grief. However, a lack of understanding on the part of counselors of how people grieve may result in negative client outcomes such as poor health, psychological distress, or an increased risk of depression. Education and training in grief counseling can improve counselors' problem recognition and skills in treatment planning. The purpose of this study was to examine whether the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) master's degree counseling students view themselves as having been adequately trained in grief theories and skills. Many people deal with grief issues that prevent them from having joy or purpose in their lives and that leaves them unable to engage in positive opportunities or relationships. This study examined CACREP-accredited master's counseling students' self-reported competency, training, and education in providing grief counseling. The implications for positive social change arising from the research may be to incorporate and promote education and training in grief theories and skills in a majority of counseling programs and to provide motivation to incorporate professional standards for grief training and practice in the mental health counseling field. The theoretical foundation used was modern grief theory based on John Bowlby's work on Attachment Theory. The overall research question was how competent do master's-level counselors view themselves regarding the education or training they received in grief theories or counseling skills in their CACREP-accredited studies. The author used a non-experimental, one shot survey comparative quantitative research design. Cicchetti's Grief Counseling Competency Scale (GCCS) was administered to CACREP master's-level counseling students enrolled in their practicum or internship experience, which resulted in 153 participants. Using a MANCOVA, there was significance found for relationships between coursework taken and (a) perceived assessment skills ($p = .029$), (b) perceived treatment skills ($p = .025$), and (c) perceived conceptual skills and knowledge ($p = .003$). Results of this study provided insight for CACREP master's-level counseling programs to explore and discuss curriculum coursework inclusion of education and training in grief theories and skills.

Keywords : counselor education and training, grief education and training, grief and loss, quality of life

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