

# Collective Grief Storytelling as a Form of Social Media Therapy @GhenghisKhan01\*

Zbirowe opowiadanie historii o żałobie jako forma terapii  
w mediach społecznościowych @GhenghisKhan01

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**Abstract.** Grief autobiography is a form of storytelling where the narrator tells personal stories of hurt and loss. Art-based research is used to explore the author's personal grief and how it is implicated in the grief of @GhenghisKhan01 and that of other netizens. This article examines @GhenghisKhan01's tweets about grief as an intersection of social media grief storytelling and therapy as referential to the author's personal loss. This study analyses @GhenghisKhan01's autobiographical tweets of 19 March 2022, about the death of his father and other responses to similar autobiographical tweets that others tweeted under his, forming a thematic thread of responses to grief and loss that has 4,355 retweets, 837 quotes, 13.7k likes, which represent the content of participatory grief autobiographical narratives. This study accounts for how the researcher is implicated in this grief. The study examines the style and functions of Twitter grief storytelling from a referential point of view. This study conclude that autobiographical grief narratives shared on social media as posted by @Ghenghiskhan01, serves as a medium for both personal emotional expression and collective mourning.

**Keywords:** grief, autobiographical narrative, death, loss, tweet, art therapy

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**Abstrakt.** Autobiografia żałoby to forma narracji, w której narrator opowiada osobiste historie o bólu i stracie. Badania oparte na sztuce służą do analizy osobistej żałoby autora i jej wpływu na żałobę @GhenghisKhan01 i innych internautów. Artykuł analizuje tweety @GhenghisKhan01 na temat żałoby, jako połączenie narracji żałoby w mediach społecznościowych i terapii jako odniesienia do osobistej straty autora. Opracowanie analizuje autobiograficzne tweety @GhenghisKhan01 z 19 marca 2022 r., dotyczące śmierci jego ojca, oraz inne odpowiedzi na podobne autobiograficzne tweety, które inni zamieścili pod jego pseudonimem, tworząc tematyczny wątek odpowiedzi na żałobę i stratę, który ma 4355 retweetów, 837 cytatów i 13,7 tys. polubień, co stanowi treść partycypacyjnych narracji autobiograficznych o żałobie. Artykuł wyjaśnia zaangażowanie badacza w tę żałobę. Badanie analizuje styl i funkcje narracji żałobnych na Twitterze z perspektywy referencyjnej. Wnioski z badania wskazują, że autobiograficzne narracje żałobne, publikowane w mediach społecznościowych przez użytkownika @Ghenghiskhan01, służą jako medium zarówno do wyrażania osobistych emocji, jak i do przeżywania zbiorowej żałoby.

**Słowa kluczowe:** żałoba, narracja autobiograficzna, śmierć, strata, tweet, arteterapia

## INTRODUCTION

Participatory grief autobiography is a therapeutic approach where individuals create a personal narrative of their grief experience through storytelling. Grief autobiography function within the framework of art where individuals create a personal narratives that explore individual's experiences with grief written in the first person narrative method. It is a reflective account of their emotional journey, memories, and experiences related to personal loss. Grief, like trauma, exists in a synthetic mode of the referential, and this is the underlying framework of analysis in this article. I write this article from a place of personal grief after two years of the loss of my brother, Chinemerem Peter Onuoha. @GhenghisKhan01's tweets of 19 March 2022, about the death of his father awakened personal grief. My loss suddenly became present after two years, and I had to read all the tweet stories that centred on personal grief in @GhenghisKhan01's personal tweet narrative of loss. I had retweeted his story as a means of owning up to his grief as a reference to mine. Although I had written about my brother's death in a published poetry collection titled *Covid Rift*, I still could not account for what creative writing did to me because I came from a literary profession where a researcher is not allowed to examine his work.

Ross W. Prior notes that "arts practitioners have ways of knowing about themselves as »artists«, and these have grown out of their deep and personally significant experiences" (Prior, 2013, p. 57). It is this "deep" and "personally significant experience" that I bring to bear on @GhenghisKhan01's tweet grief narrative. Roger Wooster corroborated the foregoing thus: "The arts can transform our lives and our attitudes..." (Wooster, 2010, p. 282). This transformation is indicative of

the relief art brings as a malleable management of grief. @GhenghisKhan01 and his collaborative storytellers of grief give me the self-referential to the site of my personal grief, and by extension, analysing his literary presentation of his grief and his collaborative storytellers, I, as a participant, give sufficient explanation to my own grief in relation to my craft.

Cathy Caruth observes that “traumatic neurosis emerges as the unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind” (Caruth, 1996, p. 2). My loss could not be left behind, and @GhenghisKhan01’s narrative grief becomes a reference to personal trauma. Peter Amsel, acknowledging the role of the personal in observation, submits that “there is no amount of observation that can make up for the benefit that experience imparts upon an individual who has lived with and through adversity” (Amsel, 2010, p. 216). This article is an attempt to combine experience and observation to arrive at meaning with regards to storytelling and social media therapy.

Shaun McNiff observes that “arts have served the purpose of offering sensible signs of experience. They bear witness by presenting what can be seen, heard, felt, and understood, all of which align with the evidence as showing whether or not something exists and its use in supporting a point” (McNiff, 2014, p. 255). This research attempts to transmit personal observation of what narrative grief does to the individual, which is in line with Prior’s “practice of doing” (Prior, 2013, p.59). This is in line with Laury Rapaport’s assertion that “artistic expression serves to explicate our self-sense or embodied knowing” (Rapaport, 2013, p. 97). @GhenghisKhan01’s tweets of 19 March 2022, of grief awaken my grief and implicate Rapaport’s submission that “listening to our inner is a guide for conducting art-based research. This inner felt sense calls forth and crystalizes known and unknown dimensions that integrate this holistic knowing” (Rapaport, 2013, p. 98). An attempt to analyse @GhenghisKhan01’s grief narrative is referential to my personal loss and the relief storytelling impacts on me. Dita Judith Federman affirms the foregoing thus; “empathy is a felt sense that lends form to feelings and is expressed words” (Federman, 2011, p. 137).

Social media is a space that embodies both serious and non-serious social issues where netizens bond through tweeting within their social spaces. Most social media contents that are intended to be a trend go with a hashtag or are listed as a thread, which is a developed story under the same thematic focus, but the same cannot be said of @GhenghisKhan01’s tweets of 19 March 2022, which seemed to be tweeted as a means of accepting his grief which awakened my own grief. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler illustrate how grief functions, and they seem to suggest why his autobiographical tweets about his actions when his father died elicited a lot of responses from people of similar loss. Kubler-Ross and

Kessler, speaking of similar experiences of loss, note that “thinking about grief naturally brought up my own...” (Kubler-Ross and Kessler, 2014, p. 20). Although Kubler-Ross and Kessler model was originally about dying patients, not bereaved individuals, it has been applied to grief in this.

What the foregoing illustrates is that netizens like me, thinking about, reading and digesting the autobiographical tweets of @GhenghisKhan01 brought up their own experiences within the narrative. Social media therapy storytelling is linked to the traditional function of condolence visits in Africa, where empathizers visit the deceased family and comfort them through personal stories of loss and hope as experienced in my personal loss of my brother.

Andra Smorti, theorizing on autobiographical memory, notes that “memory is asked to provide the necessary knowledge to undertake this path. Together with the knowledge that memory provides us with, perhaps because of the emotional and personal aspects of writing, even the most disparate memories of one’s own life come to light” (Smorti, 2018, p. vii). Autobiographical memory provides knowledge about grief and how the mourner feels, as indicated in my case based on my retweet-quoting of the narrative and the autobiographical tweets of co-tweeters or autobiographical netizens under the same thread. The co-storytellers including me, bring to light our own experiences with grief as a process of condolence and narrative bonding within a single thread. This is so in the sense that, as Smorti notes, “the narrative is a process that takes place between oneself and another. (...) A narrator tells a narrative something. It is possible that immediately afterward, the narrator becomes in turn a narratee, and that a mutual and reciprocal relationship is established between the two” (Smorti 2018, p. 8).

This illustrates aspects of what happens to me, I learnt from others in my attempt to comfort @GhenghisKhan01 within his autobiographical thread on Twitter. This is in line with Caruth’s submission that “Through the notion of trauma...we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not” (Caruth, 1996, p. 11). This is a case for me in the sense that my understanding of grief arises within the context of @GhenghisKhan01’s tweet narrative which becomes referential to my personal loss. Reuel L. Howe notes that “the personal has the power to awaken life, to destroy its bit, and also to reawaken it” (Howe, 1959, p. 48).

The other tweets of grief under the autobiographical tweets of @GhenghisKhan01 are a form of reawakening for me, from my personal grief. The memory of grief in the autobiographical narratives on @GhenghisKhan01’s tweets serve a social function due to the fact that they are written from memory and due to the fact that it awakens my personal grief after two years of the loss. Martin A Conwey and Christopher W.

Pleydell-Pearce note that “autobiographical memories are transitory dynamic mental constructions generated from underlying knowledge base” (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2003, p. 261). The tweets autobiographers responded from the knowledge of personal grief, the “transitory” nature is about grief occasioned by personal losses as related to death. Netizens who @GhenghisKhan01 tweeted their content of grief and narratives of loss of loved ones; support and promote continuity and self-development to withstand the loss in society as a form of social media therapy. Elaine Reese and Kate Farrant corroborated the forgoing, thus, “autobiographical memories are private and uniquely our own, but they are simultaneously public property because they usually involve other people” (Reese and Farrant, 2003, p. 29). The multiplicity of grief narratives of the loss of loved ones within @GhenghisKhan01’s autobiographical tweets is a representation of various shades of loss across time and is intended to bond with the narrator as well as others who had loss love one like me.

Conway and Pleydell-Pearce write that “autobiographical memory is of fundamental significance for the self, for emotions, and for the experience of personhood, that is for the experience of enduring as individual” (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce, 2003, p. 261). Tweets autobiography is an attempt to heal the emotional wound of the mourner through tweets’ autobiographical narrative of grief as autobiographical bonding. Arnold R. Bruhn notes that

memories work, as is true with any insight-oriented therapy that values and encourages insight and self-awareness, but it does not end there. With memory work, cognitive and personality changes also commonly take place fairly early in therapy – clients no longer perceive the world as they did before. (Bruhn, 2020, p. 3)

Autobiographical tweets of grief, although not an insight-oriented therapy, help the narrator learn about the grieves of others and how to cope with them.

## METHODOLOGY

The choice of @GhenghisKhan01’s tweets of 19 March 2022 was an emotional choice which awakened my personal loss. Beyond the foregoing @GhenghisKhan01’s tweets and the collaborative narrators contents are affective in nature from a literary point of reading grief. This study adopts the qualitative methodological framework, which has to do with the analysis of data from a discursive perspective. This study analyses @GhenghisKhan01’s autobiographical tweets of 19 March 2022, about the death of his father and other responses to similar autobiographical tweets that others tweeted under his, forming a thematic thread of responses to grief and loss that has

4,355 retweets, 837 quotes, 13.7k likes, which represent the content of participatory grief autobiographical narratives. The data from this study were manually mined from Twitter from @GhenghisKhan01 tweet on the death of his father. A simple random sampling technique was used, and one autobiographical narrative was used in the representation of reoccurring narratives on the same traumatic experiences of personal loss. This research adopts art-based research, which has to do with the analysis of data from experiential and observational approaches. Experiential and observational approach involves comprehensive examination of personal experiences, emotions, and reflections in line with systematic observation of behaviors. This study, the data elicited from my personal loss of my brother during COVID in 2020 and my subsequent writing of *Covid Rift* and @GhenghisKhan01's tweets narrative grief of 19 March 2022 as referential to my personal loss and were subjected to experiential and observational analysis. The retweeting of @GhenghisKhan01's tweets becomes a form of writing as well as participatory narrative. This approach gives the researcher the opportunity to critically examine the data from referential interpretation through the application of observational experiential referential autobiographical memory of grief. It enables the researcher to examine style and function of tweet autobiographical storytelling and the therapeutic effect from a referential experiential observational point. Using this approach, the best way of detecting the use of artistic process as Mitchell Kossak observed that art-based enquiry is "the use of artistic process, and the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of art, as a primary mode of understanding and examining experience" (Kossak, 2012, p. 22).

## THE FUNCTION OF STORYTELLING IN RELIEVING GRIEF

Storytelling of grief allows the narrator to verbalize or write his grief in such a way that the grief assumes a definite entity of its own, thereby producing temporal relief within the context of the narrative, which sometimes is accompanied by tears, anger, depression, denial, bargaining, and finally acceptance when such a narrative is repeated in various contexts. At first sight of reading @GhenghisKhan's tweet grief narrative, I was shocked and the memories of my past came flowing back. When I was writing the *Covid Rift* which was written at the spur of the moment was when with tears, anger, depression, denial and bargaining and at the end acceptance which poetry allows for the spontaneity of this encounter with my experience of death and creative writing.

Katherine Nelson, writing about storytelling, notes that "an important characteristic of all human life is the capacity for and habit of telling stories... Self-stories derived from autobiographical memory are one version of the stories that humans

share with one another” (Nelson, 2003, p. 24). In my writing *Covid Rift* as well as in my response to @GhenghisKhan01’s grief tweet narrative, grief becomes a thematic focus and a cultural retelling of stories from the premise of memory. The above is also observed in the thematic tweets of grieves by other netizens within the thread. Through retweets and tweets responding through grief to the loss of @GhenghisKhan01’s father, netizens engage @GhenghisKhan01 through their loss and in highlighting their grief.

Grief autobiographical narrative is usually familiar and empathetic. People feel the impact of the grief of another who lost their beloved one because they, at one point or another, have lost a loved one too. Briana MacWilliam, writing about grief, notes that

grief is uniquely related to our earliest attachment models. Thus, often it is the nature of your unfinished business that defines the despair, qualifying each individual’s grief as a distinctive experience, one that cannot be nearly tucked into specific stages or lumped into a population of mourners with a special type of loss. (MacWilliam, 2020, p. 37)

This highlights the uniqueness of various autobiographical narratives under @GhenghisKhan01’s autobiographical tweets about the loss of his father. The netizens who tweeted under @GhenghisKhan01’s autobiographical tweets know the extent of the pain of losing someone who is so dear to them as indicated in my case. Soldara Cili and Lusia Stopa observe that

autobiographical memory shapes our understanding of ourselves, guides our behaviour, and helps us to develop and maintain relationships with others. The ways in which we interpret and narrate our memories have important implications for our psychological well-being and can sometimes contribute to the onset and maintenance of a variety of psychological disorders. (Cili and Stopa, 2019, p. 23)

Autobiographical tweets and narratives of grief @GhenghisKhan01’s tweet grief guides me to accept my grief as I read through the depth of other netizens’ grieves of deaths presented under the autobiographical narrative.

There is always a strong connection in knowing that someone has felt or is feeling the pain one has felt before. It is the empathetic feeling of brotherhood. This is so in the sense that, as Smorti submits, “memory and narration are processes that have a common social basis and numerous interconnected links because they are both linked to the life and history of human culture” (Smorti, 2018, p. 19). This social basis is the weight of grief on individuals; although they may experience it differently, the pain of loss unites those who tweeted under the thread as it is indicated in my case. Others who tweeted without the loss of any loved ones engaged



in participatory grief through their tweets. For this reason, people who have not lost any loved ones in the past, sometimes try to connect themselves to the grief of others, seeing how pained these people are about losing their own. So, such participatory mourners, through tweets, think of it this way: as the bereaved are in so much pain, so could they be when they lose their own loved ones as I observed in the narratives of those who tweeted without a direct experience of loss of love one. So, they grieve with the bereaved in anticipation of the worst for themselves.

Kubler-Ross and Kessler refer to the above as “anticipatory grief”. Kubler-Ross and Kessler’s conceptualization of grief inform that “anticipatory grief is generally more silent than grief after a loss. We are often not verbal. It is a grief we keep to ourselves; anticipating a loss is an important part of experiencing that loss” (Kubler-Ross and Kessler, 2014, p. 34). There is a function of retweeting, quoting, and liking that is consenting to the grief of @GhenghisKhan01, and this is to show some connection to his loss. Those who have experienced actual loss like that of @GhenghisKhan01 are highlighting that they too have grieved before. This is also to tell other netizens that there are so many different stories of loss, as illustrated under the thread of @GhenghisKhan01’s autobiographical narrative, and these all portray the pain of loss. Netizens’ autobiographical tweets of grief are integrating @GhenghisKhan01 into the brotherhood support system to focus on love and provide therapy for the bereaved through narrative.

Kubler-Ross and Kessler submit that “integration is how we observe, understand, interact with, create, and communicate over a life story” (Kubler-Ross and Kessler, 2014, p. 64). A netizen, @Engr.Kings, who represents another group who have not experienced personal grief, notes that “it scares me every day, knowing one day I will feel this way. I pray for the strength to bear it. Death is strong” (2022, n.pag.). This highlights the nature of anticipatory grief, which prepares the mind for such an eventual loss if it ever happens. Storytelling, whether verbal or written, eases the burden of loss on the narrator, who is the bearer, and allows the bearer to be able to cope with what he has before him through repeated telling as I had experienced in writing Covid Rift.

Repeated storytelling of loss and grief lightens the mind of the bearer of loss. The same can also be said of my mother, who repeats the events of that fateful day of my brother’s death. She tells the story whenever there is a visit or a loss of a loved one, but not with the gravity of the tears and wailing she experienced when it first occurred to her. My mother’s narrative comes with some acceptance of her grief, and she comforts others with her own experience. The foregoing made me attracted to the autobiographical tweets of @GhenghisKhan01 on Twitter, how netizens responded to them, and the function of collective grieving as an inroad into my personal grief. The foregoing depends on how long the loss has been.



Storytelling reduces the pain or burden of a loss that is still fresh, while it makes the pain of a loss that is remote, not in the sense of grieving too much but in the sense of being endeared to the dead, kind of new. Amy Hodges Hamilton notes that “writing can emphasize individuality in the context of the community and the dialectical relationship among rhetoric, emotion, ideology, and linked experiences” (Hamilton, 2016, p. 204). Writing from a personal grief, as other netizens responded to @GhenghisKhan01’s autobiographical tweets, is to tell the bereaved that there are other people who have been bereaved in the past. This is so in the sense that it functions in a way that makes the recently bereaved feel some kind of connection with those who have been bereaved before, for the weight of loss of some kind of pain is reduced in brotherhood and narrative bonding of a shared grief.

This is a form of social media collective therapy through an autobiographical narrative of loss that is premised on the death of a loved one. This form of social media therapy has a form, as indicated in the tweets of @GhenghisKhan01 and other autobiographical tweets that formed a thread on loss and grief. Nelson notes that “the function of self-stories is related to the social and cultural milieu within which they are situated and the alternative resources available within the milieu for understanding self and society” (Nelson, 2003, p. 24). The tweets in @GhenghisKhan01’s narrative is related to the social perception of grieving in Nigeria, as indicated in the demography. All the tweets in the thread focus on two aspects: the mourner’s reaction to the loss of a loved one experienced by the mourner, and secondly, most of the tweets focus on the final moments before the death of their loved one. Nothing beyond these emotional moments of the reactions to loss and the reaction of the person while undergoing the loss.

It is necessary to note that no autobiographical grief tweet narrative mixes the two narrative forms mentioned in their autobiographical tweets as collective grief storytelling. In the first group, a former tweet griever by name Skairipa@Ttessyme submitted:

On June 21st, 2021, around 9 a.m., I watched my dad have a death rattle till he took his last breath. I said to him, “May God be with you. I placed my hand on his chest, and I felt his heartbeat fade in seconds. It was just me, my cousin, and my mom who were home; we are all females. We cried.”

This illustrates the group of people who experienced death firsthand. The second group are those who heard and still have reservations, as indicated in the case of @God-Bless-Nigeria, thus:

I am not a fan of calling or receiving calls. My sister called me for the first time around 10:55 p.m. since I knew her and saw the call ringing. But I didn’t pick because it was already late at night,

next day, around 9 a.m., they called us to say that my sister had just died while sitting on the chair. I called her number back, but it was iffy. Till now, I still feel like I was the one who killed her because she might have called to tell me something so serious or a complicated health issue. 3 years now, how everything happened still plays on my head.

The second aspect is also indicated in Benjamin Ozougwu's reaction to the death of his brother. The two methods mentioned are autobiographical narrative styles of grief on Twitter with regard to the story under study. This style of note is not a deliberate style parse but a psychological state that indicates the mourners' realization of the loved one's death. This is so because those two are the critical moments, and these critical moments happen once in the death of an individual, and the person who experienced them has the privilege of experiencing a single aspect, not the occurrences as indicative of the tweets under study.

The moment of seeing a loved one die and the moment of getting the news that a loved one died. It is a psychological action, not a deliberate one. Ozougwu corroborated an aspect of the foregoing thus:

I was not there when my brother died, but when I got there, it seemed he was still alive. We had to take him to another hospital only to confirm that he is dead. The moment we were enroute to the next hospital was a very critical psychological moment for me, for I had hoped that he would still be revived even when his mouth was wide open.

The acceptance stage indicates the narrative form that grief storytelling will take, and it happens psychologically. I asked Ozougwu if netizens who retweeted or tweeted about a traumatic experience of loss are retraumatized given their experiences of loss, and he answered:

I feel a surge of pain anytime I sit down to think about the whole incident from start to finish. It makes me lose hope in life itself, for one could be alive one moment and dead the next. It always puts me in mind of the emptiness of life. However, the pain reduces, but it never goes away. We can always feel it; we feel it in strong remembrance.

This highlights the state of repeated storytelling. The foregoing is implicated in my personal narrative and re-experiencing of my personal grief.

### @GHENGHISKHAN01'S NARRATIVE OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TWEET GRIEF

@GhenghisKhan01's tweets of 19 March 2022, open us up to the world of personal grief and his responses to such grief. At first, @GhenghisKhan01 lives in denial of the death of his father by virtue of his repeated visits to the mortuary and giving the mortician money to give to his father whenever he wakes up. @GhenghisKhan01's autobiographical tweets of grief, beyond the function of an attempt to distance himself from his experience and to lighten his burden, perform a social function. Reese and Farrant account for remembering that "reminiscing, or talking about the past with others, is a critical part of autobiographical memories" (Reese and Farrant, 2003, p. 29). @GhenghisKhan01's tweet is about talking to others about the depth of his grief. @GhenghisKhan01 highlights how some Africans respond to grief and indicates through his autobiographical narrative the need to allow the mourner to pass through this process as a method of grieving. @GhenghisKhan01 is written in ten tweets, which are collected together in this paper for analysis. The following convinces:

The day my dad died; I drove his warm body to the morgue myself with my eyes filled with tears. Watched as they wheeled him into the area where other bodies lay and I walked out. Told the mortician to take care of him and that if he wakes, he should give him a set of kaftan I brought with me. I gave him 3000 naira and asked him to hand it over to my father when he wakes and put him in a car to come home that I'd leave the balcony lights on so he won't miss his house. I sat there till daylight came. I walked into his bedroom and got another set of kaftan and drove again to the morgue with his toothbrush and toothpaste so he'd brush his mouth before we return home together. I got to the morgue and the mortician saw me coming and rushed to meet me. I greeted him politely and said 'is he awake now?' The man looked at me and shook his head. I said 'okay! When he wakes give him these things and tell him that I am waiting at home for him.' I turned back and walked to the car and drove home in silence. My last brother looked at me and shock his head when he saw me come in. I just went to the fridge and took out a beer and poured some whiskey in a glass and mixed the beer with it. Went out again and sat at the balcony looking out to the road in anticipation that I'd be the first to see my dad when he comes back. I sat there for nearly 12 hours before I drove back to the morgue again. The mortician saw me again and shook his head. I repeated the same routine for 8 days like clockwork and I wasn't talking to anyone. I'd just sit alone with my booze and cigar and be looking out the balcony waiting for my dad to come back home.

@GhenghisKhan01's reaction to the death of his father, as indicated in the tweets above, indicates that at first, @GhenghisKhan01 lives in denial. @GhenghisKhan01's autobiographical narrative tweets indicate unconcordant processes of grief. @GhenghisKhan01's stages of grief occur both in denial, which

is repeated in his continuous going to the mortuary in anticipation of his father coming alive. In the above-stated action, @GhenghisKhan01 engages in a form of bargaining within the structure of his narrative grief. Kubler-Ross and Kessler, in theorizing the five stages of grief, submit that “the five stages of grief are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance” (Kubler-Ross and Kessler, 2014, p. 38). They are responses to loss that many people have, but there is no typical response to them, as there is no typical loss.

This illustrates the nature of @GhenghisKhan01’s grief as well as mine. Kubler-Ross and Kessler’s accounting for grief submit that “denial is more symbolic than literal” (Kubler-Ross and Kessler, 2014, p. 40). @GhenghisKhan01’s frequenting of the mortuary is in denial and bargaining before accepting the final outcome of his situation. His refusal to accept the death of his father also occurs at syncretic flow, which is embodied in his depression of staying out until daybreak, hoping that his father would come back from the mortuary.

Kubler-Ross and Kessler implicate @GhenghisKhan01’s actions thus: This first stage of grieving helps us to survive the loss. In this stage, the world becomes meaningless and overwhelming. Life makes no sense. We are in a state of shock and denial. We go numb, we wonder how we can go, why should go on. We try to find a way to simply get through each day. Denial and shock help us to cope and make survival possible. Denial helps us to pace our feelings of grief. There is a grace in denial. It is nature’s way of letting in only as much as we can handle. These feelings are important: they are the psyche’s protective mechanism (Kubler-Ross and Kessler, 2014, p. 44). The eight-day movement of @GhenghisKhan01 to the mortuary is a coping process and a means for him to come to terms with his loss. @GhenghisKhan01’s denial comes as a result of him questioning reality. This process is a source of healing for @GhenghisKhan01. @GhenghisKhan01, in this process of bargaining, suddenly comes to an angry realization, thus:

Then on the 8th day of my routine visits to the morgue, the morgue attendant called me aside and offered me our local dry gin, sat me down outside the gate and said ‘o kwagibunkegulu medicine?’ (You are the son who studied medicine?) I said yes and he said ‘Stop waiting for him’ I looked at him with bloodshot eyes as if I was going to kill him for saying that and then I let out a loud cry. He held me like I was a baby and said ‘go home and prepare for his funeral. He’s in a better place now.’ That day, my world crumbled to pieces. Death strong oh!

@GhenghisKhan01’s acceptance of his father’s death came with anger and depression. Finally, he came to cry in such a way that it unburdened his emotions that he had held up for a very long time. Kubler-Ross and Kessler, in acknowledging the role of anger in healing, submit that,

anger does not have to be logical or valid. (...) Anger surfaces once you are feeling safe enough to know you will probably survive whatever comes. (...) Anger is usually at the forefront as feelings of sadness, panic, hurt, and loveliness also appear, stronger than ever. Anger is a necessary stage of the healing process. (Kubler-Ross and Kessler, 2014, p. 48)

@GhenghisKhan01's reaction embodies aspects of the above-stated conditions. @GhenghisKhan01 seems to have undergone the five stages of grief to the extent that he is able to recall the proceeds of the grief as a narrative engagement through tweets.

### NETIZENS' BONDING THROUGH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TWEET NARRATIVES

@GhenghisKhan01's autobiographical tweet grief is a stimulus for me and other Nigerian netizens' grief on the social media space. Dorthe Berntsen, writing about involuntary autobiographical memories, states that

we often remember personal experience without any conscious effort. A piece of music heard on the radio may stir a memory of a movement from the past. Such occurrences are known as 'involuntary autobiographical memories'. They often occur in response to environmental stimuli or aspects of current thought. (Berntsen, 2009, p. 3)

@GhenghisKhan01's grief awakens the grief of mine through bonding and providing a premise for me to cope with mine. Netizens' autobiographical narrative is therapeutic and functions as a form of social media condolence giving and comfort for the bereaved through personal narratives of grief. This is so in the sense that, as Nelson observes, "narratives are imposed on event memories for the telling, providing the coherence and point that are the same for listeners as the teller, but the teller may no longer truly »remember«" (Nelson, 2003, p. 31).

The netizens' empathizers imposed their memory on the event of @GhenghisKhan01's autobiographical grief through their own previous grieving and provided a medium for him to cope with his loss. This is so in the sense that the narrators of autobiographical tweets of grief are doing what Monisha Pasupathi calls: "recall memories in ways that enhance positive and diminish negative emotions" (Pasupathi, 2003, p. 59). Some of the netizens who tweeted used their negative narrative as a means of positive bonding to enable @GhenghisKhan01 to accept his loss. @Lassie notes that:

it is well. I was there when my dad died. I held his hands as he died. He spoke to me in his last words. I got home and continued life as usual. A week after his burial, I woke up to prepare his breakfast, and then it hit me – Papa was dead! I cried for weeks and was depressed for years.

Lassie's narrative, although it corroborates @GhenghisKhan01's denial stage, bargain, anger, depression, and acceptance, somehow bonds with @GhenghisKhan01 in his attempt at presenting his past grief, like many of the condolence autobiographical tweets of grief. @GhenghisKhan01's tweets have become a stimulus for me and many netizens to remember their experiences of grief as it is indicative of the co-created narratives. Pasupathi notes that "much remembering occurs in conversation" (Pasupathi, 2003, p. 60). Through grief tweeting, netizens engage in conversation about their personal losses and seem to be suggesting that @GhenghisKhan01 should accept and live with his loss.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate personal grief and how it is implicated in the grief of @GhenghisKhan01 and that of other netizens grieves. The analysis of data from referential experiential and observational approaches highlights dimensions of my personal loss and shared similarity to my reaction at the death of my brother during COVID as referential to @GhenghisKhan's autobiographical grief narrative. Social media autobiographical storytelling of grief is therapeutic and provide a form of distancing self-experience through personal telling. The study has highlighted the importance of understanding and reclaiming personal experiences through storytelling and social media therapy. By examining the role of memory in resituating and reestablishing connections, the text highlights the potential of storytelling as a powerful tool for healing and regaining perspectives on personal losses. Tweet autobiographies of grief are told from the perspectives of the mourners who experienced their loved one die in their presence and the ones who received the news of their loved one's deaths. These methods of birthing realities in grief influence the narrative styles, which are psychological and not deliberate. This study highlights the profound therapeutic effect of autobiographical storytelling on social media, particularly within the context of grief. Through the analysis of @GhenghisKhan's grief narrative on X, it becomes clear how personal loss, expressed through storytelling, can awaken similar emotions and memories in others. This shared experience fosters a sense of collective mourning and empathy, offering a space for individuals to process their grief in a communal setting. The narrative responses from other netizens, including myself, demonstrate the power of storytelling in healing, offering a mechanism through which grief is not

only acknowledged but also transformed into a tool for emotional relief. This study indicates that by means of these autobiographical narratives, individuals bond over shared experiences of loss, providing emotional support and solidarity. Social media platforms, particularly through retweeting and quoting, of grief narratives, serve as modern-day condolence visits, offering comfort and understanding that mirrors traditional forms of grief support. The therapeutic nature of these online interactions reflects the inherent human needs for connection during times of suffering, reinforcing the notion that grief, though deeply personal, is a shared human experience. This study, therefore, demonstrates the significance of social media as a space for grief expression and healing, offering valuable insights into the intersection of personal memory, collective mourning, and the transformative power of narrative in coping with loss.

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