

Grief Over the Sudden Death of a Loved One and Mental Stress

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Introduction

Background

- Stress is a common human reaction, often displayed by one's ability to cope with certain environmental changes (Greenberg et al., 2002).
- Grief is an emotional and physical reaction to the loss of a loved one through death, which includes feelings of depression, yearning, loneliness, and denial (Weiss, 2008).
- The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between mental stress and grief.

Methods

Participants

- In this naturalistic observational study, participants ($N = 60$) were studied from YouTube footage of funeral homes and celebrity funerals.
- Participants were of various ages and genders.
- Participants were selected through convenience sampling due to their attendance of the funeral, as this is implied that they knew the loved one that passed away.

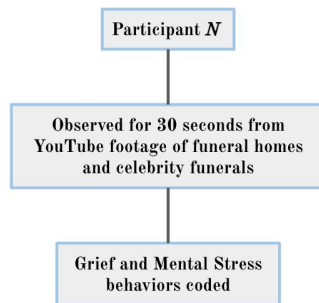
Measures

- **Grief** was coded as the frequency of a participant having tears in their eyes or face.
- **Mental stress** was coded as the frequency of a participant's display of a tense facial expression or physical action (see Figure 1).

Research Question and Hypothesis

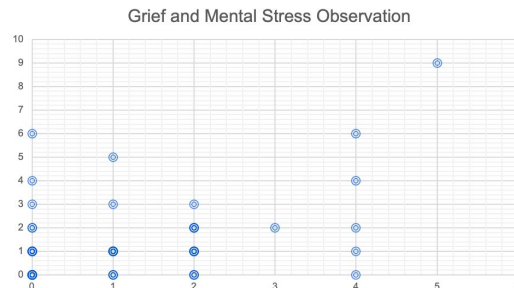
- Does grief due to the sudden death of a loved one cause mental stress?
- The hypothesis for this study is that grief positively correlates with mental stress.

Figure 1. Flowchart of Study Procedure



Note: Procedure used when data was collected from participants.

Figure 2. Grief and Mental Stress



Note: The above graph depicts the positive correlation between behaviors of grief and indicators of mental stress.

Results

- Grief was found to be positively correlated with mental stress, $r(58) = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$, due to the p-value being less than 0.05.
- As grief increased, mental stress increased as well (see Figure 2).
- The hypothesis that grief positively correlated with mental stress was supported.

Discussion

- Grief over the sudden death of a loved one is impactful on one's mental stress. As grief increased, mental stress increased.

Limitations

- Operationalization may be prone to experimenter bias.
- Participants were in attendance of the funeral of a loved one, hence they may not have openly displayed all their emotions and/or actions.

Future Directions

- Researchers may utilize an experimental study design in order to establish causation and directionality of the relationship between grief and mental stress.

Implications

- This current research is beneficial because it may allow psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists to work with those experiencing grief and how it impacts their mental health.
- Follow-up care for those grieving may be a practical use of this research for both those in the psychology field and funeral homes.

References

