



Universiteit Utrecht

The Impact of Attachment and Culture on Grief Intensity During Bereavement

Dzifa Seake-Kwawu

6816010

Clinical Psychology

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Utrecht University

Utrecht, The Netherlands

Supervisor: dr. Henk Schut

July 2020

Word Count: 4,701

Abstract

The present study investigated the impact of individualism-collectivism and adult attachment dimensions on grief intensity among bereaved who had lost someone close within the past three years. It was hypothesized that there will be cultural differences in grief intensity among those who scored high on attachment anxiety. Using samples from honor-based collectivist cultures ($n = 248$) and an individualistic culture ($n = 106$) who completed the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Version and the Inventory of Complicated Grief, it was expected that among those who score high on attachment-anxiety, there will be significant differences in grief intensity based on their cultural background. It was also expected to find an association between attachment avoidance and grief intensity for the cultures. The results showed higher grief intensity in collectivist bereaved who identified strongly with attachment-anxiety, however attachment avoidance was not associated with grief intensity for both cultures. Implications based on findings, and limitations were discussed.

Keywords: attachment, bereavement, individualism, collectivism, grief intensity

Death of a loved one, although inevitable and ubiquitous, continues to generally elicit painful emotions and reactions from bereaved people. Research has shown that beyond these manifestations, there is a risk of health and psychological difficulties associated with bereavement such as increased chance of mortality, depression and somatisation (M. S. Stroebe et al., 2006; M. Stroebe et al., 2007; Wayment & Vierthaler, 2002) This stresses the need for increased attention into this area, although grieving is a normal response to loss and adjustment usually occurs without professional support.

While the influence of attachment on interpersonal relationships, beginning from infant-caregiver interactions, has been widely researched, there have hardly been empirical studies conducted to examine its impact on the bereaved, together with the possible moderating role of individualism-collectivism, as this cultural dimension is the most closely linked to attachment and considered by some as the most insightful cultural dimension, and that is most related to other constructs (Oyserman & Lee, 2008; Triandis, 1988). As cross-cultural research has shown, there are differences in attachment across cultures (Schmitt et al., 2004). The fact that both attachment and individualism-collectivism have to do with relationships with other people, potentially raises the question of whether the nature of grief after the permanent loss of someone who was cherished will be influenced by these constructs.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; 1982) has been useful in explaining closeness to others. It has been established that humans have an innate need to form bonds with, and seek closeness to significant others in times of distress. Attachment bonds develop in early childhood, are shaped by the child's relationship with his caregiver and thereafter guides the child's way of relating with others, and responding to overwhelming events (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Conceptualised as being two-dimensional, anxiety and avoidance occupy positions along these regions and a person's place on either of these constructs is an indication of the degree to which he experiences its features (Brennan et al., 1998; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2008). While attachment-related anxiety is characterised primarily by a need to stay close to others, preoccupation with thoughts about abandonment and excessively seeking reassurance externally, attachment avoidance, on the other hand, involves suppressing one's attachment needs and choosing not to rely or maintain closeness with others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). People who have a low score on both of these dimensions are considered to be securely attached. They generally hold positive views about themselves and others, and their ability to deal with adversity.

In the context of grief, proximity-seeking, or the desire to be close to a deceased attachment figure fails, since they are no longer alive or responsive, and Bowlby (1980) suggested that acute reactions typically reduce over time as there is a corresponding increase in the realization that the loss of the deceased is permanent, however a significant departure from this pattern may be indicative of the presence of an anxious or avoidant attachment.

Previous research has shed light on this: In two studies by Meier et al., (2013), attachment anxiety was found to be a unique predictor of grief severity and mixed findings were reported with regard to avoidance. LeRoy et al., (2020) found that greater attachment anxiety was associated with elevated symptoms of grief and poorer physical and mental health in a sample of bereaved spouses, within the first three months after loss. On the other hand, results from participants with high attachment avoidance revealed an opposite trend. Other studies have reported similar results (e.g. Field & Sundin, 2001), or specifically that avoidant attachment was related to somatisation but not grief and depression (Wayment & Vierthaler, 2002). These findings may be due to weaker emotion regulation and consequently high susceptibility to stress reactivity during the early periods

after loss in people high on attachment anxiety in comparison to individuals high on attachment avoidance (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). In a longitudinal study among a sample of bereaved parents (Wijngaards-de Meij et al., 2007), both attachment-anxiety and avoidance predicted grief severity and depression.

Grief occurs in a cultural context. The definition and conceptualization of death is defined is socially constructed and hence, varies from culture to culture, and possibly has an influence on the grieving process (Gire, 2014; Radzilani, 2013). As Rosenblatt observed, 'no knowledge about grief is culture free' (2008, p. 207). The average extent of anxiety or avoidance has also been shown to vary across cultures. Predictions have been made in terms of possible common attachment orientation in certain geographical areas and the likely reasons. For instance, Shaver et al., (2010) hypothesized that in places prone to unfavourable harsh circumstances such as high mortality rates, violence, disease, or other significant stressors, there is likely to be insecure attachment prevalent (see Schmitt, et al., 2004). If children are taught to be self-reliant in these circumstances, or even in a favourable environment, this may lead to avoidance. In some central African nations, avoidance is the predominant attachment dimension. On the other hand, if it fosters dependency, they may show signs of attachment anxiety. Interestingly, a longitudinal Strange Situation Procedure (SSP) study in Khayelitsha, South Africa – a settlement with pervasive hardship, attachment security was unusually high (61.9%) in infants. This can be explained by the communal spirit and compassion termed *Ubuntu* in Africa, which serves a protective role (Tomlinson et al., 2005). Similar results were found in Mali, among the Dogon tribe (True et al., 2001).

Individualism-Collectivism refers to the extent to which members of a society are integrated into groups. Individualistic cultures are characterised by weak ties between individuals.

Beyond an individual's self and the members of one's nuclear family, there is little to no focus on looking after other people. On the other hand, collectivist societies emphasise group integration usually comprising extended family members, with unity, loyalty and interdependence being of prime importance in in-groups. While Western nations are generally individualistic, in Third World countries, collectivism is more pronounced (Hofstede, 2011). Thus, it can be inferred that people from collectivist countries may form deeper bonds, show stronger dependence on others, perceive and receive more support beyond the nuclear family (Sorensen & Oyserman, 2009), even though anxiety and avoidance are originally linked to a low perception of social support (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). However, when the social support needs of an individual from a collectivist society are not in harmony with group ideals, it may deter them from actually seeking support and this may be an explanation for mixed findings from collectivist cultures in terms of attachment orientation (e.g. Agishtein & Brumbaugh, 2013; Cheng & Kwan, 2008) and grief intensity. An illustration of this can be among the Ecuadorian Achuar people where there is an initial expression of intense emotions following loss, however, not long after that, the bereaved people make attempts to forget the deceased, as they perceive an evil association with the image of the dead (Taylor, 1993).

Seldom has there been research conducted to address this specific link and moreover, attachment literature is overrepresented by Western samples. In previous research on the individualistic-collectivist dimension as well, participants from countries sampled for collectivism are to a large extent, Asian. It is essential to draw attention to this, because, the collectivism practiced in some of these nations are based on East-Asian Confucianism (EAC). It will be informative to move beyond this and include honor-based collectivism (HBC), which is usually prevalent in other parts of the world of interest such as African and Middle East countries

(Sorensen & Oyserman, 2009). The notable distinction between these two forms of collectivism is that while the former stresses suppression of emotions to prevent offending other people, the latter does not engage in emotion-regulation of members. Individualism is also associated with freedom of emotional expression (Diener et al., 1995), but as stated earlier, social ties are weaker here than in collectivist nations. As individualistic nations are also mostly Western countries which are developed, there is greater availability and access to professional support in difficult times, compared to collectivist countries. These links may be important in understanding grief intensity. For instance, it is plausible to assume that in HBC nations, grief after loss of a loved one may be more intense or comparable to individualistic cultures, more intense than EAC countries where expression of negative emotions are prohibited or restricted. However, at the same time, the social support received in circumstances like this may offset the gravity of the emotions and other consequences pertaining to bereavement, such as financial costs and loneliness, thus the mechanisms of grieving in this case may not be so straightforward and one should be cautious in generalizing. For the purpose of this cross-cultural research, data from two honor-based collectivist countries will be included to contribute to addressing this gap.

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to investigate the influence of the attachment dimensions and individualism-collectivism on grief intensity in bereaved people after the loss of a loved one. Specifically, it is expected that there will be significant differences in grief intensity between bereaved people in individualistic and collectivist cultures who score high on attachment-anxiety. Secondly, it is hypothesized that attachment-avoidance will be stronger negatively associated with grief intensity in bereaved people from individualistic cultures than in bereaved people from collectivist countries.

Method

Design

The present study is originally part of a larger quantitative cross-sectional online project that was carried out by 13 students in the Clinical Psychology Master's program who come from 11 countries, to test differences between cultures on grief.

Participants

The study consists of participants from Ghana, Iran and Spain. These countries were considered in the study for their cultural differences in terms of their individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1984). Based on the dimension of collectivism-individualism proposed by Hofstede (1984), Ghana and Iran considered as collectivistic whereas Spain was considered as individualistic. Demographic and bereavement-related background variables are presented in Table 1. There were significant differences between the two cultures on the following demographic variables: level of education, marital status, religion, age of respondent and bereavement-related variables: deceased's relationship to respondent, deceased's age before death (for collectivist countries, mean age of deceased was 58.3 with a standard deviation of 22.2, while for the individualistic country mean age of deceased was 71 with a standard deviation of 23.9) (See Table 2). Participants from collectivist cultures were on average 30.4 years old ($SD = 8.5$), while those from the individualistic culture were on average 39.2 years old ($SD = 14.9$).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The population from which the sample was recruited consisted of people aged 18 and above who had lost a loved person within the last 36 months. Furthermore, participants that did not originate/come from either Ghana, Iran or Spain were excluded from the study. A total of 135

participants were recruited by means of the Spanish version of the questionnaires, from which 6 participants were excluded because they had not lost someone during the last 36 months, 22 were excluded because they were not from Spain, and another one for being below 18 years old.

The Ghanaian version recorded a total of 122 participants, out of which 1 participant was excluded since they were not from Ghana, and 20 others did not lose a loved one within the past 36 months.

From the total of 176 Iranian participants who finished all of the questions in the survey, 6 were excluded from the study because they were not from Iran, and 23 were excluded because they had not lost someone in the past 36 months.

Table 1

Demographics and Bereavement-Related Background Information across the Cultures

Variables	Collectivist		Individualistic	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender				
Female	171	69.0	77	72.6
Male	77	31.0	29	27.4
Country of origin				
Ghana	101	40.7		
Iran	147	59.3		
Spain			106	100.0
Marital status				
Never married	157	63.3	56	52.8
Married	87	35.1	36	34.0
Divorced/separated	3	1.2	10	9.4
Widowed	1	.4	4	3.8
Educational background				
Primary/Elementary			3	2.8
High school	24	9.7	12	11.3
Bachelor's degree	119	48.0	52	49.1
Postgraduate degree	98	39.5	32	30.2
Other	7	2.8	7	6.6

Variables	Collectivist		Individualistic	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Religion				
Christian	102	41.1	52	49.1
Muslim	90	36.3		
Other	1	.4	9	8.5
Not religious	55	22.2	45	42.5
Deceased's relationship to respondent				
Spouse	2	.8	3	2.8
Parent	52	21.0	30	28.3
Sibling	16	6.5	4	3.8
Child	2	.8	3	2.8
Friend	49	19.8	20	18.9
Other	127	51.2	46	43.3
Cause of death				
Long illness	85	34.3	54	50.9
Short/sudden illness	111	44.8	39	36.8
Accident	21	8.5	10	9.4
Homicide/murder			2	1.9
Suicide	7	2.8	1	.9
Unknown	16	6.5		
Other	8	3.2		

Note. *N* = 354 (*n* = 248 for collectivist, *n* = 106 for individualistic)

Table 2

Significance Testing of Background Variables

Variables	Collectivism/Individualism		
	Test statistic	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Gender	$\chi^2 = .32$.57	1
Marital status	$\chi^2 = 18.68$	< .001	
Age of participant	<i>t</i> = -5.71	< .001	135.36
Age of deceased	<i>t</i> = -4.77	< .001	350
Educational background	$\chi^2 = 10.53$.024	
Time since loss (in months)	<i>t</i> = -.98	.327	350
Religion	$\chi^2 = 148.28$	< .001	3
Closeness to deceased	<i>t</i> = -1.56	.119	352
Cause of death	$\chi^2 = 22.74$	< .001	
Deceased's relationship to participant	$\chi^2 = 140.02$	< .001	

Instruments

Inventory of Complicated Grief (ICG)

Grief intensity was measured using the Inventory of Complicated Grief (Prigerson et al., 1995). This 19-item questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (always) to assess the frequency with which subjects experience grief symptoms in emotional, cognitive and behavioral domains. Examples of items are “I feel disbelief over what happened” and “I feel drawn to places and things associated with the person who died”. Higher scores tend to indicate a higher degree of pathological grief. This questionnaire has a strong internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of .94. Test-retest reliability is .80. It also has good concurrent validity with other similar scales (Prigerson et al., 1995). In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha was .91 for the English version.

Experience in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire (ECR-RD12)

In order to measure the variables of attachment-anxiety and attachment-avoidance, the Experience in Close Relationships questionnaire short form (ECR-RD12) was used. The Experience in Close Relationships Short form is a 12-item version scale tested and developed by Brenk-Franz et al., (2018) from the original 36-item version initially developed by Brennan et al., (1998). This questionnaire was initially developed to assess individual differences in secure versus insecure attachment patterns. From the 12 items that make up the questionnaire, 6 of them are designed to measure the dimension of attachment-anxiety (i.e., the extent to which people are more insecure versus secure in relation to the responsiveness and availability of the people they are with), and the other 6 items are designed to measure the dimension of attachment-avoidance (i.e., the extent to which people feel uncomfortable being close to others versus secure in depending on

them). Attachment-anxiety item examples are “I worry a lot about my relationships” and “I don’t feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners”. Examples of attachment avoidance items are “I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners” and “I get uncomfortable when my romantic partner wants to be very close”. In order to obtain the score for each dimension, each item contains a Likert scale that measures the degree of agreement or disagreement on each item, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The short version of the Experience in Close Relationships has shown strong reliability, with Cronbach’s alpha of .88 for the anxiety subscale and .87 for the avoidance subscale. This test also shows good construct validity (Fraley et al., 2000). In the present study, attachment-anxiety had Cronbach’s alpha of .83 for the English version while attachment-avoidance had .62.

Instrument Preparation. There were three versions of the questionnaires depending on the official language of the countries involved. Participants from Ghana were provided with the English version, a Spanish one for participants from Spain, and a Persian version for the Iranian sample. For the Spanish version, both questionnaires were translated by using a pre-existing Spanish version of the items that had been already tested before (Limonero et al., 2009; Yárnoz-Yaben & Comino, 2011). In the present sample, Cronbach alpha for the Spanish version of the ICG was .93, while the attachment-anxiety subscale of the ECR-RD was .81 and .66 for the attachment-avoidance subscale. For the Persian set of questionnaires, ECR-RD was taken from a pre-existing Persian version (Arefi & Mohsenzadeh, 2012), while ICG was first translated into Persian by the Iranian student involved in the project and later back-translated again to English by another native speaker (See Appendices). Cronbach alpha for the Persian version of the ICG was .92, and attachment-anxiety recorded .78 while attachment avoidance recorded .80.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey included an additional questionnaire than the aforementioned as a result of differences in hypotheses of the three researchers. Using an online survey tool named *Qualtrics*, the survey was set up and then it was announced and distributed via social media channels such as Facebook, WhatsApp and LinkedIn from April to June 2020.

The informed consent specified that participation was voluntary and anonymous, and that the data would be used only for research purposes. It was also specified that participants could stop at any point if they started to feel very distressed. The data were collected at one point in time, and the participants received no compensation for their participation.

Statistical Analyses

The data was initially screened using MS Excel 2019 and analysed statistically with IBM SPSS v26. Independent t-tests were used for quantitative background variable comparisons while chi-square tests were used for categorical variables.

In order to test for a difference between the groups in terms of grief intensity, an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was performed, with the statistically significant background variables serving as covariates. Additionally, a hierarchical multiple regression was carried out in order to examine the association between attachment-avoidance and grief intensity. Cultural dimension was examined as moderator.

Prior to hypotheses testing, preliminary tests were carried out to check whether the assumptions had been met. The distributions of the samples were also checked for normality. Outliers present in the dataset were reduced to the next smaller figure.

Results

H₁: There will be significant differences in grief intensity between bereaved people in individualistic and collectivist cultures who score high on attachment-anxiety

Preliminary tests for assumptions indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated. Therefore, a more stringent alpha level was set ($p < .01$).

In order to test the hypothesis, it was necessary to split the participants into “high attachment-anxiety scorers” and “low attachment-anxiety scorers”. The mean attachment-anxiety score for the collectivist sample was 4.1 while it was 3.3 for the individualistic counterparts. Therefore, a median split was conducted and the median was 4.0. Participants scoring 4.0 and above were considered ‘high scorers’ and were the subset included in the analysis. Using a one-way (Collectivism vs. Individualism) ANCOVA, results showed that there was a significant difference in grief intensity between the two groups (see Table 4). Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. Means, Standard Errors and Standard Deviations are presented in Table 5.

Table 3

ANCOVA Results Comparing High Attachment-Anxiety Collectivist and Individualistic Bereaved on Grief Intensity

	Dependent variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2p
Main effect					
Collectivism vs. Individualism	Grief intensity	1	8.67	.004	.053
Covariates					
Marital status (married)	Grief intensity	1	4.46	.036	.028
Marital status (divorced)	Grief intensity	1	0.32	.571	.002
Religion	Grief intensity	1	0.71	.402	.004
Deceased's relation to participant	Grief intensity	1	1.68	.017	.018

	Dependent variable	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2p
Cause of death	Grief intensity	1	0.03	.855	.000
Educational background	Grief intensity	1	0.25	.620	.002
Age of participant	Grief intensity	1	0.10	.758	.001
Age of deceased	Grief intensity	1	12.48	.001	.074

Table 4

Table of Means, Standard Deviations and Standard Errors for Collectivist and Individualistic High Attachment-Anxiety Scorers

	Collectivist group <i>n</i> = 125	Individualistic group <i>n</i> = 41
<i>M</i>	27.98	18.80
<i>SD</i>	15.86	11.10
<i>M_{adj}</i>	27.77	19.43
<i>SE</i>	1.31	2.40

H₂: Attachment-avoidance will be stronger negatively associated with grief intensity in bereaved people from individualistic cultures than in bereaved people from collectivist countries

Attachment-avoidance was centered in order to prevent multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). A three-stage hierarchical multiple regression was ran in order to assess the increase in variation explained by the addition of an interaction term between attachment-avoidance and cultural dimension to a main effects model, after controlling for covariates.

Significant background variables between the two samples were entered in step one as covariates. Cultural orientation and attachment avoidance were entered in step two, and the interaction term in step three. At step one, the covariates significantly contributed to the model $F(8, 317) = 4.298, p < .05, R^2 = .10$ and accounted for 9.8% of the variation in grief intensity. Introducing attachment avoidance and cultural dimension accounted for an additional 1.4% of the

variation in grief intensity and this change was insignificant, $F(2, 315) = 2.48, p = .09, R^2 \text{ change} = .01$. Lastly, the addition of the interaction term accounted for no increase in total variation explained of .0% which was not statistically significant, $B = -.63, F(1, 314) = .06, p = .803, R^2 = .00$. The full model was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. The interaction term was removed from the model, and the new analysis summary of the new model is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression of Attachment-Avoidance, Cultural Dimension and Grief Intensity

Variable	Step 1			Step 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Educational background	-1.40	2.54	-.03	-1.51	2.53	-.03
Marital status (married)	1.98	1.88	.06	2.17	2.07	.07
Marital status (divorced)	1.78	4.21	.03	2.76	4.22	.04
Religion	-.74	2.12	-.02	-.10	2.14	-.00
Deceased's relationship to participant	5.07*	2.12	.15	4.83*	2.11	.15
Cause of death	1.62	2.71	.04	2.28	2.73	.05
Age of participant	-.02	.09	-.01	.02	.09	.02
Age of deceased	-.22**	.04	-.35	-.20**	.04	-.31
Individualism				-4.62*	2.13	-.14
Attachment-avoidance				1.06	.81	.08

Note: Cultural dimension was dummy-coded with 1=individualism, 0=collectivism.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$ (one-tailed)

Discussion

The present study sought to examine the associations between adult attachment dimensions, individualism-collectivism as a cultural dimension and grief intensity during bereavement. For the first hypothesis that there are differences between bereaved from collectivist and individualistic cultures who report high attachment-anxiety, the results were consistent with the expectation, although the direction was not previously specified. Results indicated higher grief intensity for those from the collectivist culture. This finding implies that, although attachment is a universal phenomenon, its expression in terms of attachment-anxiety and implications with respect to grief intensity differ, albeit slightly by culture (Frías et al., 2014).

Considering that collectivism is associated with interdependence, then the finding can be explained in terms of the possibility that this fundamental interconnectedness further heightens the perception of the stress of losing a loved one, thereby intensifying grief due to the employment of hyperactivating strategies (Lin et al., 2017). The reverse may then be quite the case within an individualistic framework: although they have high attachment-anxiety, pursuance of personal fulfilment is a priority (Sorenson & Oyserman, 2011), and therefore if perceived costs of intense grieving outweigh the perceived benefits then it is a more appropriate choice to strive for personal fulfilment. In this sense, attachment-anxiety may then be more in harmony with individualism since attachment-anxiety appears to be multifaceted and one aspect of it entails a focus on self-serving needs (Friedman et al., 2010). Furthermore, the presence of professional resources and ease of access is evidently higher in the individualistic country compared to the collectivist countries if one considers that Spain is a developed country while Iran and Ghana are not.

Additionally, it was hypothesized that attachment-avoidance will be strongly negatively associated with grief intensity for bereaved people from an individualistic culture than for a collectivist culture. This hypothesis was rejected since attachment-avoidance was not associated with grief intensity. This is consistent with previous research (Field & Sundin, 2001; Wayment & Vierthaler, 2002) and confirms the theory that in the presence of actual or perceived stress such as the loss of a close other, attachment-avoidance results in deactivating strategies (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002), however it is then counter to the assertion by Bowlby (1980) that avoidant attachment as an insecure attachment would be a risk factor for grief severity.

Moreover, the interdependent nature of collectivist societies should have rather been expected to indicate a mismatch between attachment-avoidance and collectivism which could then translate into negative outcomes for collectivist cultures more than for individualistic cultures. However, since honor-based collectivist countries do not emphasise regulation of emotional expression, both positive and negative strong emotions are permitted, do not offend or bring disgrace to others in their in-groups and are perceived to particularly serve a function of honor-restoration (Sorensen & Oyserman, 2009), then attachment-avoidance cannot be expected to relate any differently in grief intensity for bereaved individualists than for bereaved collectivists, if at all. Therefore, for both cultures, attachment-avoidance is not related to grief intensity.

The study was not without limitations which could have influenced the findings, and they must be addressed. Firstly, there was the issue of unequal representation due to two countries representing collectivist cultures and only one for individualistic cultures. This occurrence is likely to have influenced the results and adversely affected generalisability. It will be more appropriate to include more countries on both sides of the cultural dimension under study for

comparison and also have a more proportional distribution of the sample to allow for better representativeness.

Another limitation was the modest reliability of the attachment-avoidance subscale in the Ghanaian and Spanish sample which could have influenced the findings. As a suggestion for future research, a more reliable instrument could be used to more precisely understand how attachment-avoidance may relate with grief.

On the other hand, the study also had a strength that is noteworthy. The cross-cultural comparison between a Western individualistic culture and non-Western specific kind of collectivism that is less researched or at least, with its features less considered and an addition of a non-White sample, has added value to further clarify the associations between the constructs under review in the present study.

As suggestions for further research, it will be interesting to further delineate between the cultures and study country-level differences in order to assess potential national characteristics that were not focused on in this study, that can have implications for grieving. Furthermore, the two forms of collectivism (and if present, forms of individualism) could be studied into more depth, to complement the between-culture research.

In conclusion, although the present study was not without limitations, it contributed to shed more light on the topic of attachment and grief in terms of the similarities and differences between cultures. Support was found to some extent for the universality, and for the cultural-specificity of attachment depending on the dimension under consideration. This has implications in clinical practice for enhanced understanding and to assist in the identification of at-risk groups.

References

- Arefi, M., Mohsenzadeh, F. (2012). Attachment styles, marital interaction processes and marital satisfaction, structural equation model. *Journal of counseling and psychotherapy*. Vol, 2.
- Agishtein, P., & Brumbaugh, C. (2013). Cultural variation in adult attachment: The impact of ethnicity, collectivism, and country of origin. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 7, 384. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0099181>
- Aiken, L.S., & West, S.G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Sage.
- Ainsworth, M. D., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Hillsdale: Erlbaum.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss*, Vol. 1: Attachment. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss*, Vol 3: Loss, Sadness and Depression. New York: Basic Books.
- Brenk-Franz, K., Ehrental, J., Freund, T., Schneider, N., Strauß, B., Tiesler, F., Schauenburg, H., & Gensichen, J. (2018). Evaluation of the short form of “Experience in Close Relationships” (Revised, German Version “ECR-RD12”)—A tool to measure adult attachment in primary care. *PLOS ONE*, 13(1), e0191254. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0191254>
- Brennan, K. A., Clark, C. L., & Shaver, P. R. (1998). Self-report measurement of adult attachment: An integrative overview. In *Attachment theory and close relationships* (pp. 46–76). Guilford Press.

- Cheng, S.-T., & Kwan, K. W. K. (2008). Attachment dimensions and contingencies of self-worth: The moderating role of culture. *Personality and Individual Differences, 45*(6), 509–514. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2008.06.003>
- Diener, E., Diener, M., & Diener, C. (1995). Factors predicting the subjective well-being of nations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*(5), 851–864. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.5.851>
- Field, N. P., & Sundin, E. C. (2001). Attachment style in adjustment to conjugal bereavement. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 18*(3), 347–361. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407501183003>
- Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000). An item response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*(2), 350–365. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.350>
- Frías, M. T., Shaver, P. R., & Díaz-Loving, R. (2014). Individualism and collectivism as moderators of the association between attachment insecurities, coping, and social support. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 31*(1), 3–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407513484631>
- Friedman, M., Rholes, W. S., Simpson, J., Bond, M., Diaz-Loving, R., & Chan, C. (2010). Attachment avoidance and the cultural fit hypothesis: A cross-cultural investigation. *Personal Relationships, 17*(1), 107–126. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01256.x>
- Gire, J. (2014). How Death Imitates Life: Cultural Influences on Conceptions of Death and Dying. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 6*(2). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1120>

Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values* (Vol. 5). Sage.

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>

LeRoy, A. S., Gabert, T., Garcini, L., Murdock, K. W., Heijnen, C., & Fagundes, C. P. (2020).

Attachment orientations and loss adjustment among bereaved spouses.

Psychoneuroendocrinology, 112, 104401.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2019.104401>

Limonero, J., Lacasta, M., García, J., Maté, J., & Prigerson, H. (2009). Adaptación al castellano del inventario de duelo complicado. *Medicina Paliativa*, 16, 291–297.

Lin, H., Chew, P. Y.-G., & Wilkinson, R. B. (2017). Young Adults' Attachment Orientations and Psychological Health Across Cultures: The Moderating Role of Individualism and Collectivism. *Journal of Relationships Research*, 8, e17.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/jrr.2017.17>

Meier, A. M., Carr, D. R., Currier, J. M., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2013). Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance in Coping with Bereavement: Two Studies. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 32(3), 315–334. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2013.32.3.315>

Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2003). The Attachment Behavioral System in Adulthood: Activation, Psychodynamics, and Interpersonal Processes. In *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 35 (pp. 53–152). Elsevier Academic Press.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(03\)01002-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(03)01002-5)

- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2008). An attachment perspective on bereavement. In *Handbook of bereavement research and practice: Advances in theory and intervention* (pp. 87–112). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14498-005>
- Oyserman, D., & Lee, S. W. S. (2008). Does culture influence what and how we think? Effects of priming individualism and collectivism. *Psychological Bulletin*, *134*(2), 311–342. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.134.2.311>
- Prigerson, H. G., Maciejewski, P. K., Reynolds III, C. F., Bierhals, A. J., Newsom, J. T., Fasiczka, A., Frank, E., Doman, J., & Miller, M. (1995). Inventory of Complicated Grief: A scale to measure maladaptive symptoms of loss. *Psychiatry Research*, *59*(1–2), 65–79. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0165-1781\(95\)02757-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0165-1781(95)02757-2)
- Radzilani, M. S. (2013). *A discourse analysis of bereavement rituals in a Tshivenda speaking community: African Christian and traditional African perceptions* [Thesis]. <https://doi.org/10/619/ag>
- Rosenblatt, P. C. (2008). Grief across cultures: A review and research agenda. In *Handbook of bereavement research and practice: Advances in theory and intervention* (pp. 207–222). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14498-010>
- Schmitt, D., Alcalay, L., Allensworth, M., Allik, J., Ault, L., Austers, I., Bennett, K., Bianchi, G., Boholst, F., Borg, C., Mary, Braeckman, J., G, B., Edwin, Caral, L. G., Caron, G., Martina, C., Maria, Cunningham, M., Daibo, I., de backer, C., Souza, E., De, & ZupanÈiÈ, A. (2004). Patterns and Universals of Adult Romantic Attachment Across 62 Cultural Regions: Are Models of Self and of Other Pancultural Constructs? *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *35*, 367–402. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022104266105>

- Shaver, P. R., & Mikulincer, M. (2002). Attachment-related psychodynamics. *Attachment & Human Development*, 4(2), 133–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616730210154171>
- Shaver, P. R., Mikulincer, M., Alonso-Arbiol, I., & Lavy, S. (2010). Assessment of adult attachment across cultures: Conceptual and methodological considerations. In *Attachment: Expanding the cultural connections* (pp. 89–108). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Sorensen, N., & Oyserman, D. (2009). Collectivism, Effects on Relationships. In H. Reis & S. Sprecher, *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412958479.n80>
- Sorensen, N. & Oyserman, D. (2011) Individualism. Lopez, S. *Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology* (517-519).
- Stroebe, M. S., Folkman, S., Hansson, R. O., & Schut, H. (2006). The prediction of bereavement outcome: Development of an integrative risk factor framework. *Social Science & Medicine*, 63(9), 2440–2451. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2006.06.012>
- Stroebe, M., Schut, H., & Stroebe, W. (2007). Health outcomes of bereavement. *The Lancet*, 370(9603), 1960–1973. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(07\)61816-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)61816-9)
- Taylor, A. C. (1993). Remembering to Forget: Identity, Mourning and Memory Among the Jivaro. *Man*, 28(4), 653. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2803991>
- Tomlinson, M., Cooper, P., & Murray, L. (2005). The mother-infant relationship and infant attachment in a South African peri-urban settlement. *Child Development*, 76(5), 1044–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2005.00896.x>
- Triandis, H. (1988). Collectivism v. Individualism: A Reconceptualisation of a Basic Concept in Cross-cultural Social Psychology. In G. K. Verma & C. Bagley (Eds.), *Cross-Cultural*

Studies of Personality, Attitudes and Cognition (pp. 60–95). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-08120-2_3

True, M. M., Pisani, L., & Oumar, F. (2001). Infant-mother attachment among the Dogon of

Mali. *Child Development*, 72(5), 1451–1466. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00359>

Wayment, H. A., & Vierthaler, J. (2002). Attachment style and bereavement reactions. *Journal*

of Loss and Trauma, 7(2), 129–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/153250202753472291>

Wijngaards-de Meij, L., Stroebe, M., Schut, H., Stroebe, W., van den Bout, J., van der Heijden,

P. G. M., & Dijkstra, I. (2007). Patterns of Attachment and Parents' Adjustment to the

Death of Their Child. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(4), 537–548.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167206297400>

Yárnoz-Yaben, S., & Comino, P. (2011). Evaluación del apego adulto: Análisis de la

convergencia entre diferentes instrumentos [Assessment of adult attachment: Analysis of

the convergence between different instruments]. *Acción Psicológica*, 8, 67–85.

<https://doi.org/10.5944/ap.8.2.191>

Appendix A

Inventory of Complicated Grief – English

The following statements are related to how you grieve the loss of the person you were close to.

Please tick the boxes that best describe how you feel, where **never** is taken to mean *less than once monthly*, **rarely** means *more than once monthly but less than once weekly*, **sometimes** more than weekly, but less than daily, **often** about/around daily and **always** means more than once daily.

0 = never

1 = rarely

2 = sometimes

3 = often

4 = always

I think about this person so much that it is hard for me to do the things I normally do

Memories of the person who died upset me

I cannot accept the death of the person who died

I feel myself longing for the person who died

I feel drawn to places and things associated with the person who died

I cannot help feeling angry about his/her death

I feel disbelief over what happened

I feel stunned/dazed over what happened

Ever since he/she died it is hard to trust people

___ Ever since s/he died I feel like I have lost the ability to care about other people or I feel distant from people I care about

___ I have pain in the same area of the body or I have some of the same symptoms as the person who died

___ I go out of my way to avoid reminders of the person who died

___ I feel that life is empty without the person who died

___ I hear the voice of the person who died speak to me

___ I see the person who died stand before me

___ I feel that it is unfair that I should live when this person died

___ I feel bitter over this person's death

___ I feel envious of others who have not lost someone close

___ I feel lonely a great deal of the time ever since he/she died

Appendix B

Inventory of Complicated Grief – Spanish

Los siguientes enunciados están relacionados con como te afecta la pérdida de aquel ser cercano. Por favor, marca para cada enunciado el círculo que describa mejor como te sientes, donde "nunca" se refiere a menos de una vez al mes, "rara vez" se refiere a mas de una vez al mes pero menos de una vez a la semana, "a veces" significa mas de una vez por semana pero menos de una vez al día, "con frecuencia" significa en torno a una vez al día, y "siempre" significa mas de una vez al día.

0 = Nunca

1 = Rara vez

2 = A veces

3 = Con frecuencia

4 = Siempre

___ Pienso tanto en la persona que ha fallecido que me resulta difícil hacer las cosas como las hacía normalmente

___ Los recuerdos de la persona que murió me transtornan

___ Siento que no puedo aceptar la muerte de la persona fallecida

___ Anhelo a la persona que murió

___ Me siento atraído por los lugares y las cosas relacionadas con la persona fallecida

___ No puedo evitar sentirme enfadado con su muerte

___ No me puedo creer que haya sucedido

- Me siento aturdido por lo sucedido
- Desde que él/ella murió me resulta difícil confiar en la gente
- Desde que él/ella murió me siento como si hubiera perdido la capacidad de preocuparme de la gente o me siento distante de las personas que me preocupaban
- Me siento solo/a la mayor parte del tiempo desde que él/ella falleció
- Me tomo la molestia de desviarme de mi camino para evitar los recuerdos de la persona que murió
- Siento que la vida está vacía sin la persona que murió
- Escucho la voz de la persona fallecida hablándome
- Veo a la persona que murió de pie delante de mí
- Siento que es injusto que yo viva mientras que él/ella ha muerto
- Siento amargura por la muerte de esa persona
- Siento envidia de otras personas que no han perdido a nadie cercano
- Siento dolores en la misma zona del cuerpo o tengo alguno de los síntomas que sufría la persona que murió

Appendix C

Inventory of Complicated Grief – Persian

اظهارات زیر ارتباط به این دارد که چگونه شما سوگواری شخص فوت شده را می‌کنید. لطفاً آن مربع را که فک می‌کنید

بهتر توصیف می‌کند چه احساسی دارید، پر کنید

هرگز اینجا بدین معنی است که کمتر از یک بار در ماه

به ندرت بدین معنی است که بیشتر از یک بار در ماه ولی کمتر از یک بار در هفته

بعضی اوقات بدین معنی است که بیشتر از یک بار در هفته ولی کمتر از یک بار در روز

بیشتر اوقات بدین معنی است که تقریباً یکبار در روز

همیشه بدین معنی است که بیشتر از یک بار در روز

هرگز = 0

به ندرت = 1

بعضی اوقات = 2

بیشتر اوقات = 3

همیشه = 4

___، آنقدر در مورد این شخص فکر می‌کنم که برایم سخت می‌شود کارهایی را که معمولاً انجام می‌دهم

___ .خاطرات این شخص من را ناراحت می‌کند

___ .نمی‌توانم مرگ این شخص را قبول کنم

___ .احساس میکنم آرزوی شدید و خواستن این شخص از ته دل را دارم

___ .احساس میکنم جذب به مکان‌ها و چیزهای مربوط به این شخص هستم

___ .نمی‌توانم جلوی احساس عصبانیتیم از مرگ این شخص را بگیرم

___ .احساس ناباوری در مورد این اتفاق دارم

___ .احساس بهت و گیجی در مورد این اتفاق دارم

___ .از زمانی که این شخص فوت کرده است اعتماد به آدم‌ها سخت شده است

از زمانی که این شخص فوت کرده است، توانایی اهمیت به دادن در مورد دیگران را از دست داده ام یا احساس دوری می

کنم از افرادی که بهشان اهمیت می دهم.

احساس درد در جای مشابه در بدن شخص فوت شده دارم یا علایم مشابه با شخص فوت شده را دارم

تلاش زیادی می کنم تا جلوی یادآور های شخص فوت شده را بگیرم

احساس میکنم زندگی بدون شخص فوت شده پوچ و تهی است

صدای شخص فوت شده را میشنوم که با من صحبت می کند

شخص فوت شده را جلوی خودم میبینم

احساس می کنم که این عادلانه نیست که من زنده هستم ولی این شخص زنده نیست

در مورد مرگ این شخص احساس تلخی می کنم

احساس غبطه به افرادی دارم که کسی را از دست نداده اند

از زمانی که این شخص فوت کرده است بیشتر اوقات احساس تنهایی می کنم

Appendix D

Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire -English

The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Answer to each statement by choosing an option to indicate how much you agree or disagree on each statement.

1 =Strongly disagree

2= Disagree

3= Somewhat disagree

4= Neither agree nor disagree

5=Somewhat agree

6=Agree

7=Strongly agree

I am afraid that I will lose my partner's love

I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me

I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner

I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners

I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them

I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners

I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close

I find that my partner don't want to get as close as I would like

I talk things over with my partner

___ I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am

___ It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner

___ It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner

Appendix E

Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire – Spanish

Los enunciados que vienen a continuación se refieren a como te sientes en relaciones íntimas emocionales. Nos interesaría saber cómo experimentas las relaciones íntimas en general, no solamente lo que está ocurriendo en una relación actual. Por favor, responde a cada enunciado marcando un número para indicar en que grado estás de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con cada enunciado.

1 = Completamente en desacuerdo

2 = En desacuerdo

3 = Algo en desacuerdo

4 = Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo

5 = Algo de acuerdo

6 = De acuerdo

7 = Completamente de acuerdo

__ Me preocupa que mi pareja no me ame

__ Me preocupa que mi pareja no quiera estar conmigo

__ Me siento cómodo compartiendo mis pensamientos y sentimientos privados con mi pareja

__ Me siento cómodo dependiendo de mi pareja

__ Me preocupa que mi pareja no se interese por mí tanto como yo me intereso por ella

__ Prefiero no ser muy cercano a mi pareja

__ Me incomoda cuando mi pareja quiere ser emocionalmente muy cercano/a a mí

__ Pienso que mi pareja no me quiere tan cerca como me gustaría

__Hablo las cosas con mi pareja

__Me asusta que una vez que mi pareja me empiece a conocer, a el/ella no le vaya a gustar como realmente soy

__Me enfada no conseguir el cariño y el apoyo que necesito de mi pareja

__Es fácil para mí ser cariñoso con mi pareja

Appendix F

Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire - Persian

جملات زیر مربوط به چگونگی احساس شما نسبت به کلیت روابط صمیمانتان با دیگران و از جمله همسر و دوستان نزدیکتان است و نه صرفاً در مورد آنچه به طور خاص در جریان این روابط اتفاق می افتد. هر کدام از اظهارات زیر را با ECR. علامت گذاشتن یک گزینه پاسخ دهید تا اشاره به این کنید که چقدر با یک جمله موافق یا چقدر مخالف هستید

کاملاً مخالفم = 1

نسبتاً مخالفم = 2

مخالفم = 3

نمیدانم = 4

موافقم = 5

نسبتاً موافقم = 6

کاملاً موافقم = 7

___ من از اینکه روزی عشق و محبت همسر و یا دوستانم را از دست بدهم می ترسم

___ من اغلب نگران این هستم که همسر و یا دوستانم دیگر نخواهند با من بمانند

___ من احساس می کنم احساسات و افکار شخصی ام را می توانم به راحتی با همسر و یا دوست صمیمی ام در میان بگذارم

___ من احساس می کنم به راحتی به همسر و یا دوست صمیمی ام وابسته می شوم

___ من اغلب نگران این هستم که دوستانم به آن اندازه که من به آنها علاقمندم به من علاقمند نباشند

___ من ترجیح می دهم با همسر و یا دوستانم چندان صمیمی نباشم

___ وقتی همسر و یا دوست نزدیکم می خواهد خیلی صمیمی شود احساس راحتی نمی کنم

___ من پی برده ام که همسر و یا دوستانم نمی خواهند آنطوری که من دوست دارم با من صمیمی شوند

___ من چیزهای مهمی را به همسر یا دوست صمیمی ام می گویم

من می ترسم از اینکه همسر و یا دوست صمیمی ام من واقعی را بشناسد زیرا او آنچه را که من واقعاً هستم دوست نخواهد داشت

این مساله که عاطفه و حمایتی را که به آن نیاز دارم از جانب همسر و یا دوستانم دریافت نمی کنم مرا ناراحت و عصبانی می کند

گرم گرفتن با همسر و یا دوستم برای من راحت است