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The Association Between Grief and Afterlife Beliefs Among Bereaved Individuals: The  
Moderating Role of Culture

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### **Abstract**

The present study investigated the relationship between reward and punishment afterlife beliefs and grief between an individualistic (Germany) and collectivistic culture (Turkey) among bereaved individuals. Two hundred ninety respondents from Germany (147) and Turkey (143) completed the Prolonged Grief Disorder and the Afterlife Expectation Belief scale. It was expected that reward afterlife belief had a positive association with grief, and punishment afterlife belief a negative association with grief, and that these associations would be stronger in the individualistic culture compared to the collectivistic culture. The findings showed that there was no relationship between afterlife beliefs and grief. There was a significant three-way interaction between grief, afterlife beliefs, and culture. However, the way in which the relationship between the afterlife beliefs and grief appeared to be different from what was hypothesized. It was found that the pattern of grief levels within the individualistic culture was opposite from the collectivistic culture. Results, future research suggestions, and limitations are discussed.

*Keywords:* grief, bereavement, reward afterlife belief, punishment afterlife belief, individualistic, collectivistic, culture

## Introduction

Experiencing the death of a loved one is inevitable. This often can be considered as a dramatic event that may bring long-lasting stress in the remaining individual (Benore & Park, 2004). They may experience grief, which is a natural response to the emotional experience of bereavement (Boerner, Schut, Stroebe, & Wortman, 2016). Individuals all over the world may have different ways to make sense of loss in order to deal with grief. Some of them may find the answer in believing in an afterlife as an aspect of a meaning-making system. Various studies have found that (religious) death-specific beliefs can provide an essential means to cope with psychological distress (Pergament, 1997). However, while believing in a “better place” where the deceased will be rewarded after death may be associated with lower levels of grief, the belief that their loved one will endure pain after death may intensify grief. Moreover, the beliefs people hold are generally influenced by the culture they live in. Besides considering the belief system as a way to make sense of loss, it is also essential to know how these afterlife beliefs play a role in the grieving process across cultures. In understanding the role of culture of afterlife beliefs in the process of grief, the current study aims to investigate the relationship between afterlife beliefs and grief within both an individualistic population and a collectivistic population.

Grief is defined as a human response to separation or loss characterized by difficulty accepting the death, pervasive longing for the deceased, intense emotional pain, and social withdrawal (Schut, Stroebe, & Van den Bout, 2013). These shifts in emotion, cognition, and behavior may endure and increase the risk of developing mental and psychological health problems (Schut, Stroebe, & Stroebe, 2007). As a result, bereaved individuals may experience difficulties participating in activities, such as seeing family, friends, or going back to work, which potentially impairs daily functioning. To deal with distress in confronting death, believing in life after death may be essential in appraising the meaning of death. Through making sense of loss, people may be more able to accept it and deal with their grief (Boyraz, Horne, & Waits, 2015).

The afterlife, also referred to as life after death, is the belief or expectation that the essential part (soul) or consciousness of one’s identity continues after the death of the body. While believing in an afterlife is central to many of the world religions, they may influence bereavement outcomes independent of other religiosity measures, because they are conceptually distinct from (but still correlated with) other religiosity dimensions such as church attendance and affiliation (Carr & Sharp, 2013). For example, Feldman and colleagues (2016)

found no association between higher afterlife belief and less grief regarding the sample of only avowed believers. However, when they considered all of the participants that believed in an afterlife, including non-religious believers, they found that firmer afterlife belief was associated with lower levels of present grief.

The tendency to believe in an afterlife may provide meaning to the bereaved in such a way of the continued existence of the deceased after its death. Making meaning of death includes creating a “satisfactory account of the loss”, which is considered as comforting (Hansson, Stroebe, & Stroebe, 1988). Moreover, it may protect the human psyche from the confrontation with a meaningless reality ending in death. To conceptualize the role that believing in an afterlife have in adjusting to the death of a loved one, Folkman and Park (1997) presented a meaning-making model of coping as a model of the grieving process. They introduced afterlife beliefs as a psychological phenomenon important in their own right and central to the appraisal coping and adjustment process of bereavement. Thus, these beliefs may be essential to define what the loss means to a person (Gergen, Gergen, Stroebe, & Stroebe, 1992). Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the death-specific religious beliefs evident in the global meaning of the bereaved.

Several scholars have argued that belief in a pleasant afterlife may help individuals cope with the sadness caused by the death of a loved one (Benore & Park, 2004). For example, in a study by Koenig and colleagues (2006), bereaved participants who reported a higher afterlife belief reported less depressive symptoms. Likewise, Flannely and colleagues (2005) found that bereaved individuals who believed in an afterlife had more death acceptance. Another study reported that bereaved adults who believed in an afterlife had better existential well-being than individuals who did not believe (Range, Smith, & Ulmer, 1992). However, what if bereaved individuals believe that life after death is not always a “better place”? These studies related to the belief in an afterlife are limited because it assumes the afterlife is rewarding. O’Sullivan and Rose (2002) found that belief in an afterlife was related to reward expectation and judgment/punishment expectation, contradicting the assumption that belief in the afterlife is always comforting. While many studies measured the presence and strength of belief in an afterlife, few addressed what these beliefs include.

Grief levels may differ when the specific nature of one’s belief toward the afterlife is captured. For example, a bereaved individual believing that the deceased loved one who “sinned” will be punished after death, may report higher grief levels than the ones who do not believe that. In a study where belief in an afterlife was considered as a buffer for distress after

death in suicidal and other bereavements (Range, Smith, & Ulmer, 1992), it was found that the search for meaning among bereaved after a suicidal death, where the issue of “sin” is debated, has less death acceptance than those bereaved from natural death. Another study by Carr and Sharp (2013), showed that widowed individuals who held a pessimistic view of life after death reported significantly more depressive symptoms, anger, and intrusive thoughts, which are symptoms that can be seen in grief. Therefore, it is crucial to consider death-specific (religious) beliefs’ distinctive roles of adjustment to bereavement, either adaptive or maladaptive.

Afterlife beliefs are a part of one’s beliefs about life and death, and in a bigger picture, a part of the understandings, beliefs, rituals, and expectations as a core to the culture one lives in (Rosenblatt, 1997). Each culture has its own approach to deal with life events as the loss of a significant other; it illustrates a specific type of worldview and determines certain beliefs when people face stressful events (Chun, Cronkite, & Moos, 2006). The perception and expression of afterlife beliefs can be described by both intrinsic and extrinsic religion, according to Allport’s theoretical model (Allport, 1966). While the extrinsic motivation for religiosity is considered as a direction where it is “used” for instrumental purposes such as social integration, intrinsic religion is described to be related to private, emotional aspects of religiosity, where the individual is living one’s belief with sincerity and intentionality. Of these two, intrinsic religiosity is found to be more strongly positively associated with afterlife beliefs (Cohen et al., 2005). In other words, people who believe in an afterlife are more seem to be motivated by intrinsic religiosity. In the concept of meaning-making, studies also concluded that individuals with intrinsic motivation of religiosity have more sense of meaning in life (Ardelt, 2003; Frazier & Steger; 2005).

In the same vein, the extent to which people are intrinsically motivated religiously is found to be dependent on culture. Cohen and Hill (2007) showed that intrinsic religion was positively associated with Western (individualistic) cultures compared to non- Western (collectivistic) cultures. Accordingly, the ways to grieve for the loss of a significant other might seem to depend on someone’s afterlife beliefs, but this might differ in whether one lives in an individualistic or collectivistic culture. According to Hofstede (2001), whereas collectivistic cultures are seen to be put more value on traditional rituals and ceremonies, individualistic cultures are less engaged in such activities. Previous findings suggest a difference between the individualistic and the collectivistic culture in the way the grieving process is influenced by one’s intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of beliefs. Based on this reasoning, it is expected that

the association between afterlife beliefs and the experience and expression of grief is different for individualistic cultures compared to collectivistic cultures.

Although investigation on belief in life after death are persuasive, no research is done concerning distinctive afterlife beliefs related to the grieving process with respect to cultural differences. Therefore, the current paper investigates the relationship between reward afterlife beliefs and grief on the one hand, and punishment afterlife beliefs and grief on the other hand, comparing these relationships between collectivistic and individualistic cultures. In terms of hypotheses, it was investigated whether, generally, low grief levels are associated with strong reward afterlife beliefs (H1), and high grief levels are associated with strong punishment afterlife beliefs (H2). Moreover, it was hypothesized that the relationship between reward and punishment afterlife beliefs and grief is different within an individualistic culture compared to collectivistic culture. More specifically, it is expected that the relationship between either reward or punishment afterlife beliefs and grief is stronger for individualistic cultures than for collectivistic cultures (H3).

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

A sample of 290 bereaved individuals was used in this study, all of whom have experienced the loss of a significant other in the past three years. All participants in the study were either from Germany (n=147) or Turkey (n=143). Participants who dropped out and did not answer most of the questions were excluded from the study. There were 76 participants from Turkey, and 90 participants from Germany eliminated for incomplete data. Table 1 shows the sample descriptives.

The countries Turkey and Germany were used as representatives for individualistic and collectivistic cultures. According to Hofstede (2001), German society is individualistic, whereas Turkey is categorized as a collectivistic culture (Triandis, 1993). In this way, comparing the results from participants from Turkey and Germany will demonstrate the differences concerning grief and afterlife beliefs of individualistic and collectivistic countries.

**Table 1**

Sample Descriptives on All Demographic Variables, Grouped By Country, Including T-test Statistics of the Differences between the Countries

<i>Variables</i>	Germany (n=147)		Turkey (n=143)		<i>p</i>
	N	%	N	%	
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	140	95.2	115	80.4	.000
Male	6	4.1	28	19.6	
Other	1	15	0	0	
<b>Age</b>					
18-24	15	10.2	87	60.8	.000
25-34	36	24.5	28	19.6	
35-44	31	21.1	10	7.0	
45-54	34	23.1	9	6.3	
55-64	26	17.7	8	5.6	
65-74	3	2.0	1	.7	
75 <	2	1.4	0	0	
<b>Marital Status</b>					
Married	49	33.3	25	17.5	.000
In a relationship	35	23.8	52	36.4	
Divorced	5	3.4	7	4.9	
Widowed	27	18.4	5	3.5	
Single	31	21.1	54	37.8	
<b>Closeness to the deceased *</b>					
10-9	119	81.0	68	47.6	.000
8-7	21	14.3	48	33.6	
< 6	7	4,8	27	18.9	
<b>Cause of death</b>					
Illness	96	65.3	109	76.2	.337
Accident	14	9.5	6	4.2	
Suicide	14	9.5	8	5.6	
Homicide	3	2.0	0	0	
Other	16	10.9	15	10.5	
Unknown	4	2.7	5	3.5	

\* 1= Extremely distant, 10= Extremely close



## Materials

**Demographics** Demographic characteristics as age, gender, education, marital status, living place, and whether they have children were asked. Furthermore, time since the loss of the deceased, the relationship with the deceased, cause of death, and the participants' religiousness was also asked.

**Grief** The scale that was used to measure grief symptoms was Prolonged Grief Disorder-13 (PG-13) (Prigerson et al., 2009) (see appendix A). The PG-13 instrument consisted of 12 items: two items (items 3 and 12) assessed the duration and impairment that are to be answered with "yes" or "no", such as "Have you experienced a significant reduction in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning?". Eleven items assessed the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional symptoms, rated on a 5-point scale, formulated as, for example, "In the past month, how often have you felt yourself longing or yearning for the person you lost?". Items 1, 2, 4 and 5 are rated on a frequency scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "several times a day" (5), and items 6-12 are rated on an intensity scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "overwhelmingly" (5). One item concerning emotional loneliness is kept out from both data due to technical reasons. The conducted reliability analysis showed that this scale was reliable for the current study and the data set (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ).

**Afterlife Beliefs** To assess afterlife beliefs, participants were given the Afterlife Expectation Scale (AES) (O'Sullivan & Rose, 2002) (see appendix B). This instrument originally consists of 45 Likert-scaled items, using a 7-point scale for agreement. The scale is created to measure several specific divisions of afterlife beliefs, such as reincarnation and the surreal afterlife. However, since the present study aimed to investigate only reward and punishment afterlife beliefs, not all of the items are included in the questionnaire. Therefore, 16 items were under the subscale of joy/reward afterlife (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ) and eight items under the punishment afterlife (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$ ). The items were formulated as statements about what type of afterlife the subject expected for the participant when the participant itself dies (e.g., "I believe that when I die, I will be reunited with loved ones" and "I will be subjected to judgment"). The items five, seven, eight, and twelve in the reward afterlife belief scale were reverse coded.

The original English questionnaires were translated into the Turkish language for the participants in Turkey, and to the German language for the participants in Germany. This was

done by experts in the field of psychology. Additionally, the Turkish scales were checked up by an English-Turkish translator.

### **Procedure and Design**

The different questionnaires of the current study, were combined in one survey created by and presented in Qualtrics. The link to the survey was spread via social media and e-mail, during May 2020. Only participants who met the requirements of being older than the age of 18, who had lost a loved one in the past three years, and lives either in Turkey or Germany were able to participate. Information about the study was given, and informed consent was asked for on the first page of the survey, including the information that they were free to stop their participation anytime when they wish. Finishing the survey took 20 minutes on average. The questions were in a forced-choice format to make sure that every participant provided an answer.

Data were analyzed with IBM Statistics version 26. To test the hypotheses, a hierarchical linear regression was conducted using grief as a dependent variable and demographic variables along with. A 2 Culture (individualistic vs. collectivistic) x 2 Reward Afterlife Beliefs (low vs. high) x 2 Punishment Afterlife Beliefs (low vs. high) ANOVA was performed with Grief as a dependent variable, using a median split to divide the sample based on the level of afterlife beliefs people reported.

## **Results**

### **Descriptives**

Table 2 displays the mean grief scores for high and low reward afterlife beliefs, as well as punishment afterlife beliefs, within each culture, representing the descriptives for the three-way interaction of the ANOVA.

Table 2

*Mean Grief scores as a function of a Punishment Afterlife Beliefs x Reward Afterlife Beliefs x Culture design, including SDs (Standard Deviations)*

<b>Culture</b>	<b>Punishment Afterlife Beliefs</b>	<b>Reward Afterlife Beliefs</b>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Individualistic</i>	Low	Low	2.75	.90	59
		High	2.94	.74	59
	High	Low	3.10	.73	16
		High	2.81	.61	13
<i>Collectivistic</i>	Low	Low	2.32	.74	26
		High	1.85	.49	4
	High	Low	2.34	.57	46
		High	2.38	.71	67

### Three-way Analysis of Variance

The following are the results of the 2 Reward Afterlife Beliefs (low vs. high) x 2 Punishment Afterlife Beliefs (low vs. high) x 2 Culture (individualistic vs. collectivistic) ANOVA<sup>1</sup>. Gender and age were included as covariates. Both gender ( $F(1, 280) = 9.342, p = .002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .032$ ) as well as age ( $F(1, 280) = 10.555, p = .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .036$ ) were significant covariates. The main effect of reward afterlife beliefs ( $F(1, 280) = 2.412, p = .122$ ), as well as the main effect of punishment afterlife beliefs ( $F(1, 280) = 1.891, p = .170$ ) and the main effect of culture ( $F(1, 280) = .271, p = .603$ ), were nonsignificant. There was no two-way interaction effect between reward afterlife beliefs and punishment afterlife beliefs ( $F(1, 280) = .221, p = .638$ ). Moreover, the two-way interaction between reward afterlife beliefs and culture was also not significant ( $F(1, 280) = .482, p = .488$ ), nor was the two-way interaction between punishment afterlife beliefs and culture ( $F(1, 280) = .669, p = .414$ ). However, the three-way interaction between reward afterlife beliefs, punishment afterlife beliefs, and culture was significant ( $F(1, 280) = 4.446, p = .036$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .016$ ). This interaction is illustrated in Figure 1.

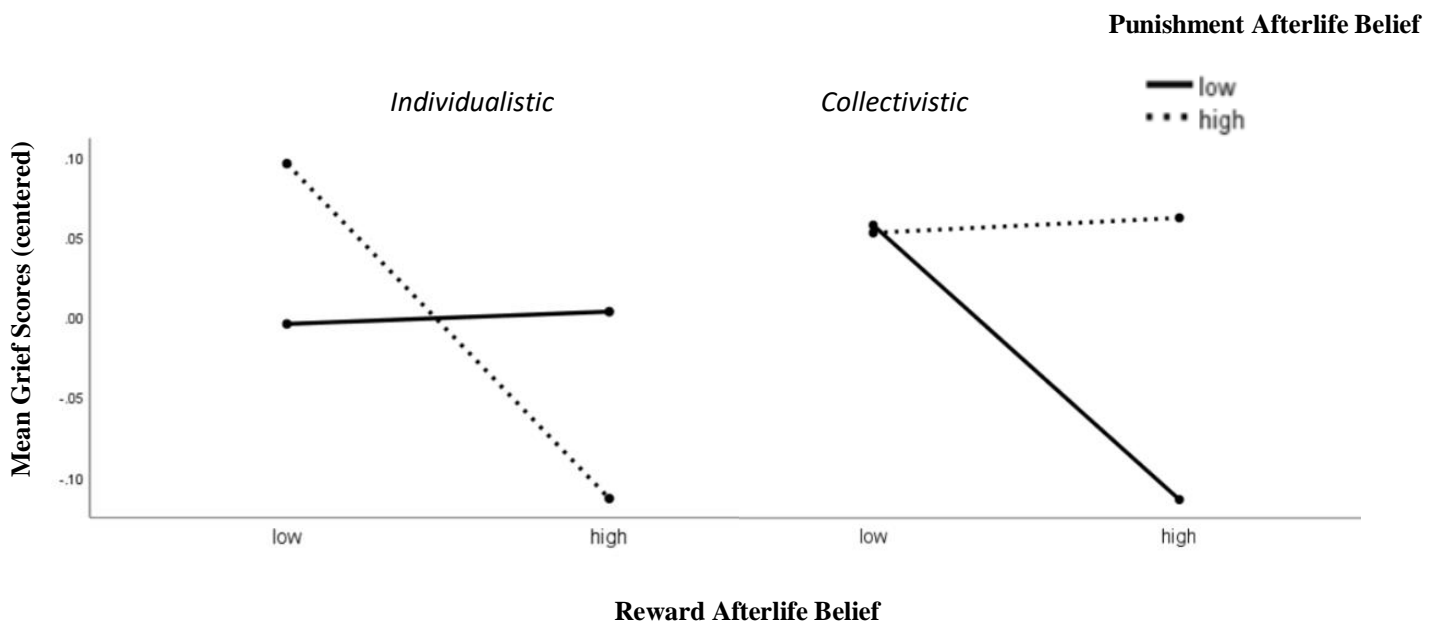


Figure 1. Interaction Effect of Reward Afterlife Beliefs, Punishment Afterlife Beliefs, and Culture with Grief as a Dependent Variable.

As can be seen from Figure 1, the pattern of mean grief scores across participants that scored either low or high on reward afterlife beliefs as well as on punishment afterlife beliefs differed between the individualistic and the collectivistic culture. For the individualistic culture, grief scores did not seem to differ according to the level of reward afterlife beliefs, whereas for the collectivistic culture, the average grief score for participants that scored low on reward afterlife beliefs was higher than for participants that scored high on reward beliefs. With regard to the association between punishment afterlife beliefs and grief, a similar but opposite pattern emerged. For the individualistic culture, a low level of punishment, afterlife beliefs seemed to be associated with high grief scores, and with a high level of punishment beliefs, a low grief score was found. For the collectivistic culture, grief scores did not seem to differ according to the level of punishment afterlife beliefs.

## Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate grief and whether there exists a relationship with the belief in an afterlife, both for beliefs about an afterlife being a rewarding place and/or a place where one is punished. In particular, it was investigated whether this expected association between afterlife beliefs and grief existed in both an individualistic and a collectivistic culture.

By doing this, the current study is, to our knowledge, the first in dividing afterlife beliefs in reward and punishment beliefs in investigating their relationship with grief. Moreover, the role of people's beliefs in an afterlife in grief has not been studied before comparing individualistic and collectivistic cultures, which is a major strength of the current study. It was hypothesized that reward afterlife beliefs would hold a negative relationship with grief (Koenig et al., 2006; Fannely et al., 2005, Smith et al., 1992), and punishment afterlife beliefs would hold a positive relationship with grief (Smith & Range, 1991; Carr & Sharp, 2013). The third hypothesis concerned the expectation that these relationships would vary across cultures, with the relationship being stronger for respondents living in an individualistic culture.

Contradicting our first two hypotheses, the results of the current study revealed that there was no relationship between either reward afterlife beliefs and grief or punishment afterlife beliefs and grief. In line with our third hypothesis, however, it was found that the relationship between people's beliefs about an afterlife and grief does exist, but when culture is taken into account. In other words, the extent to which people reported to have reward and punishment afterlife beliefs were associated with their grief scores in a different way within an individualistic culture than in a collectivistic culture. Although this interaction was hypothesized, the way in which the association between reward and punishment afterlife beliefs and grief was expected to differ across cultures appeared to be different from what was found. The interaction between reward and punishment afterlife beliefs in terms of grief scores was found not to be more emphasized in an individualistic culture, as theorized, but rather opposite compared to what was found in participants that lived in a collectivistic culture. This explains the fact that both reward and punishment afterlife beliefs did not show to be directly related to grief. The way the interaction between afterlife beliefs, culture, and grief emerged from the results of this study may be explained by the literature on the psychology of religion.

In the context of religion, our reasoning about intrinsic religiosity playing a role in how belief in an afterlife might be associated with grief, based on the theory of Allport (1966), has been supported by the data. The way in which intrinsic religiosity was expected to be related with how people deal with loss and to what extent they feel grief turned out to be different from theorized. While intrinsic religion ought to be related to individualism (Cohen & Hill, 2007), afterlife beliefs, which have to do with people's intrinsic belief system, were expected to be related to grief in a stronger sense in the individualistic culture compared to the collectivistic culture. An explanation for the observation that the interaction between reward and punishment afterlife beliefs is opposite, instead of stronger, in the individualistic compared to the

collectivistic culture, might be found in the role punishment afterlife beliefs play dependent on the level of reward afterlife beliefs. More specifically, the meaning of punishment beliefs as a part of intrinsic religiosity might play a different role depending on culture when the role of guilt is taken into account.

Guilt, in the context of religion, is a self-conscious emotional experience that occurs when a person believes that they have compromised their own or cultural moral beliefs, which might result in punishment in the afterlife. Guilt has been found to be correlated to intrinsic religiosity (Bowers, Chau, Danko, Darvill, & Johnson, 1990), determining how individuals make meaning of death and living in the light of dying. Being religious often entails living in a certain way to make the afterlife rewarding. Besides their cultural differences, the countries Germany and Turkey differ in religious conviction. While in Turkey, the majority of the people believe in Islam, in Germany, the majority of the people are Christians. These different religions are likely to differ in their religious beliefs, inherent to being separate religions. Simultaneously, the way people feel about their religious convictions and the way they emotionally react to stressful and religious-related events like the death of a significant other is likely influenced by the culture they live in. Following this line of reasoning, guilt as a specific part of punishment afterlife beliefs that is expected to be related to both religious beliefs and culture could explain the way the interaction between reward and punishment afterlife beliefs and culture was found. In future research, the current study should be followed up by taking a closer look at punishment beliefs in its interaction with reward beliefs and culture, investigating the role of guilt.

Another explanation might be the difference in the way each culture uses religious beliefs to cope with a stressful life event like a loss of a loved one. It is previously shown that religion may provide a meaning-framework for coping with loss (Koenig, Perez, & Pergament, 2000; Park, 2010). Cultures in which their religious conviction is used as a means of constructively coping with loss might show an association between reward afterlife beliefs and grief more compared to cultures in which this is less the case. For example, collective coping strategies, including the sharing of religious beliefs, are more preferred by collectivistic cultures (Kuo, 2013). Therefore, it is reasoned that the way individuals use religious beliefs, including afterlife beliefs, as a coping strategy might be related to culture. Thus, whether one sees religious beliefs as a coping strategy might be dependent on their culture.

Having found that both reward and punishment afterlife beliefs are associated with grief differently according to the culture one lives in, helps in understanding why grief levels differ

among people who have lost a significant other. This insight is of relevance to the clinical practice, as it may add to the research upon which clinical therapy guidelines are based. Most of all, it provides us with the notion that grief should be studied in a cultural context, considering the way a meaning-making system, including afterlife beliefs, may be related to grief.

### **Limitations**

The current study had some limitations important to be mentioned. First, a convenience sampling strategy was used, possibly threatening the external validity of the results. Whereas our target population consisted of all German and Turkish citizens, we only included a certain part of these citizens that were connected to us through e-mail and social media. From the data, it became evident that several German and Turkish cities were covered, but a lot of other parts of the countries were not included. Therefore, current results are limitedly generalizable to the whole German and Turkish populations.

Second, the reported strength of the relationship between the participant and the deceased differed between the two countries. The strength of the relationship with the deceased was generally higher in Germany. This sample difference might have influenced the reported grief scores, limiting the comparability of the two countries. When the samples would be more comparable with regards to the closeness of the relationship with the deceased, it is expected that the comparative pattern of the grief results might be more emphasized. Therefore, for future research, it can be suggested that besides the time of loss, also the strength of the closeness to the deceased may be considered as meeting requirements for the participants.

Moreover, important to note is that even though the items of the Afterlife Expectation Scale measured the afterlife beliefs of the bereaved, the reported information was more closely related to the bereaved instead of the deceased. For example, the item of the judgment afterlife scale “I will pay for my mistakes in this life” is formulated in a way that this statement may be true for the participant, but not for how the participant views the deceased. For future studies concerning bereavement and afterlife beliefs as a meaning-making strategy, an additional scale might be included, that measures the participant’s expectation about life after the death of the deceased. This might give information about the meaning of life and death for the bereaved themselves, as well as about how the bereaved make meaning of the loss of the deceased.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the current study have provided initial evidence for a distinctive

interplay between reward and punishment afterlife beliefs in the experience of grief, depending on the culture of the bereaved. In the individualistic culture of Germany, grief levels seem to differ according to the extent people believe in punishment after death, despite their belief about the afterlife is a “better place”. Vice versa, for a collectivistic culture like the one in Turkey, reward afterlife beliefs seem to be associated with grief levels. In understanding and investigating grief, both the distinct roles of reward and punishment beliefs, as the culture the bereaved lives in, need to be taken into account. A deeper insight into grief in a religious and cultural context might be obtained by looking into intrinsic religion, examining the relationship between afterlife beliefs, in particular those about punishment, guilt, and culture.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> To examine whether reward and punishment afterlife beliefs and culture are predictors of grief, an additional hierarchical regression was performed, including two-way and three-way interactions. The regression consisted of four steps. All the regression models in these steps turned out to be significant in predicting grief ( $p < .01$ ). These models also included the demographic variables age and gender as predictors (with the highest p-value being  $p < .05$ ). In models that included the independent variables, neither was a significant predictor, nor were there two-way or three-way interactions. The two-way interaction between punishment and reward afterlife belief ( $p = .083$ ) and the three-way interactions between punishment afterlife belief, reward afterlife belief and culture turned out to be marginally significant ( $p = .091$ ). To investigate whether there was a trend towards a pattern in the data that reflects an interaction effect, a three-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed.



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## Appendix A

**Prolonged Grief Disorder-13 (PG-13) (Prigerson, 2009) - Original Language (English)**

1. In the past month, how often have you felt yourself longing or yearning for the person you lost? *1= Not at all 2 = At least once 3 = At least once a week 4 = At least once a day 5 = Several times a day*
2. In the past month, how often have you had intense feelings of emotional pain, sorrow, or pangs of grief related to the lost relationship? *1= Not at all 2 = At least once 3 = At least once a week 4 = At least once a day 5 = Several times a day*
3. For questions 1 or 2 above, have you experienced either of these symptoms at least daily and after 6 months have elapsed since the loss? *1=Yes 0=No*
4. In the past month, how often have you tried to avoid reminders that the person you lost is gone? *1= Not at all 2 = At least once 3 = At least once a week 4 = At least once a day 5 = Several times a day*
5. In the past month, how often have you felt stunned, shocked, or dazed by your loss? *1= Not at all 2 = At least once 3 = At least once a week 4 = At least once a day 5 = Several times a day*
6. Do you feel confused about your role in life or feel like you don't know who you are (i.e. feeling that a part of yourself has died)? *1= not at all 2=slightly 3=somewhat 4=quite a bit 5= overwhelmingly*
7. Have you had trouble accepting the loss? *1= not at all 2=slightly 3=somewhat 4=quite a bit 5= overwhelmingly*
8. Has it been hard for you to trust others since your loss? *1= not at all 2=slightly 3=somewhat 4=quite a bit 5= overwhelmingly*
9. Do you feel bitter over your loss? *1= not at all 2=slightly 3=somewhat 4=quite a bit 5= overwhelmingly*
10. Do you feel that moving on (e.g. making new friends, pursuing new interests) would make it difficult for you now? *1= not at all 2=slightly 3=somewhat 4=quite a bit 5= overwhelmingly*

11. Do you feel that life is unfulfilling, empty, or meaningless since your loss? *1= not at all 2=slightly 3=somewhat 4=quite a bit 5= overwhelmingly*

12. Have you experienced a significant reduction in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (e.g., domestic responsibilities)? *1=Yes 0=No*

### German Language

1. Wie oft hatten Sie im letzten Monat Sehnsucht oder ein starkes Verlangen nach der verstorbenen Person, und es ging Ihnen schlecht dabei? *1= Überhaupt nicht 2= Mindestens einmal 3= Mindestens einmal pro Woche 4= Mindestens einmal pro Tag 5= Mehrmals täglich*

2. Wie oft hatten Sie im letzten Monat intensive Gefühle von Schmerz, Wehmut oder Trauer in Bezug auf die verstorbene Person? *1= Überhaupt nicht 2= Mindestens einmal 3= Mindestens einmal pro Woche 4= Mindestens einmal pro Tag 5= Mehrmals täglich*

3. Falls die Fragen 1 und 2 mindestens einmal mit (mindestens einmal pro Tag) oder (mehrmals täglich) beantwortet wurden: Dauern diese Erfahrungen mindestens sechs Monate? *1= Ja 2= Nein*

4. Wie oft im letzten Monat versuchten Sie, die Erinnerung daran, dass die verstorbene Person tatsächlich nicht mehr da ist, von sich zu schieben? *1= Überhaupt nicht 2= Mindestens einmal 3= Mindestens einmal pro Woche 4= Mindestens einmal pro Tag 5= Mehrmals täglich*

5. Wie oft im letzten Monat waren Sie bezüglich des Verlustes fassungslos, schockiert oder benommen? *1= Überhaupt nicht 2= Mindestens einmal 3= Mindestens einmal pro Woche 4= Mindestens einmal pro Tag 5= Mehrmals täglich*

6. Fühlen Sie sich ratlos bezüglich Ihrer Rolle im Leben oder als wüssten Sie nicht mehr, wer Sie sind (z.B. als ob ein Teil Ihrer Selbst gestorben wäre)? *1= Überhaupt nicht 2= Kaum 3= Ein wenig 4= Ziemlich 5= Sehr*

7. Fällt es Ihnen schwer, Ihren Verlust zu akzeptieren? *1= Überhaupt nicht 2= Kaum 3= Ein wenig 4= Ziemlich 5= Sehr*

8. Fällt es Ihnen seit Ihrem Verlust schwer, anderen Menschen zu vertrauen? *1= Überhaupt nicht 2= Kaum 3= Ein wenig 4= Ziemlich 5= Sehr*

9. Sind Sie verbittert über Ihren Verlust? 1= *Überhaupt nicht* 2= *Kaum* 3= *Ein wenig* 4= *Ziemlich* 5= *Sehr*

10. Glauben Sie, dass es jetzt schwierig für Sie ist, Ihr Leben weiterzuführen (z.B. neue Freunde zu finden, neue Interessen zu verfolgen)? 1= *Überhaupt nicht* 2= *Kaum* 3= *Ein wenig* 4= *Ziemlich* 5= *Sehr*

11. Kommt Ihnen Ihr Leben seit Ihrem Verlust unerfüllt, leer oder bedeutungslos vor? 1= *Überhaupt nicht* 2= *Kaum* 3= *Ein wenig* 4= *Ziemlich* 5= *Sehr*

12. Haben Sie eine deutliche Einschränkung Ihrer Fähigkeiten im sozialen, beruflichen oder in einem anderen Umfeld (z. B. bei der Bewältigung des Haushalts) bemerkt? 1= *Ja* 2= *Nein*

### **Turkish Language**

1- Geçtiğimiz ay içerisinde, kaybettiğiniz kişiye ne sıklıkla özlem ya da hasret duyduğunuzu hissettiniz? 1 = *Hiç değil* 2 = *En az bir kez* 3 = *En az haftada bir kez* 4 = *En az günde bir kez* 5 = *Günde birkaç kez*

2- Geçtiğimiz ay içerisinde, kaybınızla ilgili olarak ne sıklıkla duygusal ızdırıp, yoğun üzüntü ya da keder hissettiniz? 1 = *Hiç değil* 2 = *En az bir kez* 3 = *En az haftada bir kez* 4 = *En az günde bir kez* 5 = *Günde birkaç kez*

3- Yukarıdaki 1 ve 2. sorular için, bu semptomlardan herhangi birini en azından her gün ve kaybınızın ardından 6 ay geçtikten sonra hissettiniz mi? 1=*evet*, 0=*hayır*

4- Geçtiğimiz ay içerisinde, size kaybınızı hatırlatan şeylerden ne sıklıkla kaçınmaya çalıştınız? 1 = *Hiç değil* 2 = *En az bir kez* 3 = *En az haftada bir kez* 4 = *En az günde bir kez* 5 = *Günde birkaç kez*

5- Geçtiğimiz ay içerisinde, ne sıklıkla kaybınız nedeniyle afallamış, hayrete düşmüş ya da şaşkına dönmüş hissettiniz? 1 = *Hiç değil* 2 = *En az bir kez* 3 = *En az haftada bir kez* 4 = *En az günde bir kez* 5 = *Günde birkaç kez*

6- Yaşamdaki rolünüzle ilgili kafa karışıklığı ya da benlik duygunuzda azalma (bir parçanızın öldüğü hissi gibi) hissediyor musunuz?

1=*asla* 2=*kısmen* 3=*biraz* 4=*sık sık* 5=*büyük bir coğunlukla*

7- Kaybınızı kabullenmekle ilgili güçlük çektiniz mi? 1=*asla* 2=*kısmen* 3=*biraz* 4=*sık sık* 5=*büyük bir çoğunlukla*

8- Kaybınızı öğrendiğinizden bu yana başkalarına güvenmek sizin için zor oldu mu? 1=*asla* 2=*kısmen* 3=*biraz* 4=*sık sık* 5=*büyük bir çoğunlukla*

9- Kaybınız nedeniyle buruk hissediyor musunuz? 1=*asla* 2=*kısmen* 3=*biraz* 4=*sık sık* 5=*büyük bir çoğunlukla*

10- Artık hayatınıza devam etmenin (örneğin, yeni arkadaşlar edinmek, yeni ilgi alanları oluşturmak vb.) sizin için zor olacağını hissediyor musunuz? 1=*asla* 2=*kısmen* 3=*biraz* 4=*sık sık* 5=*büyük bir çoğunlukla*

11- Kaybınızı öğrendiğinizden bu yana hayatın doyum vermediğini, boş ya da anlamsız olduğunu hissediyor musunuz? 1=*asla* 2=*kısmen* 3=*biraz* 4=*sık sık* 5=*büyük bir çoğunlukla*

12- 2 Sosyal, mesleki ya da diğer önemli alanlardaki (aile yaşamı) işlevselliğinizde önemli bir azalma oldu mu? 1= *evet* 2= *hayir*



## Appendix B

**Afterlife Expectation Scale (Rose & O'Sullivan, 2002) – Original Language (English)**

Answering categories on a scale from 1 to 7: 1= *Strongly disagree* 2= *Disagree* 3= *More or less disagree* 4= *Undecided* 5= *More or less agree* 6= *Agree* 7= *Strongly agree*

**Joy/Reward Afterlife**

1. I will be reunited with people I love.
2. I will experience peace.
3. I will enter into a better existence.
4. The result will be positive.
5. The result will be neither positive nor negative.\*
6. I will see God.
7. Nothing will happen.\*
8. My existence will be over.\*
9. I will see those who have died.
10. I will be with important holy or religious figures.
11. I will be joined with God or a higher power.
12. There will be no afterlife.\*
13. I will go to heaven.
14. I will experience ultimate joy.
15. I will be enlightened.
16. I will be given greater understanding.

**Judgment Afterlife**

17. I will spend time in purgatory
18. I will be punished.

19. I will need to be purged of my sins.
20. It will take some time before I can enter my reward state.
21. I will be subjected to judgment.
22. My actions on earth will determine my fate.
23. I will regret what I have done in this life.
24. I will pay for my mistakes in this life

(Items marked with \* will be reversed coded)

### **German Language**

*1= Stimme überhaupt nicht zu 2= Stimme nicht zu 3= Stimme ein bisschen nicht zu 4= Unentschlossen 5= Stimme ein bisschen zu 6= Stimme zu 7= Stimme völlig zu*

### **Freude / Belohnung Leben nach dem Tod**

1. Ich werde wieder vereint sein mit den Menschen, die ich liebe.
2. Ich werde nach dem Tod Frieden spüren.
3. Ich werde ein besseres Leben führen nach dem Tod.
4. Es wird alles positiv enden.
5. Ich kann nicht sagen ob es positiv oder negativ enden wird.
6. Nach dem Tod werde ich Gott begegnen.
7. Nichts wird passieren.\*
8. Nach dem Tod werde ich nicht mehr existieren.\*
9. Nach dem Tod werde ich den Verstorbenen begegnen.
10. Nach dem Tod werde ich Heiligen begegnen.
11. Nach dem Tod werde ich mit Gott vereint sein.
12. Es gibt kein Leben nach dem Tod.
13. Ich werde in den Himmel kommen.

14. Nach dem Tod werde ich pures Glück verspüren.
15. Nach dem Tod werde ich eine Erleuchtung spüren.
16. Nach dem Tod werde ich mehr Erkenntnis haben. I will be given greater understanding.

### **Urteil Leben nach dem Tod**

17. Nach dem Tod, werde ich in die Hölle kommen.
18. Nach dem Tod werde ich bestraft werden.
19. Ich muss von meinen Sünden gereinigt werden.
20. Es wird einige Zeit dauern bevor ich belohnt werde.
21. Nach dem Tod werde ich vor einem höheren Gericht stehen.
22. Meine Taten auf der Erde werden mein Schicksal bestimmen.
23. Ich werde bereuen was ich in meinem Leben getan habe.
24. Ich werde für die Fehler in meinem Leben bezahlen müssen.

### **Turkish Language**

*1= Kesinlikle katılmıyorum 2= Katılmıyorum 3= Aşağı yukarı katılmıyorum 4= Kararsız 5= Aşağı yukarı katılıyorum 6= Katılıyorum 7= Kesinlikle katılıyorum*

### **Ölüm Sonrası Ödül / Sevinç**

- 1- Sevdiklerime kavuşacağım.
- 2- Huzuru tadacağım.
- 3- Daha iyi bir yaşam biçimine (ya da varlığa) gireceğim.
- 4- Sonuç güzel olacak.
- 5- Sonuç iyi ya da kötü olmayacak.
- 6- Tanrı'yı göreceğim.
- 7- Hiçbir şey olmayacak.

- 8- Varlığım son bulacak.
- 9- Ölenleri göreceğim.
- 10- Kutsal ya da dini figürlerle (,dindar şahıslarla) birlikte olacağım.
- 11- Tanrı'ya ya da daha yüksek bir güce katılacağım.
- 12- Ölümden sonra hayat olmayacak.
- 13- Cennete gideceğim.
- 14- Nihai mutluluğa ulaşacağım. (mutluluğun nirvanası gibi bi şey)
- 15- Aydınlanacağım.
- 16- Mükemmel bir kavrama zekasına sahip olacağım.

### **Ölüm Sonrası Ceza**

- 17-Arafta zaman geçireceğim.
- 18-Cezalandırılacağım
- 19- Günahlarımdan arınmam gerekecek.
- 20- Mükafat mevkisine (ya da "ödül evresine" daha duru bir türkçe için) ulaşmam zaman alacak.
- 21- Yargıya tabi tutulacağım..
- 22- Dünyadaki eylemlerim kaderimi belirleyecek.
- 23- Bu hayatta yaptıklarımdan pişmanlık duyacağım.
- 24- Hatalarımdan bedelini bu hayatta ödeyeceğim.
- 25- Bilinç tamamen yok olacak.
- 26- Tüm gerçekliğim son bulacak.