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**The Influence of Attachment Anxiety on Grief Intensity and Perceived Social Support: A Cross-cultural Bereavement Study**

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**Abstract**

Previous studies have investigated and reported the significance of the role of attachment insecurities to play during bereavement. Most of those studies though have been conducted in Western cultures and the non-Western ones are largely from South-East Asia. This study however compares the impact of attachment on the grief intensity and the perceived social support in Western culture(Spain) to two non-Western from Africa (Ghana) and the Middle East (Iran). A sample of 354 bereaved participants from Spain, Ghana, and Iran took part in an online survey and answered the questionnaire. The findings of the study show that in both individualist and collectivist societies, higher attachment anxiety predicted higher grief intensity and lower perceived social support. Additionally, it has been shown that culture does not significantly moderate the relationship between attachment anxiety and grief intensity. Moreover, the culture did not moderate the relationship between attachment anxiety and perceived social support as expected. Implications, possible explanations and limitations were discussed.

*Keywords:* attachment, grief intensity, social support, individualism, collectivism

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Loss has been around for almost as long as human existence. It will happen to everyone sooner or later if it has not happened yet already. Eventually, we all are confronted with it. Grief is defined as an individual's reaction as a result of the loss (Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2007). Losing a home, someone (due to their death), or a relationship all result in grief. Yet another cause of grief is bereavement. It can be defined as an objective situation in which someone close to the individual dies and they experience the loss. Bereavement carries a significant risk for an individual's health and it increases the probability of developing psychiatric illnesses (Stroebe & Schut, 2016). Numerous factors impact the bereavement process such as the cause of death, circumstances surrounding death, kinship, attachment style, and social support (Stroebe et al., 2007).

A significant factor that influences the grief in an individual is the attachment to the bereaved (Smigelsky, Bottomley, Relyea, & Robert, 2019). In the following study, we sought to examine the impact of attachment insecurities on grief intensity and the perceived social support of the bereaved. Bowlby (1973, 1980, 1982) argued that in the course of their development, a child establishes a relationship with a figure in their close proximity who can support them (an attachment figure). Interactions with this attachment figure have a significant influence on the child's future relationships into adulthood and impact the "attachment behavioral system". Bowlby (1973) believed that if the attachment figure is close, available, and nourishing, it will create a stable and secure attachment style which would lead to a positive appraisal of the self and the world for the child. However, if that is not the case and the attachment figure is not responsive or supportive the child is likely to develop an insecure attachment style which in turn could lead to negative self-appraisal and negative evaluation of the world.

With regards to attachment, many studies measure two dimensions relating to attachment orientations: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Attachment anxiety (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) is characterized by an extent to which the individuals are afraid and anxious that the relationship partner would be unavailable when they need them. They are also fearful that the relationship partner might abandon or reject them. Attachment avoidance, on the other hand, is characterized by an extent to which the individuals have misgivings about their relationship partner or their intentions and aims to be emotionally independent to keep a distance from them.

As a result, being low on the two dimensions means that the individual has a secure attachment style. However, being high on attachment anxiety will mean that the individual uses hyper-activating strategies: proactively seeking love and support without the confidence that they can find it (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2007). But when they fail to find it they will fall into despair and anger. Contrarily, being high on attachment avoidance will mean that the individual uses deactivating strategies: displaying no effort to get close to others when in distress, rejecting any kind of openness and exposure to others, and lastly avoiding intimacy and dependence on others in their relationships. Finally, being high on both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance will mean that the individual is fearful which in turn means that they hold a negative view of both themselves and the world.

Attachment anxiety has been found to have a clear connection with intensity and abnormality in the grief process (Meier, Carr, & Currier, 2013; Wayment & Vierthaler, 2002). Compared with attachment anxiety, it has been observed that individuals with attachment avoidance experience somatic symptoms and they may not show as much intensity in their grief as people with attachment anxiety. For individuals with attachment avoidance, it will take more time to process loss than normal grief. They have less to grieve for since their connection to the deceased is weaker (Jerga, Shaver, & Wilkinson, 2011). The fact that attachment anxiety leads to more abnormalities (Field & Sundin, 2001; Fraley & Bonanno, 2004; Lobb et al., 2010; Meier et al., 2013; Wayment & Vierthaler, 2002) in the bereavement outcome compelled us to choose it for this study.

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As for help-seeking behavior, individuals with a secure attachment style are more likely to seek social support; while individuals with an insecure attachment style tend to see an exaggeration in threatening situations and lack the confidence to seek social support and cope properly with grief. Therefore, adding to reasons as to why they will likely be the people with a higher intensity of grief and grief reactions (Cohen, Katz, Cohen, & Katz, 2015).

This goes to show that there is a difference between attachment styles and their respective perception of social support. One reason for that might be that individuals with insecure attachment styles have unclear expectations about the responsiveness of others. This results in having more imbalanced perceptions of support, in which they easily change their appraisals according to their recent experience. Another possibility is that individuals with insecure attachment styles use their negative mood as information (Clore & Tamir, 2002). It may also be that the difference in perception of social support reflects a deficit in the regulation of affect. This means that individuals with insecure attachment styles have problems separating the emotional experiences from one interaction to another.

With regards to grief, it has been posited that the amount of perceived social support is a predictor for grief experience (Houwen, Stroebe, Stroebe, Bout, & Meij, 2010). Among the bereavement scholars, it is commonly recognized that social support from family and friends is one of the most important mediators of the bereavement outcome (Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2005). A lack of support has been seen as a predictor for lasting effects on psychological adjustment (Stroebe et al., 2005). This demonstrates how social support is important in the bereavement process.

However, societies have different systems of social support based on their structure and culture. Since many of the studies surrounding adult attachment and grief have been conducted in the U.S. and western societies, it is imperative that we conduct such studies in other regions of the world. This will allow the comparison and see whether they generalize for applications such as clinical practice. One of the ways in which it is possible to investigate the difference is to use individualism and collectivism as a cultural framework. According to Triandis (1995), there are four essential features which separate individualism from collectivism: (1) individualism encourages independency of the self while collectivism is about interdependency (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) (2) individualism is about prioritizing personal goals over groups goals while collectivism does the opposite (Schwartz, 1990) (3) individualism is about exchange while collectivism is about communal relatedness (Bontempo & Rivero, 1992; Miller, 1994) (4) individualism puts more importance in attitudes rather than norms while collectivism does not (Kim, Triandis, Kâğitçibaşı, Choi, & Yoon, 1994). The collection of all these essential differences creates a collectivistic society in which the perception of and also receiving social support is higher than in individualistic societies (Goodwin & Hernandez Plaza, 2000). However, there are two brands of collectivism: Confucianism-based and Honor-based collectivism. Most of the studies in this field have been conducted in East Asian countries which possess Confucianism-based collectivism and not Honor-based collectivism such as Middle East and Africa (Brumbaugh & Agishtein, 2013).

Cultural dimensions might be a moderator for the function of adult attachment. Some features of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance are harmonious with behavioral characteristics associated with interdependency and therefore might be more adjustable in collectivistic cultures (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). Furthermore, the perspective of being connected with others might create a higher general sense of perceived social support (Shelton, Zamudio, Asking, & Wang, 2014).

The overarching aim of this study is to investigate whether attachment anxiety predicts grief intensity and the social support the bereaved perceives in collectivistic and individualistic societies. The first posed hypothesis is that lower individualism moderates the association between attachment anxiety and grief

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intensity, meaning that in collectivistic cultures higher attachment anxiety will predict higher grief intensity compared to individualistic cultures.

It has also been reported that there is a higher level of attachment anxiety in collectivistic cultures compared to that of individualistic ones (Brumbaugh & Agishtein, 2013). Since we expect attachment styles to be generally stable throughout life including at times of bereavement, our second hypothesis is that low individualism moderates the association between attachment anxiety and social support perceived by a grieving individual. In other words, higher attachment anxiety will predict higher perceived social support in collectivistic countries compared to individualistic countries.

### Method

#### Design

This study is part of a cross-cultural project called “Grief: An International Comparison”. The project was conducted by 13 clinical psychology Master’s students at Utrecht University, representing 11 countries who investigated different aspects of grief in their respective countries.

#### Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from Iran, Ghana, and Spain. These countries were chosen due to their varying scores of individualism/collectivism based on Hofstede’s dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2019). The demographic and background data from our sample are presented in Table 1. The significant differences between the two categories were the age of the participant, their marital status and religion, as well as the cause of death, age, and the degree of closeness to the deceased.

#### *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 identify with either Ghana, Iran, or Spain were excluded from the study. A total of 135 participants were recruited by the means of the Spanish version of the questionnaire. Out of the 135 participants, 6 were excluded because they had not lost someone during the last 36 months, 22 were excluded because they were not from Spain, and one because she was below 18 years old. As a result, the results of only 106 out of the initial 135 participants were included in the analysis

The Ghanaian version recorded a total of 159 participants, out of which 58 were excluded since they were not from Ghana, 20 did not lose a loved one within the required time frame and 37 did not answer most of the questions. The final number of eligible participants from the Ghanaian sample was 101.

From the total of 281 who participated in the Iranian version, 176 Iranian participants finished all of the questions in the survey. Out of them, 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. As a result, 147 met the criteria for the study.

#### Procedure

The participants were recruited between April and June 2020 through announcements on Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Instagram. The announcement explained the purpose of the study as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The announcement was posted by the researchers involved in this study

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via their profiles on the various platforms. It was also spread through specific Facebook groups for people that had lost a loved person, and through several WhatsApp groups.

The informed consent form 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 feeling distressed. One of the three versions of the informed consent and the questionnaire (English, Persian, or Spanish) was provided depending on the language that the participants spoke as their mother tongue. For the Spanish version, the items were translated using the Spanish version of the items that had been already tested before (García, Reverte, García, Méndez, & Prigerson, 2009; Mendoza, Perales, & González-Cabrera, 2012; Yárnoz-Yaben & Comino, 2011). The data were collected using Qualtrics, and the participants received no compensation for their participation.

Table 1. Background Data of Participants Based on Cultural dimension of Individualism/Collectivism.

Variables	Individualist		Collectivist	
	n	%	n	%
Country of origin				
Ghana			101	40.7
Iran			147	59.3
Spain	106	100		
Gender				
Male	29	27.4	77	31
Female	77	72.6	171	69
Education				
Elementary school	3	2.8		
High school	12	11.3	24	9.7
Undergraduate	52	49.1	119	48
Graduate and higher	32	30.2	98	39.5
Other	7	6.6	7	2.8
Marital Status				
Never married	56	52.8	157	63.3
Married	36	34	87	35.1
Divorced/Separated	10	9.4	3	1.2
Widowed	4	3.8	1	.4
Religion				
Christianity	52	49.1	102	41.1
Islam			90	36.3
Other	9	8.5	1	.4
Not religious	45	42.5	55	22.2
Deceased's Relationship to the participant				
Spouse/Partner	3	2.8	2	.8
Parent	30	28.3	52	21
Sibling	4	3.8	16	6.5
Child	3	2.8	2	.8
Friend	20	18.9	49	19.8
Other	46	43.3	127	51.2
Cause of death				

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Long illness	54	50.9	85	34.3
Sudden/short illness	39	36.8	111	44.8
Accident	10	9.4	21	8.5
Homicide	2	1.9		
Suicide	1	.9	7	2.8
Unknown			16	6.5
Other			8	3.2

Note: N=354 (Individualist=106, Collectivist=248).

Table 2. *Significance Testing for Background Variables*

Variables	Individualism/collectivism		
	Test Statistic	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>
Age	t = -5.71	<.001	135.35
Gender	$\chi^2 = .48$	.48	1
Education	$\chi^2 = 11.72$	.019	4
Marital Status	$\chi^2 = 18.97$	< .001	3
Religion	$\chi^2 = 68.95$	< .001	3
Time since death	t = -0.87	.38	352
Relationship with the deceased	$\chi^2 = 7.51$	.18	5
Cause of death	$\chi^2 = 49.16$	< .001	6
Age of the deceased	t = -4.86	<.001	352
Closeness	t = -1.56	<.001	352

### 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 used in this questionnaire 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 alpha of .94. Test-retest reliability is .80. it is also characterized by high concurrent validity with other similar scales (Prigerson et al., 1995). The Cronbach alpha for the Spanish version of ICG was .93. In the case of the Persian version, ICG was first translated into Persian by the author and later back-translated again to English by another native speaker (See Appendices) and the Cronbach alpha was reported as .92.

#### *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 and colleagues (2018) from the original 36-item version initially developed by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998). This

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questionnaire was initially developed to assess individual differences in secure versus insecure attachment patterns (Brenk-Franz et al., 2018). From the 12 items that compound the questionnaire, 6 are designed to measure the dimension of attachment anxiety (i.e., the extent to which people feel more insecure vs. secure in relation to the responsiveness and availability of the people they are with), whereas the purpose of the remaining 6 is to measure the dimension of attachment avoidance (i.e., the extent to which people feel uncomfortable being close to others vs. secure in depending on them). Examples of the attachment anxiety items 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 question is answered using 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 a Cronbach alpha of .88 for the Anxiety scale and a Cronbach alpha of .87 for the Avoidance scale. This test also shows good construct validity (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). For the Spanish version, the attachment-anxiety subscale of the ECR-RD was .81 and .66 for the attachment-avoidance subscale. For the Persian version, ECR-RD was taken from a Persian version (Arefi & Mohsenzadeh, 2012; Iranzad, 2014) and the Cronbach's alpha for attachment-anxiety was .78 while attachment avoidance reported .80.

### *Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL-16)*

The Interpersonal Support Evaluation List is a questionnaire developed by Cohen and Hoberman (1983) that measures perceived social support. The original test contains 40 items that measure four dimensions of social support: (a) Appraisal Support, (b) Tangible Assets Support, (c) Belonging Support, and (d) Self-esteem support (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983). The version that was used is the modified short version of the questionnaire which has 16 items (4 items per subscale) and the option for each item ranges from “definitely true” to “definitely false”. It has an acceptable test-retest reliability ( $r = .87$ ) and internal consistency ( $\alpha = .83$ ) suggesting a high interrelatedness among items and also a convergent validity for correlation with other tests such Lubben Social Network Scale (Lubben, 1988). Each of the four dimensions corresponds to 12 points which in total sums up to 48 points. The higher the score the greater the perceived social support. Indices for each of the subscales were the following: Appraisal Support: .67, Tangible Assets: .66, Belonging Support: .61, and Self-esteem support: .53 (Payne et al., 2012). For the Spanish version the reported Cronbach's alpha is .88 and for the Persian version is .84.

### **Statistical analysis**

The data was screened using Qualtrics and analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS 26. For significance testing, independent t-tests and chi-square tests were performed.

### **Results**

The first hypothesis addresses whether lower Individualism (Iran and/or Ghana compared to Spain) moderates the association between attachment anxiety and grief intensity. This will be investigated using hierarchical multiple linear regression. The assumptions of linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity for this method were investigated and sufficient supporting evidence for them was found. The influence was measured with Cook's distance and found to be within the threshold of below 1. Also, no evidence of multicollinearity was found.



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Background variables (e.g. age of the participant, age of the deceased, the closeness of the relationship, and time since death were entered first to control for their effects. Categorical variables (e.g. education level, marital status, religion, relationship to the deceased, and cause of death were represented in the form of dummy variables.

Some answering categories were collapsed because of technical redundancy. For example, in the case of marital status, if a participant has not chosen the options of married or widowed or separated it automatically means that the participant has never been married.

Attachment anxiety was centered for the purposes of the interaction. Using only the background variables, Model 1 appeared to be significant,  $F(26, 327)=5.47, p<.001, R^2=.30$ , meaning that Model 1 explains 30% of the variation in the grief intensity. Adding attachment anxiety, in Model 2, overall  $F(27,326)=3.80, p<.05, R^2=.32$ , indicating that the addition of attachment anxiety accounted for an additional 1.8% of the explained variation in grief intensity. Adding the individualism/collectivism factor in Model 3 however turned out to not add to the prediction of the grief intensity  $F(28, 325)= 4.33, p= .51, R^2=.32$ . Adding the interaction of individualism/collectivism and attachment anxiety in Model 4 also did not improve the prediction power  $F(29, 324)=4.35, p= .09, R^2=.33$ . The analysis summary is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Grief Intensity From Cultural Dimension and Attachment Anxiety

Variable	Grief Intensity											
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Constant	17.97	11.24		15.60	11.14		15.42	11.15		17.04	11.16	
Age	-.10	.09	-.08	-.08	.08	-.06	-.06	.08	-.05	-.07	.09	-.05
Gender	5.25**	1.57	.16	5.03**	1.55	.15	5.11**	1.55	.15	5.03**	1.55	.15
Time since death	-.24**	.06	-.18	-.23**	.06	-.17	-.23**	.06	-.17	-.23*	.06	-.17
Age of the deceased	-.18**	.04	-.29	-.18**	.04	-.28	-.17**	.05	-.27	-.17*	.05	-.27
Closeness	5.57**	.88	.31	5.70**	.87	.32	5.73**	.88	.32	5.71**	.88	.32
Marital Status (Widowed)	-12.75	10.61	-.10	-8.29	10.58	-.06	-8.37	10.60	-.06	-9.69	10.60	-.07
Religion (Islam)	3.52	4.54	.10	2.52	4.50	.07	1.76	4.65	.05	1.58	4.64	.46
Relationship to the deceased (Partner)	11.52	10.46	.09	8.04	10.40	.06	8.44	10.42	.06	8.90	10.40	.07

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Education (Graduate and higher)	-1.18	8.22	-	-.42	8.13	-	-.70	8.15	-.01	-1.41	8.1	-.04
Cause of death (Long illness)	-2.02	3.66	-	-2.37	3.62	-	-2.31	3.63	-.07	-2.67	3.6	-.08
Attachment Anxiety Individualism			.04	.26*	.08	.14	.24*	.08	.14	.35*	.10	.19
Interaction												
$R^2$	.30			.32			.32			.32		
$F$	5.47**			5.73**			5.53**			5.47**		
$\Delta R^2$	.30			.02			.00			.00		
$\Delta F$	5.47**			8.93*			.42			2.93		

Note: Individualism is a dichotomous variable with 1 for Individualist and 0 for collectivist cultures. Gender is also a dichotomous variable with 0 for males and 1 for females.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .001$ .

The second hypothesis addresses whether lower Individualism (Iran and/ or Ghana compared to Spain) moderates the association between attachment anxiety and perceived social support.

Similar to the previous hypothesis, starting with the background variables in Model 1,  $F(26, 327)= 2.42$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $R^2=.16$ , means that Model 1 explains 16% of the variations in social support. However, in Model 2,  $F(27,326)= 3.80$ ,  $p< .001$ ,  $R^2=.24$ , after adding attachment anxiety to the previous Model leads us to conclude that the addition of attachment anxiety accounted for 7.8% of the variations in social support. Consequently, in Model 3,  $F(28, 325)=4.33$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $R^2=.27$  following the addition of individualism to the previous model means that it accounted for 3.2% of the variations in social support. Model 4,  $F(29, 324)= 4.36$ ,  $p= .47$ ,  $R^2=.28$  showed that the interaction explained .9% of the variations. The full model was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) and since the interaction was also significant, it means that the hypothesis was accepted. The summary of the analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Perceived Social Support From Cultural Dimension and Attachment Anxiety

Variable	Perceived Social Support											
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Constant	9.22	7.07		12.0	6.76		12.62	6.63		11.5	6.6	
				0						0	2	
Age	.17*	.05	.23	.14*	.05	.19	.09	.05	.12	.09	.05	.13
Gender	1.23	.98	.06	1.49	.94	.08	1.23	.92	.06	1.28	.92	.06
Time since death	.02	.04	.02	.01	.04	.01	.01	.03	.01	.01	.03	.01
Age of the deceased	.02	.03	.06	.01	.02	.04	-.01	.03	-.02	-.01	.03	-.02
Closeness	.89	.55	.08	.73	.53	.07	.65	.52	.06	.66	.52	.06

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Marital Status (Widowed)	10.24	6.67	.14	4.99	6.43	.06	5.29	6.30	.07	6.21	6.2	.089
Religion (Not religious)	-5.55	2.83	-.03	.02	2.70	.00	.87	2.66	.04	1.07	2.6	.055
Relationship to the deceased (Spouse/Partner)	-8.26	6.58	-.11	-4.17	6.31	-	-5.56	6.20	-.07	-5.88	6.1	-.087
Education (Graduate and higher)	6.43	5.17	.36	5.54	4.94	.31	6.43	4.84	.36	6.93	4.8	.393
Cause of death (Long illness)	3.13	2.30	.17	3.79	2.20	.21	3.31	2.15	.18	3.46	2.1	.195
Attachment Anxiety				-.30*	.05	-	-.26**	.05	-.26	-.33*	.06	-.33
Individualism							4.52**	1.19	.24	4.89**	1.1	.269
Interaction										.21*	.10	.12
$R^2$	.16			.24			.27			.28		
$F$	2.42**			3.80**			4.33**			4.36**		
$\Delta R^2$	.16			.08			.03			.01		
$\Delta F$	2.42**			33.45**			14.50*			4.00*		

Note: Individualism is a dichotomous variable with 1 for Individualist and 0 for collectivist cultures. Gender is also a dichotomous variable with 0 for males and 1 for females. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Discussion**

The current study aimed to investigate the effect of attachment anxiety as a dimension of adult attachment and Individualism/collectivism as a cultural dimension on grief intensity and perceived social support experienced by the bereaved. The first hypothesis being the effect of attachment anxiety on grief intensity and the second hypothesis being the effect of attachment anxiety on perceived social support.

For the first hypothesis, it was expected that the impact of attachment anxiety on grief intensity would be moderated by a lower individualism score. The results showed that there is a main effect of attachment anxiety, meaning that the higher the attachment anxiety the higher the grief intensity. However, to explain that individualism/collectivism moderates this association, this hypothesis was rejected due to the lack of statistical significance of the interaction term. This means that Individualism/Collectivism did not succeed as a factor that explains the association between attachment anxiety and grief intensity. However, it can be inferred that the higher the attachment anxiety the participant received the higher the grief intensity that was reported irrespective of whether the participant belongs to an individualistic culture or a collectivist culture. It can also be inferred that the shorter the duration of time that has passed since the loss the higher the grief intensity that is reported regardless of whether the participant belongs to an individualistic or a collectivistic culture. The same can be said about the age of the deceased. More specifically, it has been shown that loss of younger kin results in higher grief intensity. The participant

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being female, as well as closeness, was reported as the other factors increasing the reported grief intensity. Nonetheless, we expected to see a moderation effect from the cultural dimension factor since in previous studies it has been demonstrated that the differences in cultures, populations, and nationalities have led to differences in the reporting of grief intensity (Fujisawa et al., 2010; Pressman & Bonanno, 2007; Stroebe, Folkman, Hansson, & Schut, 2006).

For the second hypothesis, it was anticipated that the impact of attachment anxiety on perceived social support would be moderated by a lower individualism score. The results showed that in addition to significant main effects for attachment anxiety and the Individualism/collectivism factor, their interaction was also significant. Therefore, individualism/collectivism moderates the association between attachment anxiety and perceived social support. As a result, the second hypothesis is accepted. This means that the lower attachment anxiety predicted higher perceived social support. However, the results also showed that higher individualism contributed to the abovementioned association. This could be explained since Spain is right in the middle of the individualism/collectivism spectrum with a score of 51 (Hofstede Insights, 2019) which could be interpreted as having some traits of individualism while retaining other traits attributed to collectivism or behaving as a combination of both. The finding that lower attachment anxiety predicted higher perceived social support is in line with previous studies (Frías, Shaver, & Díaz-Loving, 2014; Shelton et al., 2014; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006).

The over-arching goal of this study was to investigate the effect and influence of attachment anxiety on the grief intensity and perceived social support in a population that has recently experienced losing someone. Although this study provides us with interesting insights and results, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. One of the major limitations of the study is that the loss of the extended family is over-represented compared to the loss of immediate family. This limitation could potentially skew the results of this study since it is generally assumed that the degree of closeness has a strong effect on grief intensity (Burke & Neimeyer, 2012; Eckerd, Barnett, & Jett-Dias, 2016; Mash, Fullerton, Shear, & Ursano, 2014). Another limitation of this study is that the over-representation of the collectivist sample (two countries) in comparison with the individualist sample (one country). This particular limitation could also potentially adversely impact the results. Lastly, there was a limitation of our reach to the Iranian participants. Due to the Iranian government's censoring of most social networks, our Iranian sample could be unrepresentative of the wider population due to the fact that only people with access to a proxy or social networks could participate.

At the same time, this study does possess a strength that is worth noting. The cross-cultural nature of this study offers a perspective between countries that include many non-Western or non-White participants. This is valuable especially since the current psychological data is dominated by data from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic or WEIRD samples (Muthukrishna et al., 2020). As opposed to that, our sample includes a diversity that is not Western, industrialized, or rich and arguably not democratic.

For the purpose of further research, it would be helpful to include different forms of collectivism (Confucianism vs honor-based collectivism), since most of the comparison between Individualist and collectivist cultures are conducted with countries that have Confucianism based collectivism (Uskul, Oyserman, & Schwarz, 2010). Another possibility would be to include countries characterized by showing higher scores on the individualism domain. In this study, we used Spain as an example of an individualist culture. However, Spain is unique in a way that is in the middle of the individualism/collectivism spectrum.

## INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT ON GRIEF AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

In conclusion, while our study has several limitations, It provides useful insights regarding the association between attachment insecurities and the way the bereaved experiences loss in different societies. Most importantly, this study provides some proof for the universality of attachment theory and its effect on grief and social support. This effect was investigated regardless of the culture of the society and with regards to it. In our increasingly globalized world, it is necessary for psychologists and mental healthcare workers to have the awareness of the difference in cultures and tailor the clinical intervention to that culture or subculture. Therefore, further research is needed to correctly and properly determine the effect of attachment anxiety on grief intensity and perceived social support with consideration to the difference of cultures.

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**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

Anhele 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 داده‌ام یا احساس دوری می‌کنم از افرادی که بهشان اهمیت می‌دهم.
- \_\_ احساس درد در جای مشابه در بدن شخص فوت شده دارم یا علائم مشابه با شخص فوت شده را دارم.
- \_\_ تلاش زیادی می‌کنم تا جلوی یادآورهای 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 میکند.
- \_\_ شخص فوت شده را جلوی خودم میبینم.
- \_\_ احساس می‌کنم که این عادلانه نیست که من زنده هستم ولی این شخص زنده نیست.
- \_\_ در مورد مرگ این شخص احساس تلخی می‌کنم.
- \_\_ احساس غبطه به افرادی دارم که کسی را از دست نداده‌اند.
- \_\_ از زمانی که این شخص فوت کرده است بیشتر اوقات احساس تنهایی می‌کنم.

**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 صمیمانگان 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 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.

## Appendix G

### Interpersonal Support Evaluation List-English

The following set concerns your general social relations, the support you receive, and is made up of a list of statements each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement check "definitely true" if you are sure it is true about you and "probably true" if you think it is true but are not completely sure. Similarly, you should check "definitely false" if you are sure the statement is false and "probably false" if you think it is false but are not absolutely sure.

0=Definitely false

1=Probably false

2=Probably true

3=Definitely true

Most of my friends are more interesting than I am

When I feel lonely, there are several people I can talk to

I often meet or talk with family or friends

I feel like I'm not always included by my circle of friends

There really is no one who can give me an objective view of how I'm handling my problems

If I were sick and needed someone (friend, family member or acquaintance) to take me to the doctor, I would have trouble finding someone

If I were sick, I could easily find someone to help me with my daily chores

When I need suggestions on how to deal with personal problems, I know someone I can turn to

I don't often get invited to do things with others

Most of my friends are more successful at making changes in their lives than I am

If I had to go out of town for a few weeks, it would be difficult find someone who would look after my house or apartment (the pets, plants, garden, etc.

There is really no one I can trust to give me good financial advice

I am more satisfied with my life than most people are with theirs

It would be difficult to find someone who will lend me their car for a few hours

There is at least one person I know whose advice I really trust

I have a hard time keeping pace with my friends

## Appendix H

### Interpersonal Support Evaluation List-Spanish

Los siguientes enunciados están relacionados con tus relaciones sociales en general, el apoyo que recibes. Para cada enunciado marca el círculo "completamente cierto" si estas seguro/a que es algo cierto sobre tí y "probablemente cierto" si crees que es cierto pero no estás seguro/a. Del mismo modo, marca el círculo "completamente falso" si estás seguro/a que el enunciado es falso y "probablemente falso" si crees que es falso pero no estás seguro/a.

0= Completamente falso

1= Probablemente falso

2= Probablemente cierto

3= Completamente cierto

\_\_ La mayoría de mis amigos son mas interesantes que yo

\_\_ Cuando me siento solo hay varias personas con las que puedo hablar

\_\_ A menudo me reúno o hablo con mi familia o amigos

\_\_ Siento como que no siempre estoy incluido en mi círculo de amigos

\_\_ No hay realmente alguien que pueda darme un punto de vista objetivo sobre cómo estoy manejando mis problemas

\_\_ Si estuviera enfermo y necesitara de alguien (amigo, familiar o conocido) que me llevase al médico, tendría problemas en encontrarlo

\_\_ Si estuviera enfermo, encontraría fácilmente a alguien que me ayudaría con las tareas diarias

\_\_ Cuando necesito alguna sugerencia sobre cómo manejar un problema personal, conozco a alguien a quien puedo acudir

\_\_ No recibo con mucha frecuencia invitaciones para hacer cosas con otros

\_\_ La mayoría de mis amigos tienen más éxito haciendo cambios en sus vidas que yo

\_\_ Si tuviera que salir fuera de la ciudad durante unas semanas, sería difícil encontrar a alguien que cuidara mi casa o apartamento (las plantas, las mascotas, el jardín, etc.)

\_\_ No hay nadie en quien pueda confiar verdaderamente para que me dé buenos consejos financieros

\_\_ Estoy más satisfecho con mi vida que la mayoría de la gente con la suya.

\_\_ Sería difícil para mí encontrar a alguien que me prestara su coche durante unas horas

\_\_ Hay al menos una persona que conozco en cuyo consejo confío

\_\_ Tengo muchas dificultades para mantener buenas relaciones con mis amigos



## Appendix I

### Interpersonal Support Evaluation List-Persian

مجموعه زیر در مورد روابط اجتماعی تان و پشتیبانی و حمایتی که دریافت می کنید است و شامل لیستی از اظهارات است که ممکن است در مورد شما درست یا غلط باشد. برای هر جمله، گزینه "قطعا درست" را انتخاب کنید اگر مطمئن هستید که این در مورد شما صحیح است و "احتمالا درست" اگر فکر می کنید درست است ولی کاملا مطمئن نیستید. به صورت مشابه، "قطعا اشتباه" را انتخاب کنید اگر مطمئن هستید که این جمله در مورد شما نادرست است و "احتمالا اشتباه" را انتخاب کنید اگر فکر می کنید نادرست است ولی کاملا مطمئن نیستید.

قطعا اشتباه=0

احتمالا اشتباه=1

احتمالا درست=2

قطعا درست=3

- \_\_\_ بسیاری از دوستانم جذاب تر از من هستند.
- \_\_\_ وقتی من احساس تنهایی می کنم چند نفر هستند که من با آنها می توانم صحبت کنم.
- \_\_\_ من اغلب با فامیل یا دوستان ملاقات می کنم.
- \_\_\_ من احساس می کنم همیشه در جمع دوستان گنجانده نمی شوم.
- \_\_\_ واقعا شخصی که بتواند به من یک دیدگاه عینی از اینکه من چگونه بر مشکلاتم غلبه کنم وجود ندارد.
- \_\_\_ اگر من بیمار شوم و نیاز داشته باشم به فردی (دوست، اعضای خانواده، آشنا) که من را به دکتر ببرد برای پیدا کردن این فرد من مشکل خواهم داشت.
- \_\_\_ اگر من بیمار بشوم می توانم به راحتی شخصی را که در کارهای روزانه به من کمک کند را پیدا کنم.
- \_\_\_ هنگامی که نیاز به پیشنهادات در مورد چگونگی مقابله با مشکل شخصی را دارم فردی را که به او مراجعه کنم می شناسم.
- \_\_\_ من اغلب برای سهیم شدن در مهمانی با دیگران دعوت نمی شوم.
- \_\_\_ اکثر دوستانم در ایجاد تغییرات زندگی موفق تر از من هستند.
- \_\_\_ اگر من مجبور به خارج رفتن از شهر برای چند هفته بشوم، به سختی شخصی را که از آپارتمان یا خانه ام مراقبت کند، خواهم یافت.
- \_\_\_ واقعا کسی نیست که بتوانم به او اعتماد کنم که بتواند به من نصیحت مالی خوبی بدهد.
- \_\_\_ در مقایسه با بقیه افراد، من بیشتر از بقیه افراد از زندگی خودم راضی هستم.
- \_\_\_ پیدا کردن کسی که بتواند برای چند ساعت خودرو خود را به من قرض دهد مشکل خواهد بود.
- \_\_\_ حداقل یک شخصی را به عنوان مشاور میشناسم که من واقعا به او اعتماد دارم.
- \_\_\_ برای من سخت است که پا به پای دوستانم در زندگی حرکت کنم.