

Research Article

Coping Strategies and Resilience of Grief in Individuals Who Lost a Relative in a Traffic Accident

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Summary

Grief is a daily experience worldwide, with approximately 87,000 deaths occurring each year. According to the National Institute of Development Information (INIDE), between 2020 and 2021, 68,680 deaths were recorded in Nicaragua alone. The Ministry of Health reports that grief generates emotional challenges such as stress, anxiety, and depression. The overwhelming nature of losing a loved one can deeply affect individuals. The objective of this research is to identify Coping Strategies and Resilience of grief in people who lost a family member due to a traffic accident.

This qualitative phenomenological study included six participants who experienced the loss of a family member due to a traffic accident. Data were collected using snowball sampling and unstructured interviews, achieving information saturation within the 28 to 40 age group.

People who lose a family member in a traffic accident report a very difficult grieving process to face due to the impact of unexpected news, which in some cases was witnessed firsthand, but through Participants used strategies such as maintaining daily routines, engaging in work, exercising, visiting tourist sites and restaurants, and attending church. These activities facilitated emotional adjustment.

It involves emotional pain as the need for acceptance, depending on individual interpretation and adaptation to loss of a loved one. Participants consistently reported that maintaining their daily routines helped them cope with grief. Self-reflection and exploring new places offered mental clarity and facilitated perspective shifts during mourning. Also, the support of the Church as a method of refuge and socialization with friends and family, helping distraction and emotional well-being in the grieving process, proved significantly helpful for individuals in similar situations, in addition to understanding.

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that road traffic fatalities continue to increase, with an annual global average of 1.35 million deaths. According to the WHO's 2018 Global Status Report on Road Safety, road traffic injuries have become the leading cause of death among children and young people aged 5 to 29 years [1].

In terms of grief recovery beliefs, some suggest that those affected engage in entertainment activities or travel as a way to cope with their loss. "The positive thing is to help the person in their process of acceptance, and that others respect

that pain and give them that time to overcome that stage in the midst of understanding, ethics and empathy." Alternatively, spiritually oriented therapies emphasize serene acceptance, emotional detachment, faith, patience, and resilience as key factors in overcoming grief after a tragedy. It is important to allow emotional expression, such as crying, to process grief such as fears, sadness, anger and guilt" [2].

In 2013, Emilio Gamo Medina, et al. conducted a study in Madrid titled 'Grief and the Stages of Life,' which analyzed how individuals experience emotional readjustment and adaptation after significant loss, a process commonly referred to as grief, cognitive and behavioral reactions that take place

More Information

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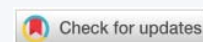
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Keywords: Grief; Coping; Resilience





after the loss of a loved one. Therefore, grief is a normal adaptive reaction and is a stressful life event that all people can go through [3].

In 2015, McCarthy, et al. conducted a study in Wisconsin, USA, titled 'Psychological Sequelae in Traffic Accident Victims,' which examined the long-term psychological effects of losing a loved one in a traffic accident. The researchers followed a group of individuals affected by the loss of a loved one in a traffic accident for a year after the event. They found that grieving the loss of a loved one in a car accident was associated with high levels of psychological distress and a significant impact on long-term emotional well-being [4].

In 2019, Estefanía Álvarez Monsalve, et al. conducted a study in Medellín titled 'Grief Process and Coping Strategies,' which revealed that the death of a loved one is a natural part of existence. However, in many cultures, it is perceived as a deeply painful and distressing event due to the loss of an important figure in one's life [5].

Problem statement

Traffic accident fatalities impose a significant emotional burden on families and survivors. Grief resulting from road accidents can evoke feelings of fear, anger, guilt, pain, stress, anxiety, helplessness, and a sense of injustice. During the first months, bereaved individuals often require compassionate support, including nonjudgmental accompaniment, respectful listening, and, in some cases, specialized professional assistance for both individuals and families [6].

In Nicaragua, 1,014 traffic accident fatalities were recorded in 2023. In León, during the year 2023, 30 victims were registered due to road accidents. The Citizen Observatory of León (OCL) reported May as the month with the highest number of road accident fatalities [7].

Coping and resilience in individuals who have lost a loved one in a car accident depend on multiple factors, including social support, emotional expression, the ability to redefine meaning and purpose in life, and access to psychological and therapeutic resources. In addition, the time and process of grieving can influence how people adjust and cope with the loss [8,9].

However, the grief coping and resilience strategies that each person uses are different. For some, it is relatively easy to accept the new situation and adapt to it. Meanwhile, for others, the world seems to be falling apart. For the aforementioned reasons, the following question arises:

What coping and resilience strategies do individuals employ after losing a family member in a traffic accident?

Justification: According to the International Classification of Diseases, normal grief reactions typically last no longer than six months. However, sociocultural factors must be

considered, as they significantly influence an individual's overall health status. This can become a problem if it is not dealt with in a functional way and if the pain significantly interferes with daily life [10].

Grief is a normal and necessary adaptation process following the loss of a loved one. During this period, individuals experience emotions such as pain, sorrow, and distress. While grief is not a pathological condition, it is a profound human experience that requires emotional processing [10].

From a psychological perspective, grief and its associated coping strategies have been insufficiently explored. A deeper understanding of this topic could provide valuable theoretical and practical contributions, guiding targeted interventions to enhance adaptive coping mechanisms. Ultimately, this would improve the well-being of individuals experiencing grief.

This study aims to identify coping and resilience strategies used by individuals who have lost a family member in a traffic accident. The results will be useful for:

1. **For affected families and friends:** Offering resources and guidance on grief coping strategies and mutual support during this difficult process.
2. **For health professionals:** Providing insights into effective grief management strategies and methods to support individuals in emotional recovery.
3. **For support organizations:** Developing targeted programs and safe spaces for individuals grieving the loss of loved ones due to traffic accidents, fostering emotional recovery and peer support.
4. **For communities and road safety organizations:** Raising awareness about the emotional consequences of traffic accidents and providing support resources while advocating for enhanced road safety measures.

Objectives

Identify the coping and resilience strategies used by individuals who have lost a family member in a traffic accident.

Specific objectives

1. Characterize the sociodemographic profile of the study population.
2. Analyze the coping strategies adopted by individuals experiencing grief after losing a family member in a traffic accident.
3. Evaluate the resilience skills demonstrated by individuals grieving the loss of a family member in a traffic accident.

Methodological design

Type of study: A qualitative phenomenological study



was conducted to explore coping and resilience strategies in individuals who lost a family member in a traffic accident. The study focused on understanding participants' life experiences and the mechanisms they used to process grief.

Sample: The sample consisted of six individuals who lost a first-degree relative in a traffic accident. Convenience sampling was used until data saturation was achieved.

Method of information collection: Participants provided informed consent before the data collection process. Once consent was obtained, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather study data. The terms and conditions of their participation were explained to the people who conducted the interview, Clarified doubts and obtained both verbal and written consent prior to interviews, voluntarily granting their informed consent to start the interview.

Collection technique: Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews using semi-structured, open-ended questions and the snowball sampling technique. This approach enabled participants to refer others who met the study criteria, thereby facilitating the recruitment process. Participants were initially contacted by telephone to request their voluntary participation in the study. Upon their agreement, the researchers visited them at their homes to conduct the interviews, which were divided into three sections.

- 7 items of sociodemographic data
- 7 items about Coping
- 7 items on Resilience

Study plan: Audio recordings were made using mobile devices. After each interview, preliminary analysis was conducted to determine information saturation. Transcriptions were documented in Microsoft Word and systematically coded to ensure data accuracy and prevent duplication. In the same way, the study led to a categorization process where the information was filtered according to the problem and variable studied, with the aim of having a study free of possible biases.

Results

Sociodemographic data

This study was conducted with a sample of six individuals, all from urban areas. The participants ranged in age from 28 to 40 years, with 80% being women. Regarding educational attainment, 10% were university graduates, while 90% had completed high school.

Regarding marital status, 40% of respondents were single, another 40% were in a common-law union, while the remaining individuals were either married or widowed. In terms of occupation, 40% were housewives, 20% were

university graduates, and the rest worked as operators in free trade zones or as promoters. Additionally, 90% of participants identified as Catholic, while 10% had no religious affiliation.

Coping strategies for grief

Grief is a highly individualized process, with each person experiencing it differently. According to the research findings, some perceive grief as a stage of emotional pain that emerges following the loss of a loved one.

Grief management can be addressed through various approaches. Establishing a daily routine helps maintain structure and a sense of normalcy in times of uncertainty. Additionally, self-reflection serves as a crucial tool for emotional processing. Exploring new places can provide mental clarity and fresh perspectives. Moreover, faith acts as a refuge, fostering socialization with friends and family while promoting emotional well-being throughout the grieving process.

"Religion has given me hope and strength. Knowing that my loved one is in a better place, in God's presence, brings me peace" Interview 5.

Religious beliefs often offer comfort and hope to people, providing a sense of welcome. Through faith, many find inner peace and purpose that helps them cope with life's difficulties. However, there is also the possibility of disengagement, when individuals choose to move away from these beliefs, because of the grieving process experienced by participants, they can also adopt an irreligious stance, choosing other ways to find meaning and well-being in their lives.

When they heard the news, the main reaction of some participants was fainting. For others it was a state of shock as if everything were a nightmare. In addition, they experienced an emotional breakdown and grief marking the beginning of the grieving process.

From then on, in terms of the daily routine. They were unable to complete daily tasks, additionally, participants reported fatigue and difficulty concentrating, some participants were unable to complete their work shifts (Figure 1).

Several strategies were employed to process the loss and cope with grief to cope with the situation, firstly, talking about feelings is key, as it allows you to release emotions that would otherwise have been trapped. In addition, comfort is found in churches, despite the difficult times, I have tried to continue with my daily life, staying active through prayer.

The process of acceptance has been gradual, but with the support of family and participation in Christian services, I have been moving towards resignation. Little by little, I have come to accept what happened, understanding that it is part of life and that strength also comes from learning to move forward (Figure 2).



Figure 1: Effects of grief on daily activities and emotional well-being after the loss of a family member in a traffic accident.

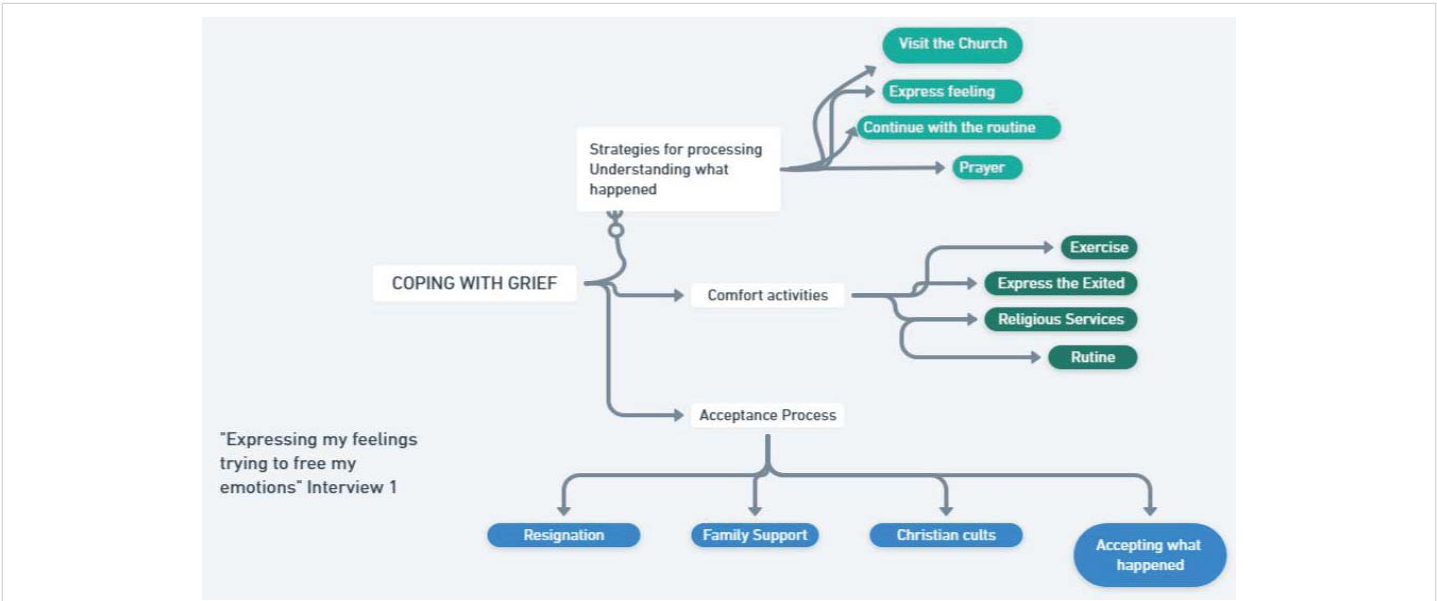


Figure 2: Coping strategies used by individuals grieving the loss of a family member in a traffic accident.

Feelings of loneliness and sadness became overwhelming, particularly during moments of solitude.

However, family and friends played a crucial role. Through understanding, empathy, and inclusion, individuals felt increasingly supported. Additionally, having friends who were willing to listen proved essential, as words of encouragement arrived precisely when they were most needed. In this way, support from family and friends was essential to emotional recovery.

Prioritizing emotional and mental self-care has been essential. For instance, adopting a healthier diet has contributed to overall well-being. Prioritizing studies also served as a method of self-care for some people. At the same time, I have implemented an exercise routine that helped them to keep them active and release accumulated stress. This has led to a change in lifestyle. In addition, expressing emotions and routine outings served as relief or distraction in the grieving process.

As for the motivational approach, they have been completely focused on studies and small goals. Also, the support received from people has been key to keeping them motivated. On the other hand, distraction activities help maintain a balance between responsibilities and mental well-being. Finally, my daily routine is an anchor, providing me with stability and structure in everyday life (Figure 3).

"My friends also played an important role. Their presence, prayers and words of encouragement reminded me that not every moment was possible" Interview 4.

Discussion

This study was conducted with a sample of six individuals, all from urban areas. The participants ranged in age from 28 to 40 years, with most being women. Regarding educational attainment, the majority had completed secondary education. In marital status, most are single. Regarding occupation, most are housewives. Finally, in terms of religion, the majority of respondents identify as Catholic.

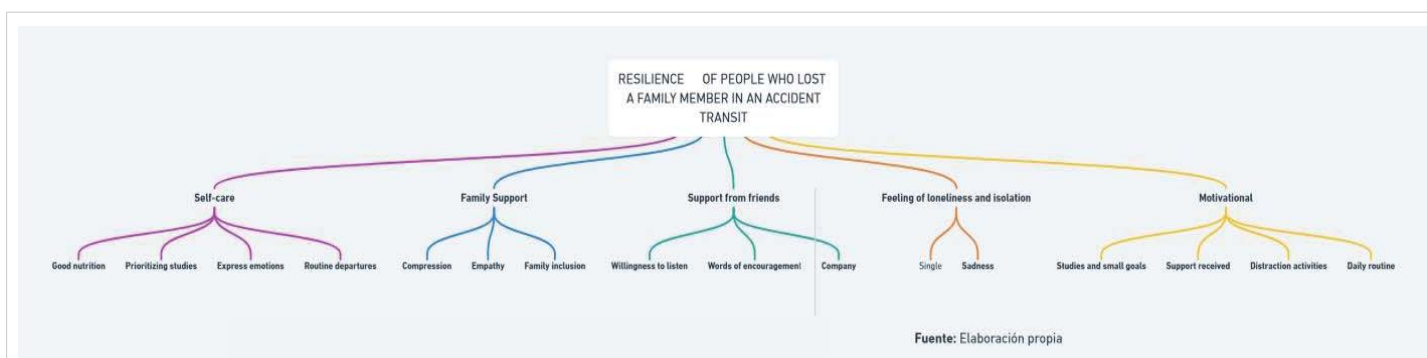


Figure 3: Coping strategies used by individuals grieving the loss of a family member in a traffic accident.

The results of this research show that, for some, grief is understood as a stage of emotional pain that arises after the loss of a loved one. Kübler-Ross [11] described grief as a psychological state that arises following the loss of a significant person who played an important role in an individual's life.

In conclusion, grief is a complex and deeply personal process that varies according to individual experiences and ways of coping with loss. It can involve both emotional pain and the need for acceptance, depending on how each person interprets and manages the absence of a loved one or something significant. Although it is a natural process, some may have difficulty coming to terms with its inevitability, highlighting the importance of understanding and respecting the different ways people experience grief.

Findings from this study indicate that many individuals cope with grief by maintaining their daily routines, which helps preserve structure and a sense of normalcy during periods of uncertainty. In addition, self-reflection. On the other hand, visiting new places helps to clear the mind and offers the opportunity to find new perspectives. Also support in faith as a method of refuge and socialization with friends and family helping distraction and emotional well-being in the grieving process.

Lazarus and Folkman [12] proposed that individuals employ coping strategies to manage internal and external demands perceived as exceeding their available resources. These strategies enable people to consciously regulate their emotions, maintaining balance and psychological stability.

The grieving process involves a significant emotional challenge that requires the implementation of various coping strategies. Not only do these strategies help relieve immediate pain, but they also facilitate personal reconstruction. People tend to seek internal and external resources, such as social support or the search for meaning through faith. The cognitive approach highlights the importance of actively interpreting and handling difficult situations. In this way, grief becomes a dynamic process, in which emotional well-being is sought to be restored through adaptive responses.

Results indicate that religion provides comfort and hope, fostering a sense of belonging. Through faith, many individuals find inner peace and a renewed sense of purpose, aiding them in coping with life's challenges. According to Losantos [13], faith is a very important support and it has been proven that it is a bastion that allows believers to lighten the pain. There are those who, in the face of a loss, cling to faith as a lifeline, and this brings them peace and serenity. Religion can offer significant emotional support after the death of a loved one.

Belief in an afterlife and the possibility of a reunion can mitigate pain and generate hope. In addition, many religious rituals offer a space of containment, where people can process their loss in community. Accepting death as part of God's plan can also help those who believe in a higher force, providing them with peace of mind and a way to find peace in the midst of grief.

The results of this research showed that for some people the daily routine was affected. They were unable to complete daily tasks, as if that were not enough, they had no energy and they lost concentration easily. In addition, they left their working day unfinished. Pilar Pastor [14] suggested that self-focus can encompass concerns about how loss may impact an individual's future life, relationships, and sense of identity. In some cases, Self-Focus can lead to emotional withdrawal, as individuals may become deeply immersed in their own thoughts and feelings that they have difficulty connecting with others.

Grief can profoundly impact a person's daily life, it can interfere with everyday activities, affecting work, personal relationships, and overall well-being. Lack of concentration, loss of motivation are common responses that make it difficult to manage responsibilities and commitments. The results of this research allowed us to demonstrate that participants reported that acceptance developed gradually, aided by family support and participation in religious gatherings and campaigns. Participants reported progressing toward acceptance. Gradually, I have reached a state of acceptance regarding the events that transpired, recognizing them as an inherent aspect of life. Furthermore, I have come to



understand that resilience is cultivated through the process of learning and progressing beyond such experiences.

According to Kübler-Ross, E. in 1969 [11] expressed this stage, the person begins to accept the reality of the loss and gradually adapt to it by finding a sense of peace and reconciliation.

Participation in Christian services or campaigns can facilitate the process of resignation by providing a space for reflection and spiritual comfort. These activities offer an environment in which to seek to strengthen faith, find support and connect with transcendental values. Through prayer and emotional accompaniment, believers can find peace and acceptance in the face of difficult situations, helping them to face adversity with a renewed perspective and hope for the future.

The results of the research showed that family support such as that of friends play a crucial role, since, thanks to understanding, empathy and inclusion, they begin to feel more accompanied. In addition, having friends willing to listen was essential, as his words of encouragement came just at the moments when he needed them most. In this way, the company and support of those around were essential for emotional recovery.

Henka Educational Centers [15] highlighted that grief therapy and social support from family and friends are valuable resources for helping individuals navigate the grieving process in a healthy and constructive manner. Support is the ability to cope with difficult situations or crises with the result of feeling strengthened by facing in company.

The Presence of family and friends in grief is crucial because it provides emotional support, validates feelings, allows sharing memories of the loved one, offers practical help and prevents isolation. In addition, it encourages open communication and provides different perspectives on loss, thus facilitating the healing process and promoting a sense of community and mutual support.

The results of this research showed that emotional and mental self-care has been a healthy diet contributed to improved overall well-being. Exercise routines helped reduce stress and maintain physical activity and participants focused on academics and achievable short-term goals. On the other hand, distraction activities help maintain a balance between responsibilities and mental well-being. Finally, the daily routine is an anchor of stability and structure in everyday life.

According to Raquel Lorenzo Álvarez in 2020 [16] she expressed that self-care not only has to do with the basic part of eating and sleeping, something undoubtedly essential, but tries to go a little further. Self-care also involves getting help and comfort, since not only food is a necessity. There are many ways to nourish yourself that it is important to pay

attention to in order to feel full and balanced. Therefore, in critical moments such as grief, being aware of what we need and what can help us on a psychological level will help us to release emotions.

Prioritizing self-care and maintaining a motivational focus are crucial during grief, contributing to physical and mental well-being, stress management, and social engagement. Practicing self-care allows you to process emotions and facilitates healing. On the other hand, a motivational approach encourages resilience, adaptation to change and the redefinition of life after loss, allowing the memory of the loved one to be celebrated. Together, these elements allow you to cope with grief in a healthier and more constructive way [17-20].

Conclusion

The studied population exhibits diversity in age, gender, socioeconomic status, and employment. These sociodemographic factors influence individuals' coping mechanisms and resilience in the grieving process. Factors such as access to support networks and economic stability are important variables that affect the process of coping and emotional recovery.

Individuals grieving the loss of a family member in a traffic accident utilize diverse coping strategies. Adaptive mechanisms include seeking social support, acceptance, and self-reflection, as well as maintaining daily routines, engaging in physical activity, and attending religious services. Conversely, maladaptive strategies observed included isolation, denial, and avoidance at different stages of grief. The choice of these strategies directly influences the form and duration of grief, as well as its emotional recovery.

Resilience significantly influences individuals' ability to adapt and recover from loss the emotional impact of loss. Individuals exhibiting higher resilience tend to navigate grief more effectively, by integrating the loss into their lives and strengthening their coping capacity. Factors such as the ability to manage stress, maintain an optimistic attitude, and have support networks contribute significantly to this process.

Overall, grief management following loss due to traffic accidents is profoundly shaped by personal characteristics, the coping strategies employed, and the resilience skills developed. These findings underscore the necessity of personalized therapeutic interventions to effectively support bereaved individuals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained in this research, the following is considered necessary:

General population

- Acknowledge that grief is a natural and deeply personal



process. Coping with grief varies widely; there is no universal approach as each experience is deeply personal.

- Maintaining structured routines and prioritizing sleep, diet, and exercise can support emotional stability can significantly enhance both physical and emotional well-being throughout the grieving process.
- Acknowledge that grieving takes time and requires patience and understanding from others and understanding to navigate it with greater ease.
- Avoid isolation; maintaining social connections is essential for emotional support and can reduce feelings of loneliness and emotional withdrawal.
- Participation in religious communities has demonstrated emotional and psychological benefits and support during the grieving process following the loss of a loved one.

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