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Pet Loss and Grieving Strategies: A Systematic Review of Literature

Ruth Cervantes

A doctoral project completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters Science—Nursing, Family Nurse Practitioner at the Valley Foundation School of Nursing, San José State University

May 2023

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my boys Angel and Chris, who are my inspiration to grow, and to Louis, my runner dog Thank you for the 16 years of life I got to spend with you.

Pet Loss and Grieving Strategies: A Systematic Review of Literature

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Family Nurse Practitioner Program

The Valley Foundation School of Nursing

San José State University

May 1, 2023

Abstract

The impact that companion animals have on human lives has been explored in many aspects including therapy and emotional support. In some cases, these types of pets have been deemed necessary for pet owners with medical problems. However, pets are not only a medical necessity for some humans, but they are also companions, and most are included as family members. The loss of a pet often brings on intense grief that is not often acknowledged in the workforce. Bereavement leave for immediate family members is a benefit offered to employees, and as we will read in this literature review pet owners grieve the loss of a pet even more so than a human family. It would only make sense to include pets in this policy. Companies that include this benefit have improved employee morale, retention rates, company loyalty, and less stress. (Shutan, 2017)

Keywords: Pet bereavement, the grieving process, workplace grief, self-compassion, disenfranchised grief

Pet Loss and Grieving Strategies: A Systematic Review of Literature

Background

According to the 2021-2022 American Pet Products Association Survey, 70% of households own a pet. Among the most popular pets owned were 69 million dogs, and 45.3 million cats, and other pets include fish, birds, reptiles, and horses. ("Facts + Statistics: Pet Ownership and Insurance," 2022). In a separate survey by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals during March 2020- May 2021, one in 5 households acquired a cat or a dog during the pandemic, of those households 90% have kept their dog and 80% have kept their cats. (ASPCA, 2021)

Pets play an important role in human life, so much so that many different species have been labeled as emotional support animals (ESA). These animals vary from horses, pigs, hedgehogs, rabbits, snakes, cats and of course, dogs, having your pet certified as an ESA allows you to have your pet in places where usually pets are not allowed. (*Types of Emotional Support Animals: A Complete Guide*, 2020) Pets in general have taken a vital part in our daily life. Some humans would often rather spend time with their pets instead of other humans.

Selfobject is a concept derived from self-psychology theory, which explains the attachment of a person to an animal, thing, or experience by Heinz Kohut (Kohut, H. 1971). The need that a pet provides depends on the owner's needs, this often can be supported, by a sense of self, sustenance, and a sense of cohesion. The three types of selfobject according to Kohut are mirroring, idealizing, and twinship. (Blazina, Boyraz, & Shen-Miller, 2011, p. 139; Baker & Baker, 1987).

The loss of a pet can bring on immense grief, depending on the level of attachment the pet owner had with their pet and the amount of grief the owner will experience (Park et al, 2021).

The amount of time that a person grieves can take anywhere from 6 months to one year or beyond. It can be adaptive or maladaptive. If maladaptive responses develop, they can further complicate pre-existing depression, anger, and anxiety, which according to Park et al., (2021) can also disturb human relationships. The grieving person may feel that he/she cannot share their grief because they are afraid that they will be judged for grieving “just a pet”, this is called disenfranchised grief. The importance for workplace acknowledges that the loss of a pet companion is grieved is important for the employee. This allows for the pet owner to experience grief at work without shame despite their internal sadness, changing the maladaptive response to a positive one. Bereavement leaves for pet loss, will give the mourning pet owner sufficient time to grieve the loss of their pet, and may benefit the workplace and pet owner equally by anticipating the number of days the employee needs off to grieve immediately after the loss of their pet, and consequently, staff the departments appropriately and fill in the gaps. The pet owner will feel supported by their work circle, administration, and social circle and prevent complicated grief (Park et al., 2021).

Systematic Methodology

Study Purpose & Design

The purpose of all the articles in this literature review is to further understand the grieving process and experience in humans after the loss of a pet. This is important in many aspects of our lives including personal and work-life balance. The grieving process varies in each individual and depends on personal history, including the times a person has experienced losing a pet or a human life. This topic needs further research to understand and promote mental health wellness in the workplace. The effects of disenfranchised grief can negatively affect personal relationships, mental health, and the desire to work for organizations that do not support the

grieving individual. Furthermore, research has shown that sharing grief, self-compassion, and empathy supports a person's mental health, therefore shortening the time of a person's grief. (Smolkin, 2016)

Pets play an important role in people's lives; Redmalm (2015), Smolkovic et al., (2012), Testoni et al., (2017), Testoni et al., (2019), Uccheddu et al., (2019) research studies found different aspects of grief when it comes to relationships with pets and then losing a companion animal. First, we analyze if non-human life is grievable or not, second, levels of attachments and bonds between humans and pets, and third, self-compassion during the bereavement process, including returning to work post the loss of the pet regardless if it was anticipated or sudden death, supporting variables in a person's grieving process, and quality of the pet's life in the time of covid and post-pandemic issues that rose from owners returning to work.

Search Strategy

In this literature review, the search strategy was to find articles that include healthcare professionals either inpatient or outpatient, which has limited research, then the focus of the research will be the positive effects of supporting individual people experiencing pet grief at work. Scholarly search engines such as PubMed, CINAHL Complete, and Gale Health and Wellness were used to compile the research. Key terms included in the search are pet bereavement, pet grief, employee benefits, healthcare workers experiencing pet grief, and coping with pet grief at work.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria include articles written from 2010-2023. The articles used only include pet bereavement, pet loss grief, bereavement leave, and lastly pet ownership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Articles that include healthcare workers are included in the articles used. Exclusion

criteria include articles that are dated before 2010, that do not include pet bonds, attachment to pets, bereavement process, bereavement for pet loss, and non-healthcare workers.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Using the level of evidence from I-VII these research articles were reviewed, and details were extracted on the grieving process of people surveyed experiencing pet loss grief, gender, age, and profession.

Quality Appraisal

Using the Center for the Advancement of Evidence-Based Practice at the Arizona State University College of Nursing and Health Innovation tool kit each research article was appraised according to study design. The sample size varied in each article. The interventions included self-assessment tools, personal interviews, online surveys, and mail-in surveys. The outcomes of those interventions were documented in the ninth column of the “Literature Review Matrix”.

Results

The initial search yielded 675 articles, 618 of the articles did not fully meet the criteria and were excluded. After reviewing the 52 articles, 10 articles met the criteria, with the need to further the data, new search criteria were also included the search criteria included bereavement leave for pet loss in any workplace, not just for healthcare workers, and non-scholarly articles. Widening the search yielded more information about this understudied theme and confirms the author’s theory that more research is needed to support the need for this benefit for grieving employees. After including these new search criteria 5 more articles were included in the review, with a total of 15. (Figure 1)

Population and setting

The population in the studies included participants from Italy, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the United States. 4 out of the 15 articles were from Italy. The articles included mostly women.

Study design

The design of the studies included cross-sectional, personal interviews, snowball sampling, and quantitative analysis of grief. Sample sizes range from 10-430 participants. About 30% of the studies included detailed personal interviews on pet loss, and 70% were online or paper surveys.

Themes regarding Pet bereavement

Themes identified as important are, first, if non-human life is grievable or not, second, levels of attachments and bonds between humans and pets, and third, self-compassion during the bereavement process, including returning to work post grief, supporting variables in a person's grieving process, and quality of the pet's life in the time of covid.

Discussion

According to Kubler-Ross, the five stages of grief can be triggered by several conditions and variables. The Kubler-Ross Grief Cycle (Schaup, 1996) moves through the following five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance. This is not a linear process, but a benchmark for providers to identify the stage in which the patient is in to help navigate through the stage and continue onto the next. (Schaup, 1996)

The first question that arises in this topic is whether the life of a pet is significant enough for humans to grieve. Butler's conceptualization of the grief framework introduces the idea of something non-human as grievable or not. There are two concepts in this framework. The first is

if life is irreplaceable, and the second is unpredictability. The study consisted of personal interviews with 18 participants who owned either cats or dogs. A collection of narrative responses was analyzed in this narrative qualitative research. Most of the individuals interviewed stated that their pets were irreplaceable and felt they had good personal support, and people in their circle would understand their grief if shared. Another observation regarding irreplaceability was that respondents questioned the timing of adopting a new dog or cat “too soon,” in the sense that another pet would take away from the previous one’s existence. Unpredictability was the other variable in the aspect of someone’s grief after the loss. Most answered that a cat or a dog’s life was grievable but not a reptile or kettle. However, the rat owner did acknowledge that it is the pet's personality that he thought participants grieved. Many of the participants did acknowledge that signs of aging and illness prepared them to plan for euthanasia as a personal responsibility and to spare the pet from a painful death. (Redmalm, 2015)

In a periodical of a Canadian newspaper, Liz Foster reports that organizations offer bereavement leave including pets. In 2015 the Quebec national assembly passed Bill 54 to improve the legal situation of animals claiming they are not property or things. (Foster, 2016) (Shutan, 2017) Pet friendly policies in the workplace directly affect employee morale, lowers stress, improved work-life balance, and company loyalty according to Banfield’s PAWrometer survey of 2016. Pet owners however would prefer pet-related policies including pet-time off, and bereavement leave, in a survey of 1000 employees and 200 employers. (Shutan, 2017)

Moreover, Redmalm (2015) and Testoni et al., (2019) found that participants that plan for pet euthanasia had better closure and less complicated grief. In addition, participants that have bad coping mechanisms tend to experience negative emotions comparable to those of participants grieving human life. Redmalm (2015) suggests that if pets are given the same kind

of sentiments, we have towards humans it then can dehumanize people, and soon pets will take the place of humans. Ucchedu et al., (2019), Redmalm (2015), and Testoni et al. (2019) Smolkovic et al., (2012), all agree that the human-pet attachment increased the level of grief experienced. The length of time, specifically years of ownership, influenced attachment and grief. Pet owners humanize their pets consequently grief similar to that of the loss of human life. Human-pet relationships are felt by their owners as safe, non-judgmental, and unconditional. These pets tend to replace human-human relationships. (Smolkovic et al., 2012). Moreover, Uccheddu et al., (2019) also found that pet owners do categorize pets as worthy of human-like treatment because of similarities in emotions. These findings can help mental health workers and health caregivers, in general, to understand feelings of grief when patients or co-workers lose a pet. (Testoni et al., 2017)

Disenfranchised grief was more often found in that whose pets' death was unexpected and short versus those who chose euthanasia for their pets to end the suffering of their pet. Similarly, Bussolari et al., (2021) found that self-compassion, continuing bonds, and social constraints play a major role in grieving the loss of a pet. the positive relationship between self-compassion and continuing bonds tends to not have disenfranchised grief and cope better.

In addition, Testoni et al. (2017) using the Pet Bereavement Questionnaire (PBQ), Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS) and Bereavement Questionnaire II (BDI-II), and Death Representation Scale (TDRS) analyzed factors that contributed to positive experiences of people during the decision-making process to choosing euthanasia for pets. Positive relationships with veterinarians assisted participants to decide to euthanize pets, owners felt supported by them. Nevertheless, findings in this research suggest that pet owners remain in need of emotional support to navigate through grief.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt by humans and pets alike. Piotti et al., 2021 recently analyzed the effects on the quality-of-life of pets using the Milan Pet Quality of Life Instrument (MPQL) during the COVID-19 pandemic. There's no doubt that the pandemic changed the lives of many people, confining them to their homes and spending most of their time with their pets and family indoors. Piotti et al., (2021) findings reported that pets' quality of life declined due to the emotional challenges faced by owners and the lack of outdoor activity. One can argue that humans' negative emotions not just throughout the pandemic but in general affect the emotional well-being of our pets.

Most people that experience pet loss must immediately return to work unless they take personal leave or sick leave. Pet owners often are embarrassed to share their grief with co-workers, mostly because they feel that pet loss and grief are not experienced or viewed as normal. But as stated previously, human grief and pet grief are experienced equally. Pitimson (2021) found that returning to work following the death of a loved one helps manage grief better through daily routine and productivity. Despite participants feeling better returning to their daily life, couldn't show their feelings at work. Having a safe person at work to share emotions as they came up did help improve their workday. Bereavement leaves as Pitimson (2021) found are never long enough for people to navigate through grief but having that available to them as a benefit did indeed help. Companies like Trupanion and J.M. Smucker give bereavement leave to employees who lose a pet. Such policies provide support for employees when needed most, this gives people the opportunity to take the time off to grieve their pets. Organizations that provide such benefits are seen as compassionate and empathetic. (Smolkin, 2016, Hroncich, 2019)

Limitations and Gaps

Further research is to illuminate experiences of pet bereavement as there are limited studies of this. These studies can improve mental health care for grieving pet owners by providing more context and disbursing information regarding pet grief. Healthcare providers and therapists can have a better understanding when encountering a grieving client. The workforce and management if made aware that employees not only grieve human life but at times the loss of a pet is much more intense and less understood. According to research collected 1 in 3 pet owners grieve and are sad at least six months after the passing of their beloved pet. (Shellenbager, 2015) New tools such as “The Mourning Dog Questionnaire” could be a useful tool to assess extreme grief in pet owners that are at risk. (Foster, 2016)

Conclusions and Practice Implications

Literature shows that pet humanization is more common than publicly recognized and grieving after the loss of a pet is experienced similar to the loss of a human. (Uccheddu et al., 2019, Testoni et al., 2017, Redmalm 2015) Participants in the research articles were mostly women, educated and owners of cats and dogs, which can be seen as a limitation, men are often not participants or willing to share emotions regarding grief, and or more resilient than women. (Testoni et al., 2017, Uccheddu et al., 2019, Piotti et al., 2021 Smokovic and Mlinaric 2012). Negative coping skills, lack of support, and shame complicate grief. (Bussolari et al., 2021, Pitimson 2021, Testoni et al., 2019)

There needs to be more information regarding managing pet grief and normalizing that most participants view their dogs as an extension of their family. Organizations that have offered bereavement leave for pet loss are perceived as compassionate. Social constructs may negatively affect grief. To improve the way society understands the relationships humans have with their

pets, pet owners are more open to sharing feelings of sadness and openly grief with co-workers and friends. Mental health in recent years has been more openly discussed, and people have become more open to sharing their experiences. Using this momentum to educate the public through research can continue to improve it. The work in this literature sets up the stage for future research, offering tools to improve knowledge of attachment, grief, self-compassion, and social constraints.

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Table 1.

Literature Review Matrix Template

| Author/ Date | Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework | Research Question(s) / Hypotheses | Methodology | Analysis & Results | Conclusion s | Implications for Future research | Implications For practice | Level of eviden ce |
|------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Bussilari et al., 2021 | Human loss and self-compassion | H1: continuing bonds efforts would be more frequent as a function of self-compassion scores. H2: Self-compassion would moderate the relationship between social constraints and psychosocial outcomes | Cross-sectional of study whose pet died less than 6 months prior to survey completion. Through survey monkey. | Social constraints predicted poorer outcomes across all symptom categories, self-compassion moderated relationship for only one outcome: depression, follow up test indicated that all self-compassion subscales for Common humanity demonstrated interaction with social | Findings suggest that self-compassion might be associated with greater engagement in self-soothing coping efforts such as CB. Self-compassion may buffer deleterious relationships between social constraints and psychologi | Further research to illuminate experiences of pet bereavement as well as other kinds of commonly disenfranchised loses. | Self-compassion is a learned coping skill that can be thought. | IV |

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| | | H3: self-compassion would moderate the relationship between social constraints and psychosocial outcomes | | constraints in predicting depression. | cal outcomes most notably depression . | | | |
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| <p>Crossley & Rolland, 2022</p> | <p>Attachment theory</p> | <p>Considerations for therapists and counselors for practice when working with clients with attachments to their pets working through the grief process.</p> | <p>Literature Review</p> | <p>The human-animal bond and pet loss and human bereavement literature highlight the importance of pets in the lives of people, therefore, grief after a loss is an important topic that should be addressed in counseling literature, continuing education, and practice in the future.</p> | <p>There are more individuals today who include their pets as part of the family. Due to the pandemic and virtual counseling, it is likely that they have even been a part of therapy</p> | <p>Better understanding for therapists, health care providers when caring for clients in the grieving process.</p> | <p>Conceptualizing how an individual will grieve a loss depending on the strength of the attachment</p> | <p>V</p> |
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| <p>Piotti et al., 2021</p> | <p>Human and non-human animals' personalities can be characterized through reinforcement sensitivity theory (RST)</p> | <p>High scores in human and pet RST domains would be detrimental to pets QoL by causing impulsive, fearful and/or anxious responses to changes.</p> | <p>Participants were given written information about the aim of the procedures of the study. The survey was anonymous and confidential</p> | <p>The results indicate that the pets' physical QoL was largely explained by pet-related elements (pets' demographics and life experience, and pets' personality).</p> | <p>Findings suggest that such a relationship partly explains the social aspects of pets' QoL and, to a smaller degree, their physical QoL</p> | | <p>Importance of One Health-one welfare perspective</p> | <p>III</p> |
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| <p>Pitimson 2021</p> | <p>Data analysis was carried out using an inductive approach, based on Thomas' (2006) definition of this process, describing it as being one that supports close reading of the data: 'to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured</p> | <p>Exploratory ways in which bereaved individuals navigate return to work.</p> | <p>Qualitative data from seven semi-structured interviews were analyzed, exposing key common emotional and experiential themes, particularly regarding disenfranchised grief, comfort in the familiarity of the work environment, and the impact of silent or awkward responses from colleagues.</p> | <p>There was comfort to be found in the familiar routines and processes of the workplace.</p> | <p>This study demonstrates the need for a broader engagement by organizations in dialogue around the importance of having a clearly defined bereavement policy, integrating compassion into working culture beyond being the name of a form of leave.</p> | <p>Increase knowledge on bereavement leave and return to work.</p> | <p>Public health policy and workplaces must do better to ensure there are clear structures in place to support and be present for bereaved employees during the most challenging time of their lives.</p> | <p>VI</p> |
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| | methodologies | | | | | | | |
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| Redmalm 2015 | Butler's notion of the differential allocation of grievability | When is non-human life grievable? | Recorded, transcribed semi-structured interviews with pet owners in Sweden about pet keeping, loss and grief between 2010 and 2012. | Most pet owners regarded their pets as grievable. Pets included cats, dogs, rats, birds, and horses. This is based on irreplaceability, unpredictability, embodied loss. | Pet owners make their pets grievable and ungrievable by turns to be able to grieve them while simultaneously keeping the categories 'human' and 'animal' separate. | The interpersonal implications of grief collide with the hierarchical dichotomization between humans and other animals, revealing tensions inherent to the human/animal binary | These studies contribute to the understanding of pet grief as a social phenomenon, but their primary aim is to suggest improvements in practices connected with pet loss (such as counseling, veterinarians communication, and cremation services) | V |
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| Shellenbarger, 2015 | | Pet grieving challenges at work. | | | | 1 in 3 people feel grief and sadness for at least six months after the death of a beloved pet | Employers who recognize pet bereavement and allow employees a few days to a week to grieve have employees who return to work at ease and are more productive. | VII |
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| Shutan, 2017 | | Pet-friendly policies are morale booster | Participants were provided online survey. Participants were 18yo or orders, including high level decision makers | 93% higher morale, 93% lower stress, 91% company loyalty, 93% better work life balance, | | | Higher level decision makers can improve retention of employees. | VIII |
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| <p>Smolkovic etal., 2012</p> | <p>Bowlby's theory of attachment to people.</p> | <p>Demographic variables like pet owner gender and type of pet will influence the strength of pet-owner attachment.</p> <p>Participants with higher scores on the dimensions of avoidance and/or anxiety (based on the ECR-R questionnaire) will be more attached to their pets.</p> <p>Participants who are lonely and/or do not receive enough</p> | <p>Programming language PHP and MYSQL database management systems were used for creating and publishing the questionnaires and automatically collecting data in online form, from January 6th, 2009, to February 13th, 2009.</p> | <p>Statistical analyses. Examined bivariate correlations between all variables of interest.</p> <p>OPRS were higher in females and those who owned a pet for longer than 3 years.</p> | <p>This study showed that pet-owners differ in pet attachment according to different owner demographic characteristics.</p> | <p>Longitudinal study or investigate the attachment to a pet in different groups of people, for example in those who engage in some pet related activity (dog or cat shows, agility, rescue etc.) to achieve comparable qualitative results.</p> | | <p>II</p> |
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| | | social support will be more strongly attached to their pets. | | | | | | |
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| <p>Testoni et al., 2019</p> | <p>Path Analytic Model</p> | <p>Creating a tool that could be used to assess bereavement in companion animal owners in Italian, translation pre-existing tools like the PBQ, RBFM, SDM-Q-9 and CARE</p> | <p>Self-administered online survey. From July 2017 to December 2017 of 354 pet owners.</p> | <p>Fifty-nine percent of participants opted for euthanasia and 88% were present during the procedure. In their opinion, euthanasia was performed at the right time (91%), the veterinarian was sensitive toward the owner and the pet during euthanasia (96%) and provided proper information on the procedure (95%).</p> | <p>Negative dimensions of bereavement are strictly linked to each other: guilt, grief, anger intrusive thoughts and decisional regrets. On the one hand, our study evidenced that all these variables, which normally typify complicated grief in human loss, characterize also pet loss.</p> | <p>In Italy pet loss counseling services are starting to be activated but there are no instruments in the Italian language to assess grief following the death of a companion animal and the impact of effective veterinary communication skills on pet bereavement.</p> | <p>Mental health professionals may play an important role in the care team increasing EOL communication training for all the veterinary staff and supporting owners not only after the death but also during the final phase of their companion animal's lives.</p> | <p>III</p> |
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| <p>Testoni et al., 2017</p> | <p>Structural model of representation of death as annihilation and the attachment of the owner to the pet as independent variables.</p> | <p>Understand the relationship between ontological representations of death and attachment.</p> | <p>Snowball sampling, in Italy, inclusion criteria included experienced death of a pet, 18yo or older. Self-administered paper survey.</p> | <p>Two step analyses. Step one: internal reliability of each questionnaire was verified by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and averaging the means of the LAPS, PBQ, TDRS, and BDI-II scores.</p> <p>Step 2 path analysis was used to test whether the PBQ mediated the relationship between the LAPS and the BDI-II or between the TDRS and BDI-II, using the LISREL</p> | <p>Finally, research suggests that although belief in an afterlife is associated with greater attachment and, therefore, greater grief, this belief does not correlate with depressive outcomes and acts as a humanization factor for the relationship with the pet and its death.</p> | <p>Further research should be conducted to investigate the social constructs of animals among veterinarians and whether these may latently conflict with the constructs of the owners.</p> | <p>The use of reliable instruments.</p> | <p>II</p> |
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| <p>Uccheddu et al., 2019</p> | <p>The research model was based on a grid of five different questionnaires: the Pet Bereavement Questionnaire, the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale, the Animal-Human Continuity Scale, the Positivity Scale, and the Testoni Death Representation Scale.</p> | <p>Validating the Mourning Dog Questionnaire.</p> | <p>Quantitative analysis of grief.</p> | <p>Analyses were carried out using SPSS 24 (IBM Corp. Released 2016. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 24.0. Armonk, NY.) for descriptive, reliability and correlations analysis and using the R package lavaan for CFAs.</p> <p>We collected reports from 369 Italian dog owners (329 females and 38 males) with a mean age of 42.00 ± 10.70 (SD) years (range 21.00–70.00). In total, 17.60% reported their highest level of qualification to be post-</p> | <p>People may be at risk for extreme grief responses upon the death of their companion animal. In fact, the main factors related to grief for human beings (being guilty, in grief, in anger, with intrusive thoughts) are often present after the loss of a pet</p> | <p>The Mourning Dog Questionnaire could be a useful tool considering the high numbers of people who are at risk of experiencing the loss of a companion dog, which makes this type of grief as potential major concern for public health and human welfare.</p> | <p>Proper tools to assess grief are beneficial to healthcare workers in mental health settings.</p> | <p>IV</p> |
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| | | | | <p>graduate, 32.80% a university degree, 45.30% a high-school qualification, and 4.30% a middle school award. Regarding marital status at the time of loss, 61.80% participants were married or in a long-term commitment relationship, 24.40% were single and alone, 7.30% were separated/divorced and alone, 19.80% lived with at least one child (age 0–14) but no other a</p> | | | | |
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Figure 1.

Place your literature search flow diagram here

Appendix

Annotated Bibliography

Bussolari, C., Habarth, J. M., Phillips, S., Katz, R., & Packman, W. (2021). Self-Compassion, - Social Constraints, and Psychosocial Outcomes in a Pet Bereavement Sample. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 82(3)

Bussilari et al., (2021) conducted a cross-sectional study whose pet died less than 6 months prior to the survey, their framework was that of human loss and self-compassion. Social constraints predicted poorer outcomes across all symptom categories, and self-compassion moderated the relationship for only one outcome: depression, follow up test indicated that all self-compassion subscales for Common Humanity demonstrated interaction with social constraints in predicting depression. Findings suggest that self-compassion might be associated with greater engagement in self-soothing coping efforts such as continuing bonds. Self-compassion may buffer deleterious relationships between social constraints and psychological outcomes most notably depression.

Piotti, P., Karagiannis, C., Satchell, L., Michelazzi, M., Albertini, M., Alleva, E., & Pirrone, F. (2021). Use of the Milan Pet Quality of Life Instrument (MPQL) to Measure Pets' Quality of Life during COVID-19. *Animals (Basel)*, 11(5), 1336.

Piotti et al ., (2021) found that the quality of life (QoL) of pets was directly impacted by the QoL the human had during the covid-19 pandemic. Human and non-human animals' personalities can be characterized through reinforcement sensitivity theory (RST). The Participants were given written information about the aim of the procedures of the study. The

survey was anonymous and confidential. Findings suggest that such a relationship partly explains the social aspects of pets' QoL and, to a smaller degree, their physical QoL. High scores in human and pet RST domains would be detrimental to pets' QoL by causing impulsive, fearful, and/or anxious responses to changes.

Pitimson, N. (2021). Work after Death: An Examination of the Relationship between Grief, Emotional Labour, and the Lived Experience of Returning to Work after a Bereavement. *Sociological Research Online*, 26(3), 469-484.

Pittimson, N. (2021) performed data analysis using an inductive approach, based on Thomas' (2006) definition of this process, describing it as being one that supports close reading of the data: 'to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies. This study demonstrates the need for a broader engagement by organizations in dialogue around the importance of having a clearly defined bereavement policy, integrating compassion into working culture beyond being the name of a form of leave.

Redmalm, D. (2015). Pet grief: when is non-human life grievable? *The Sociological Review (Keele)*, 63(1), 19-35.

Redmalm, D (2015) Interviews participants on the theme of non-human life grief. The result was that pet owners regarded their pets as grievable. Pets included cats, dogs, rats, birds, and horses. This is based on irreplaceability, unpredictability, and embodied loss. Pet owners make their pets grievable and ungrievable by turns to be able to grieve them while simultaneously keeping the categories 'human' and 'animal' separate. The interpersonal

implications of grief collide with the hierarchical dichotomization between humans and other animals, revealing tensions inherent to the human/animal binary. These studies contribute to the understanding of pet grief as a social phenomenon, but their primary aim is to suggest improvements in practices connected with pet loss (such as counseling, veterinarians' communication, and cremation services). Participants who are lonely and/or do not receive enough social support will be more strongly attached to their pets.

Smolkovic, I., Fajfar, M., & Mlinaric, V. (2012). *Attachment to pets and interpersonal relationships*. American Psychological Association (APA).

Smolkovic et al (2012) This study showed that pet owners differ in pet attachment according to different owner demographic characteristics. Demographic variables like pet owner gender and type of pet will influence the strength of pet-owner attachment. Participants with higher scores on the dimensions of avoidance and/or anxiety (based on the ECR-R questionnaire) will be more attached to their pets. Participants who are lonely and/or do not receive enough social support will be more strongly attached to their pets.

Testoni, I., De Cataldo, L., Ronconi, L., Colombo, E. S., Stefanini, C., Dal Zotto, B., & Zamperini, A. (2019). *Pet Grief: Tools to Assess Owners' Bereavement and Veterinary Communication Skills*. MDPI AG.

Testoni et al (2019) Self-administered online survey. From July 2017 to December 2017 of 354 pet owners found that fifty-nine percent of participants opted for euthanasia and 88% were present during the procedure. In their opinion, euthanasia was performed at the right time (91%), the veterinarian was sensitive toward the owner and the pet during euthanasia

(96%), and provided proper information on the procedure (95%). Negative dimensions of bereavement are strictly linked to each other: guilt, grief, anger, intrusive thoughts, and decisional regrets. On the one hand, our study evidenced that all these variables, which normally typify complicated grief in human loss, also characterize pet loss.

Testoni, I., De Cataldo, L., Ronconi, L., & Zamperini, A. (2017). Pet Loss and Representations of Death, Attachment, Depression, and Euthanasia. *Anthrozoös*, 30(1), 135-148.

Testonin et al (2017) used a structural model of representation of death as annihilation and the attachment of the owner to the pet as independent variables. Snowball sampling, in Italy, inclusion criteria included the experienced death of a pet, 18yo or older. Self-administered paper survey. Finally, research suggests that belief in an afterlife is associated with greater attachment and, therefore, greater grief. However, this belief does not correlate with depressive outcomes and acts as a humanization factor for the relationship between the pet and its death.

Uccheddu, De Cataldo, Albertini, Coren, Da Graça Pereira, Haverbeke, Mills, Pierantoni, Riemer, Ronconi, Testoni, & Pirrone. (2019). *Pet Humanisation and Related Grief: Development and Validation of a Structured Questionnaire Instrument to Evaluate Grief in People Who Have Lost a Companion Dog*. MDPI AG.

Uccheddu et al (2019) research model was based on a grid of five different questionnaires: the Pet Bereavement Questionnaire, the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale, the Animal-Human Continuity Scale, the Positivity Scale, and the Testoni Death Representation Scale.

The Mourning Dog Questionnaire could be a useful tool considering the high numbers of people at risk of experiencing the loss of a companion dog, making this type of grief a potentially major concern for public health and human welfare.