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Symptoms of prolonged grief, post-traumatic stress, and depression after loss in a Dutch community sample: A latent class analysis

A.A.A. Manik J. Djelantik^{a,b*}, Geert E. Smid^{b,c}, Rolf J. Kleber^{a,b}, Paul A. Boelen^{a,b}

^a Department of Clinical Psychology, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands

^b Arq Psychotrauma Expert Group, Diemen, The Netherlands

^c Foundation Centrum '45, Diemen, The Netherlands

*Correspondence Address: A.A.A. Manik J. Djelantik, Department of Clinical Psychology, Utrecht University, PO Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands. E-mail: a.a.a.m.j.djelantik@uu.nl

Abstract

Mental health problems following loss can manifest as heterogeneous symptomatology that may include symptoms of Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). However, the co-occurrence of symptoms of these three disorders is still only partially explored. The aims of this study were to identify subgroups (i.e., classes) in a Dutch sample of bereaved individuals, based on severity and/or co-occurrence of symptoms and to identify predictors for these subgroups, taking into account all three disorders. Using data from 496 participants who filled in questionnaires assessing PTSD, MDD and PGD, we conducted latent class analyses to identify different symptom classes. Predictors of these classes were identified using one-way ANOVA, Chi Square tests and multinomial regression analysis. We found three different classes: a resilient class, a PGD class and a combined PGD/PTSD class. Violent cause of death, loss of a child, and loss of a partner were associated with membership of the combined PGD/PTSD class. This study increases our understanding of the predictability of symptomology outcome following bereavement. This is a first step towards designing assessment and intervention methods, specifically directed towards subgroups of individuals sharing characteristic symptomatology.

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