

Grieving the Death of Pets from the Perspective of Life Education: The Experience of Taiwan

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Abstract

There is a special emotional bond between humans and their pets. In modern society, pets have become emotional family members rather than utilitarian objects, fulfilling human needs for belonging, security, and intimacy. However, since pets' lifespans are shorter than humans', the impact of pet death cannot be overlooked. This article explores owners' grief reactions and adjustment processes from the perspective of life education, analyzing how life education can help owners face loss, complete mourning, and reconstruct meaning. The findings reveal multifaceted grief reactions across emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioral domains. Grief intensity is related to attachment strength, cause of death, and social support. Grief adjustment is a dynamic process involving impact, pain, and reconstruction stages. Coping strategies include facing emotions, sublimating grief, modifying cognition, and performing mourning rituals. Emerging digital memorials also contribute to meaning reconstruction. Life education can assist owners through five dimensions: understanding life and death, learning grief expression, participating in mourning rituals, seeking social support, and giving meaning to death. Suggestions include integrating pet-related issues into life education curricula, establishing support networks, and providing professional training to promote societal attention to pet loss issues.

Keywords— *life education, pet death, grief adjustment, human-pet attachment, meaning reconstruction.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The population of pet owners in Taiwan has been increasing year by year. According to statistics from the Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan [1], the total number of pet dogs and cats in Taiwan has exceeded 2.8 million, an increase of nearly 40% compared to 2015. During the COVID-19 pandemic, pet ownership rates increased significantly, and the human-pet attachment bond became even closer [2]. Pets not only provide emotional companionship but also satisfy human needs for belonging and

attachment [3], reducing loneliness and enhancing life satisfaction [4]. Research by Bowen et al. [5] indicates that during the pandemic, pets served as important emotional pillars for many people, helping to alleviate anxiety and loneliness.

However, the lifespan of pets is short, and their death has a profound impact on owners. Research shows that pet death can trigger symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and insomnia, with approximately 30% of owners experiencing clinically significant grief symptoms [6]. Those with high

attachment levels experience stronger grief reactions [7], and about 10–20% of owners may develop complicated grief, characterized by persistent longing, inability to accept the loss, and impaired daily functioning [8]. A review by Donahue of the past decade's research indicates that the impact of pet death on mental health has gained widespread academic attention [9], but cross-cultural comparisons and intervention studies still need strengthening.

Life education aims to guide individuals in exploring the meaning of life, confronting death-related issues, and establishing positive values. Pet death, as the first encounter with loss for many people, presents an excellent opportunity for implementing life education. A systematic review by Testoni et al. [10] points out that incorporating pet death into life education curricula helps students develop a proper understanding of life and death, cultivate empathy, and foster a sense of responsibility. Although substantial research has been accumulated in Europe and the United States [10,11], relevant studies in Taiwan remain limited. From the perspective of life education, this paper explores owners' grief reactions and coping processes, analyzing how life education can help owners confront loss, complete mourning, and reconstruct meaning.

Specifically, the questions this paper seeks to explore are as follows: What grief reactions do owners experience after the death of a pet? What is the grief adjustment process? What are the influencing factors? How can life education assist owners in grief adjustment? What are the unique characteristics of Taiwanese owners' grief adjustment experiences within the socio-cultural context?

II. THE ESSENCE AND PRACTICE OF LIFE EDUCATION

Life education is an integrated educational concept encompassing cognitive, emotional, and practical dimensions, aimed at guiding individuals to explore the meaning of life, confront death-related issues, and establish positive values. Chang Shu-Mei [12] points out that the core of life education includes four aspects: "understanding life," "respecting life,"

"cherishing life," and "developing life," with death education being an indispensable component.

Pet death, as the first encounter with loss for many people, presents an excellent opportunity for implementing life education. A systematic review by Testoni et al. [10] indicates that incorporating pet death into life education curricula helps students develop a proper understanding of life and death, cultivate empathy, and foster a sense of responsibility. Research shows that students who participate in courses on pet ownership and loss demonstrate a significantly enhanced understanding of life and death, while their anxiety levels decrease [10].

Life education can assist owners in coping with pet death through the following five dimensions:

First, understanding life and death: Comprehending the natural cycle of life, recognizing the relatively short lifespan of pets, and engaging in psychological preparation.

Second, learning to express grief: Recognizing that grief is a normal emotional response and learning to express it healthily through talking, writing, artistic creation, etc.

Third, participating in mourning rituals: Through funerals, memorial activities, and similar practices, helping to accept the reality of death and complete the mourning process.

Fourth, seeking social support: Sharing grief with family and friends, or joining support groups, to obtain emotional support.

Fifth, attributing meaning to death: Assigning meaning to the pet's life and death, thereby facilitating personal growth from grief.

These five dimensions will serve as the theoretical framework for this paper's analysis of how life education can be integrated into pet grief adjustment.

III. THE CHANGING ROLE OF PETS AND THE HUMAN-PET ATTACHMENT BOND

3.1 The Changing Role of Pets: From Tools to Family Members

The role of pets in human society has evolved along with changes in social structures and family forms.

Following industrialization and urbanization, interpersonal relationships became more distant, and pets gradually took on emotional roles [4]. In modern society, many people regard their pets as "family members," even referring to them as "fur children." This cross-species emotional connection has become a significant feature of contemporary family relationships. A qualitative study by Charles and Davies [13] found that pet owners commonly describe their pets as "family members," with a status equivalent to that of children or partners. A cross-cultural study by Irvine and Cilia [14] further noted that while this phenomenon is prevalent in both Western and Asian societies, there are slight differences in expression and cultural connotations.

A study by Bowen et al. [5] on changes in human-pet relationships during the pandemic found that 35% of owners reported a closer relationship with their pets, particularly among those living alone and the elderly. A review by Packman et al. [15] of 25 years of research on human-pet attachment indicates that pets have transformed from "possessions" into "emotional subjects," a shift that makes the impact of pet death on owners deserving of greater attention.

3.2 The Human-Pet Emotional Bond: An Attachment Theory Perspective

The emotional bond between humans and pets can be understood through attachment theory. Bowlby [16] proposed that humans form emotional bonds with caregivers, characterized by features such as a sense of security, proximity seeking, and separation anxiety. Subsequent research has confirmed that a similar relationship exists between humans and pets, with pets serving as secure attachment figures for their owners [17].

Zilcha-Mano [3] further proposed the concept of "pet attachment orientation," categorizing human-pet attachment relationships into secure attachment and insecure attachment (including anxious attachment and avoidant attachment). The quality of attachment influences the owner's grief reaction after the pet's death. Field et al. [18] found that the strength of the attachment between owner and pet is positively correlated with the intensity of grief following the pet's death. A quantitative study by Rockett and Carr

[7] confirmed that securely attached individuals are better able to utilize social support resources and navigate the grief adjustment process more smoothly, whereas insecurely attached individuals are more prone to complicated grief.

Clements et al. [19] emphasized that the human-pet emotional bond has a protective effect on physical and mental health and can be considered a source of social support. Research during the pandemic further indicated that pets became important emotional pillars for many, helping to alleviate anxiety and loneliness [2].

IV. THE IMPACT OF PET DEATH AND GRIEF REACTIONS

4.1 Types of Impact from Pet Death

McCutcheon and Fleming [20] categorized causes of death into three types, each resulting in different psychological impacts on owners. A systematic review by Barnard-Nguyen et al. [21] updated this classification, incorporating discussions on contemporary ethical issues surrounding euthanasia.

Sudden death, such as from car accidents, accidental poisoning, or acute illness, occurs abruptly, leaving owners psychologically unprepared. Grief reactions are often most intense and complex. Such causes of death can easily trigger guilt and self-blame in owners, for example, repeatedly thinking, "If I had been more careful, it wouldn't have happened." A systematic review by Komischke-Konnerup et al. [8] pointed out that sudden death is a significant risk factor for complicated grief, with a risk approximately 2.5 times higher than that of anticipated death.

In cases of death from chronic illness or old age, owners usually have a longer period for psychological preparation, and grief reactions are relatively milder. However, the long-term care of elderly or sick pets can itself lead to caregiver burden and anticipatory grief for the owner. A study by Spitznagel et al. [22] found that owners caring long-term for seriously ill pets exhibited significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression compared to general pet owners, highlighting the need to attend to their mental health.

Euthanasia is a highly controversial form of pet death, often confronting owners with difficult ethical choices and emotional struggles. During the euthanasia process, owners may experience intense guilt, indecision, and post-decision self-blame. Research by Spitznagel et al. [23] indicates that if owners receive thorough explanations and emotional support from the veterinarian during the euthanasia decision-making process, their feelings of guilt and self-blame are significantly reduced. Barnard-Nguyen et al. [21] also emphasized that the quality of communication from the veterinarian during euthanasia has a critical impact on the owner's subsequent grief adjustment.

4.2 Worden's Four Dimensions of Grief Reaction

Worden [24] proposed four dimensions of grief reactions, which can comprehensively describe the types of reactions owners experience after the death of a pet.

The affective dimension includes emotional responses such as sadness, guilt, anger, loneliness, anxiety, helplessness, and yearning. Lagoni and Butler [11] point out that guilt is the most common and distressing emotion for owners experiencing pet death, especially when the owner is involved in the euthanasia decision.

The cognitive dimension includes reactions such as disbelief, confusion, preoccupation with thoughts of the pet, hallucinations, and difficulty concentrating. Some owners may experience "metaphysical experiences," such as dreaming of their pet or feeling their pet's presence, which can sometimes help alleviate grief.

The physiological dimension includes reactions such as stomach upset, chest tightness, weakness, dry mouth, and sleep disturbances. A quantitative study by Gosse and Barnes [6] found that approximately 40% of owners experienced sleep disturbances within one month after the death of their pet, with a higher prevalence among women than men.

The behavioral dimension includes reactions such as insomnia, social withdrawal, memorializing behaviors, and seeking support. Sofka et al. [25] note that contemporary owners increasingly engage in

memorialization through digital means, such as social media tributes and online memorial platforms.

A systematic review by Komischke-Konnerup et al. [8] indicates that approximately 10–20% of owners experience complicated grief, characterized by persistent longing, inability to accept the loss, impaired daily functioning, and social withdrawal. Risk factors include high attachment levels, sudden death, lack of social support, and prior history of mental illness.

4.3 Factors Influencing Grief Reactions

The intensity and duration of grief reactions following pet death are influenced by multiple factors. Based on recent research, the following key factors can be identified.

Attachment strength is the most significant factor. Field et al. [18] found a positive correlation between the strength of the owner-pet attachment and the intensity of grief. Zilcha-Mano [3] further noted that owners with insecure attachment (anxious and avoidant) exhibit more complex and difficult-to-manage grief reactions. The study by Rockett and Carr [7] confirmed that securely attached individuals are better able to utilize social support resources and navigate the adjustment process more smoothly.

Length of ownership is also correlated with grief intensity. Davis et al. [26] found that the longer the ownership period, the greater the emotional investment and daily interaction, leading to higher levels of loss and grief after the pet's death. A review by Packman et al. [15] indicated a moderate positive correlation between the length of ownership and grief intensity.

The predictability of death influences the complexity of grief. McCutcheon and Fleming [20] found that grief reactions following sudden death are more intense and complex than those following anticipated death. A systematic review by Komischke-Konnerup et al. [8] also confirmed that sudden death is a significant predictor of complicated grief.

Owner characteristics include age, gender, previous experience with pet loss, and personality traits. A study by Gosse and Barnes [6] found that female owners are generally more willing to express

grief and experience higher levels of grief, but may also be perceived as "overreacting" and consequently lack social support. Older owners and those with more experience in pet loss tend to recover from grief more easily.

The social support system is crucial for grief adjustment. Research by Kogan et al. [27] found that online pet loss communities have become a new source of social support, especially for owners who lack understanding in their offline lives. Hoffmann et al. [28] also pointed out that supportive comments and shares on social media help owners feel understood and accepted. An analysis of online support community content by Clements et al. [29] revealed that members primarily receive three types of support: emotional support, informational support, and companionship support.

Funeral rituals and memorial activities can help owners accept the reality of death, express grief, and complete the mourning process. A study by Redmalm [30] indicated that owners who participate in pet funeral rituals (such as cremation, burial, or memorial services) navigate the grief adjustment process more smoothly. Sofka et al. [25] explored the rise of digital mourning rituals (such as online memorial services and social media tribute pages), finding that these emerging rituals also serve functions of emotional catharsis and meaning reconstruction.

Cultural and religious beliefs influence owners' understanding of death and their ways of expressing grief. A comparative study by Chiu et al. [31] on pet grief experiences in Taiwan, Japan, and China found that owners in Buddhist cultural contexts more frequently utilize religious rituals (such as chanting or ceremonies for the deceased) to cope with grief. A study by Yamamoto et al. [32] on the development and cultural significance of pet cemeteries in Japan found that cemeteries serve not only as places for handling remains but also as important spaces for owners to engage in mourning and meaning reconstruction. These findings can serve as a reference for the development of pet funeral culture in Taiwan.

V. THE GRIEF ADJUSTMENT PROCESS FOLLOWING PET DEATH

5.1 Theoretical Foundations of Grief Adjustment

Grief adjustment refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral strategies individuals employ after experiencing a loss to restore psychological balance and adapt to new life circumstances. In the context of pet death, the adjustment process involves how owners confront grief, process the loss, reconstruct meaning in life, and gradually resume daily functioning.

Various theoretical models have been proposed to explain the grief adjustment process. Kübler-Ross [33] proposed the five-stage model (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance), which is often applied to pet death grief adjustment, although some scholars criticize it for being overly linear and neglecting individual differences. Worden [24] proposed four tasks of mourning: accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of grief, adjusting to the new environment, and emotionally relocating the deceased. This model emphasizes that grief adjustment is an active process. Neimeyer [34, 35] proposed the meaning reconstruction model, arguing that the core of grief adjustment lies in reconstructing the meaning of the loss, reinterpreting the relationship with the deceased, and finding a new place for them in one's life. The dual process model by Stroebe and Schut [36] emphasizes that grief adjustment requires a dynamic oscillation between "loss-oriented" (thinking about the deceased, experiencing grief) and "restoration-oriented" (adapting to new life, developing new roles).

A review by Breen et al. [37] on the application of the dual process model in pet death research found that owners who can flexibly oscillate between loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping navigate the adjustment process more smoothly. A meta-analysis by Milman et al. [38] also confirmed that meaning-reconstruction-oriented interventions have significant effects on grief adjustment.

5.2 The Three-Stage Process of Grief Adjustment

Grief adjustment following pet death is not a linear progression but a dynamic, cyclical, and

individualized process. Synthesizing the aforementioned theories with recent research, three main stages can be identified.

The initial stage is the impact and confusion phase. In the early period after a pet's death, owners may experience shock, denial, and numbness. Their daily routines are disrupted, and emotions are chaotic. The primary task in this stage is to "accept the reality of the loss," which can be facilitated by viewing the body or participating in funeral rituals. Sofka et al. [25] point out that contemporary owners can also gradually accept the reality by digitally documenting the moment of death or sharing information online.

The middle stage is the pain and struggle phase. As the reality of death becomes clearer, owners begin to experience profound grief, including emotions such as sadness, anger, guilt, and loneliness. The primary task in this stage is to "work through the pain of grief," allowing oneself to feel grief and express it in healthy ways. A study by Kogan et al. [27] found that online support communities play a crucial role during this phase, as members can share their emotions and receive immediate responses at any time. Some owners may show signs of complicated grief during this stage and require professional assistance.

The later stage is the adjustment and reconstruction phase. Over time, owners gradually adapt to life without their pet, re-establish daily routines, and find a new place in their hearts for the departed pet. The primary tasks in this stage include "adjusting to the new environment" and "emotionally relocating the deceased." Neimeyer [35] emphasizes that the key in this phase is meaning reconstruction, where owners need to assign meaning to their pet's life and death and derive growth from the grief. A study by Lloyd et al. [39] found that owners who participated in online memorial activities or created commemorative works exhibited significantly higher levels of meaning reconstruction.

5.3 Factors Influencing Grief Adjustment

The grief adjustment process following pet death is influenced by multiple factors. An integrative review by Breen et al. [37] identified the main influencing

factors as: personal factors (age, gender, personality traits, past pet loss experiences, attachment style); social factors (family support, friend companionship, societal acceptance of pet death, online community support); event factors (cause of death, participation in funerals, opportunity for farewell); and cultural factors (religious beliefs, views on death, pet funeral customs).

Kogan et al. [27] particularly emphasized the importance of online communities in contemporary society. Their research found that owners participating in online pet loss communities reported levels of social support comparable to those from in-person support groups, with added advantages such as 24/7 accessibility and anonymity. Clements et al. [29] further analyzed interaction patterns in online communities, finding that members primarily support each other through sharing stories, offering advice, and expressing empathy.

The influence of cultural factors should not be overlooked. A comparative study by Chiu et al. [31] on pet grief experiences in Taiwan, Japan, and China found that owners in Buddhist cultural contexts more frequently used religious rituals to cope with grief, while those with Christian backgrounds tended to rely on prayer and church support. A study by Yamamoto et al. [32] on Japanese pet cemeteries found that these cemeteries not only provide remains handling services but also hold regular memorial services and offer online tribute platforms, forming a comprehensive mourning support system.

VI. GRIEF ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES FROM A LIFE EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

Life education can assist owners in coping with pet death through five dimensions, as detailed below regarding their content and practical application.

6.1 Understanding Life and Death

The primary task of life education is to guide individuals in understanding the natural cycle of life and comprehending that death is an inevitable process. Research by Testoni et al. [10] found that students participating in courses on pet ownership and loss significantly improved their understanding of life and death, while their fear of death decreased.

Before acquiring a pet, owners should be aware of the pet's relatively short lifespan and engage in psychological preparation. During the ownership period, discussing issues related to pet death with family members can help gradually establish the understanding [11] suggest that veterinarians can proactively discuss end-of-life care issues with owners during routine health check-ups to assist with psychological preparation.

6.2 Learning to Express Grief

Grief is a normal emotional response, and individuals should allow themselves to feel it and express it healthily. Worden [24] emphasizes that suppressing grief may actually prolong the adjustment process. Life education should teach individuals methods to identify, accept, and express grief emotions.

Writing is an effective way to express emotions. Research by Pennebaker [40] confirmed that writing about sad experiences daily can aid emotional adjustment and physical health. A study by Lloyd et al. [39] found that owners using pet loss apps to record their feelings and share stories had significantly lower levels of grief compared to a control group.

Talking about grief is also an important form of expression. Discussing memories of the pet and sharing feelings of grief with family and friends can provide support and companionship. Kogan et al. [27] noted that online communities offer an alternative space for discussion, especially for owners lacking listeners in their offline lives.

6.3 Participating in Mourning Rituals

Mourning rituals help owners accept the reality of death, express grief, and complete the mourning process. Research by Redmalm [30] indicates that owners who participate in pet funeral rituals navigate the grief adjustment process more smoothly. Rituals take various forms, including cremation, burial, memorial services, and creating commemorative items.

Digital mourning rituals have emerged in contemporary society. Sofka et al. [25] explored new forms such as online memorial services, social media tribute pages, and virtual memorial gardens, finding

that these rituals also serve functions of emotional catharsis and meaning reconstruction. A study by Lloyd et al. [39] noted that creating online pet documentaries or establishing memorial websites has become an important way for many owners to express their longing.

6.4 Seeking Social Support

Social support is crucial for grief adjustment. Research by Planchon et al. [41] found that understanding and support from family members, companionship from friends, and participation in support groups all help owners adjust to grief. Conversely, if an individual's grief is not understood by others, it can lead to social withdrawal and complicated grief.

Kogan et al. [27] found that online pet loss communities have become a new source of social support. Their survey of 500 community participants revealed that 85% felt the community helped them through their most difficult times. An analysis of community content by Clements et al. [29] showed that members primarily received three types of support: emotional support (e.g., empathy, comfort), informational support (e.g., resources for funeral services, professional consultations), and companionship support (e.g., shared memories, witnessing grief).

6.5 Attributing Meaning to Death

Neimeyer [35] emphasizes that the core task of grief adjustment is to attribute meaning to the loss event. Owners need to reinterpret their relationship with the deceased pet, assign meaning to its life and death, and find a new place for it in their lives.

There are various ways to attribute meaning. Some owners channel their love for their pet into tangible actions, such as helping stray animals or donating to animal welfare organizations. Others create written tributes or artistic works to document their pet's life. A meta-analysis by Milman et al. [38] confirmed that meaning-reconstruction-oriented interventions have significant effects on grief adjustment, with benefits lasting up to six months or more.

A study by Yamamoto et al. [32] on how Japanese owners attribute meaning to their pets'

deaths found that many regard their pets as "life teachers," believing they learned from them lessons such as unconditional love, living in the present moment, and facing death with courage. Such positive reinterpretation helps owners derive personal growth from their grief.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Summary of Research

From the perspective of life education, this paper explored the grief reactions and adjustment processes of owners after the death of a pet. Based on the literature analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Pets have become objects of emotional attachment in modern families. With social changes and the distancing of interpersonal relationships, the role of pets in families has shifted from a functional tool to an emotional family member. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified this phenomenon, with pets serving as crucial emotional pillars for many people. This "pet as family member" phenomenon makes the impact of pet death on owners impossible to ignore.

Pet death triggers multifaceted grief reactions. The four dimensions of reaction described by Worden [24]—affective, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral—are commonly observed among owners. Approximately 10–20% of owners may develop complicated grief, with risk factors including high attachment levels, sudden death, and lack of social support. Owners who opt for euthanasia may face unique challenges related to guilt and decision-making burden.

Grief adjustment is a dynamic and individualized process. It can be divided into three stages: impact and confusion, pain and struggle, and adjustment and reconstruction. Meaning reconstruction is the core task of adjustment, requiring owners to assign meaning to their pet's life and death and find a new place for them in their lives. Those who can flexibly oscillate between loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping navigate the adjustment process more smoothly.

Diverse adjustment methods exist, and emerging digital approaches deserve attention. Traditional coping methods include facing and accepting grief emotions, transforming and sublimating grief, modifying personal cognitions and behaviors, and engaging in mourning rituals. Emerging digital forms of memorialization, such as social media tributes, online memorial platforms, and pet loss apps, have become important channels for many owners to express their longing and receive support.

Social support and cultural context influence adjustment outcomes. Family support, friend companionship, and support group participation all facilitate adjustment. Online support communities further complement the shortcomings of offline support, providing 24/7 accessible companionship. Cultural background and religious beliefs influence owners' understanding of death and their expressions of grief. Taiwan's Buddhist influences and pet funeral culture warrant further research.

7.2 Specific Recommendations for Integrating Life Education into Pet Grief Adjustment

Based on the research findings above, this paper proposes specific recommendations aligned with the five dimensions of life education.

Regarding understanding life and death: It is recommended to incorporate pet ownership and death issues into life education curricula at all school levels. At the elementary school level, classroom pets can be used to guide students in observing the life cycle and understanding the inevitability of death. At the junior and senior high school levels, issues such as euthanasia ethics and pet funeral culture can be explored to foster critical thinking and value clarification. Universities and colleges could offer elective courses such as "Human-Pet Relationships and Loss Adjustment" to provide more in-depth theoretical and practical training.

Regarding learning to express grief: It is recommended that educational authorities collaborate with professional organizations to develop educational materials on pet grief counseling, teaching owners how to identify, accept, and express grief. Diverse media such as manuals, videos, and online courses can be created to provide

resources for self-learning. School counseling centers should include pet loss as a topic of concern to help students cope with the emotional distress of losing a pet.

Regarding participating in mourning rituals: It is recommended that pet funeral service providers offer diverse and dignified service options, encompassing both traditional rituals and digital memorialization. Collaborations with schools and communities could be established to hold events such as pet memorial days or remembrance services, providing public spaces for owners to express their longing. The government could develop regulations for pet funeral services to protect owners' rights and ensure pets are treated with dignity.

Regarding seeking social support: It is recommended that the government partner with non-governmental organizations to establish a pet loss support network. This could include setting up support hotlines, training volunteers, forming support groups, and building online resource platforms. Medical institutions could incorporate pet loss into clinical care considerations, and veterinary clinics could provide referrals for emotional support resources. Online community platforms could collaborate with professional organizations to offer accurate information and appropriate guidance.

Regarding attributing meaning to death: It is recommended that counseling professionals recognize the importance of meaning reconstruction and integrate relevant techniques into pet grief counseling practice. Owners can be guided to attribute meaning to their pet's life through writing, creative activities, volunteer service, and other means. Schools can encourage students to document their pets' stories or create commemorative works, transforming their grief experiences into opportunities for life learning.

7.3 Future Research Directions

Based on the analysis in this paper, suggested directions for future research include: expanding studies to include diverse samples, encompassing owners of different genders, age groups, and pet types; conducting longitudinal studies to track the long-term trajectories of owners' grief adjustment;

promoting cross-cultural comparisons to examine pet grief experiences and coping strategies in Taiwan versus other East Asian countries; developing intervention studies to evaluate the effectiveness of life education curricula, support groups, online platforms, and other interventions; exploring new phenomena related to pet grief in the digital age, such as social media memorialization and grief over virtual pets; and studying the long-term changes in human-pet relationships after the pandemic, as well as the unique experiences of those who lost pets during the pandemic.

7.4 Conclusion

The grief triggered by the death of a pet is a real emotional experience that deserves recognition. For many owners, the loss of a pet is not only a bereavement event but also an opportunity for life education. Through grief, people come to understand the fragility and preciousness of life; through adjustment, they can reorganize their life experiences and assign new meaning to death.

From the perspective of life education, the death of a pet is not the end of the relationship but its transformation. If owners can confront their grief healthily and complete the mourning process, they can find a new place in their hearts for the departed pet and continue forward with that love and memory. As Neimeyer [35] states, the core of grief adjustment lies not in "letting go" but in "reconnecting"—finding a new way to connect with the deceased after loss and assigning new meaning to them in one's life.

Death brings grief, but it also brings opportunities for growth. Only by truly confronting loss and experiencing grief can one understand the absolute value of one's own life, reorganize life experiences and meaning, and unleash potential while clarifying one's sense of self-worth. May every owner who has lost a pet find strength in their grief, see hope in their loss, transform their love for their pet into nourishment for life, and live a richer, more meaningful life.

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