Hope as a Predictor for Complicated Grief and Anxiety: A Bayesian Structural Equational Modeling Study

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Abstract : Bereavement is recognized as a universal challenging experience. It is important to gather research evidence on protective factors in bereavement. Hope is considered as one of the protective factors in previous coping studies. The present study aims to add knowledge by investigating hope at the first month after death to predict psychological symptoms altogether including complicated grief (CG), anxiety, and depressive symptoms at the seventh month. The data were collected via one-on-one interview survey in a longitudinal project with Hong Kong hospice users (sample size 105). Most participants were at their middle age (49-year-old on average), female (72%), with no religious affiliation (58%). Bayesian Structural Equation Modeling (BSEM) analysis was conducted on the longitudinal dataset. The BSEM findings show that hope at the first month of bereavement negatively predicts both CG and anxiety symptoms at the seventh month but not for depressive symptoms. Age and gender are controlled in the model. The overall model fit is good. The current study findings suggest assessing hope at the first month of bereavement. Hope at the first month after the loss is identified as an excellent predictor for complicated grief and anxiety symptoms at the seventh month. The result from this sample is clear, so it encourages cross-cultural research on replicated modeling and development of further clinical application. Particularly, practical consideration for early intervention to increase the level of hope has the potential to reduce the psychological symptoms and thus to improve the bereaved persons' wellbeing in the long run.