

Influence of Death on Interpersonal Relationship in Teens and People in their Early Twenties

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Abstract

The death of a loved one can profoundly influence interpersonal relationships for teens and young adults (those in their early twenties). This stage of life is already marked by significant emotional, social, and cognitive development, so experiencing loss can have a profound impact. The impact of death on individuals' lives, particularly during the formative years of adolescence and early adulthood, has been a subject of growing interest in psychological and sociological research. Grief and loss can trigger a range of emotional responses, leading to a reevaluation of personal values, beliefs, and interpersonal connections. The ways in which young people process and communicate about death can significantly shape their social interactions, relationships, and overall well-being. This paper argues that the death of a significant person profoundly impacts the interpersonal communication and coping mechanisms of teens and individuals in their early twenties. Young individuals exhibit diverse communication responses to grief, ranging from increased openness and the need for emotional sharing to withdrawal and internal processing of grief. The closeness of the relationship with the deceased plays a critical role in the intensity and nature of grief communication. The paper concludes that professional help, such as counseling and support groups, is sought more frequently in cases of profound losses. Experiencing loss can lead to the development of more mature and empathetic communication skills over time. However, the extent of long-term adaptation varies among individuals, with some developing strong coping mechanisms and others facing prolonged challenges.

Keywords

Death, Early Twenties, Influence, Interpersonal and Relationship



I. Introduction

Death is an inevitable and universal aspect of the human experience that profoundly influences individuals across various stages of life. Adolescence and early adulthood represent critical developmental periods marked by significant emotional, social, and cognitive growth. During these stages, individuals form their identities, establish interpersonal relationships, and navigate the complexities of communication. The impact of death on individuals' lives, particularly during the formative years of adolescence and early adulthood, has been a subject of growing interest in psychological and sociological research. Grief and loss can trigger a range of emotional responses, leading to a reevaluation of personal values, beliefs, and interpersonal connections. The ways in which young people process and communicate about death can significantly shape their social interactions, relationships, and overall well-being (Owens-Ibie & Aondover, 2024).

Understanding the dynamics of interpersonal communication in the context of death is crucial for identifying potential challenges and facilitating effective coping mechanisms (Wello and Novia in Abba et al., 2021). This study aims to explore the

nuanced ways in which teens and individuals in their early twenties experience and express communication patterns following the death of a significant person in their lives. In the tapestry of human existence, the experience of death is an inevitable thread that weaves its way through the intricate fabric of individual lives (Goodman, 2019; Ahmed & Msughter, 2022). Adolescence and early adulthood, marked by dynamic emotional and social development, stand as critical junctures where the impact of death on interpersonal communication takes on heightened significance. The profound nature of bereavement during these formative years necessitates an in-depth exploration to comprehend the intricate ways in which individuals navigate grief and express themselves within the realm of interpersonal relationships. This study embarks on an exploration into "The Effect of Death on Inter-Personal Communication in Teens and People in Their Early Twenties," seeking to unravel the complex interplay between loss, grief, and the communication dynamics shaping the emotional landscapes of young individuals during this crucial developmental period (McGlone & Giles, 2020; Aondover et al., 2023).

Grounded in a theoretical framework that combines elements of attachment theory, the Dual Process Model, and the Cultural-Context Model of Grief, this research endeavors to shed light on the multifaceted dimensions of bereavement. Attachment theory provides insight into how the loss of a significant person may influence attachment styles and subsequent communication patterns, while the Dual Process Model guides the examination of oscillations between loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping strategies (Aondover et al., 2022). Additionally, the Cultural-Context Model of Grief ensures a nuanced exploration of how cultural factors shape the grieving process and, consequently, the ways in which teens and young adults communicate about death. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative surveys and qualitative interviews, this study aspires to contribute not only to academic understanding but also to the development of targeted interventions, educational programs, and support systems that acknowledge and address the unique communication challenges faced by young individuals dealing with the profound effects of death.

The significant problem lies in the existing gaps regarding how the experience of death influences the communication patterns of teens and individuals in their early twenties. While adolescence and early adulthood are crucial developmental stages marked by profound emotional and social changes, the specific ways in which death shapes interpersonal communication during these formative years remain inadequately explored (Bretherton, 2019; Aondover et al., 2023). Understanding the intricate dynamics of how grief and loss affect the communication styles of young individuals is essential for developing targeted interventions and support systems that cater to their unique needs (Airaoje et al., 2023). Without a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics, educators, mental health professionals, and support networks may struggle to provide effective assistance to those grappling with the challenges of bereavement.

Another problem to this study emerges from the limited attention given to cultural, gender, and relationship factors in existing research. Furthermore, the impact of the type of relationship with the deceased on communication styles and coping mechanisms remains insufficiently investigated. These gaps hinder the development of a nuanced understanding that considers the diversity of experiences among teens and young adults dealing with loss.

1.1 Objectives of the study

1. To determine how the experience of death influence the communication patterns of teens and individuals in their early twenties
2. To identify the role grief plays in shaping the dynamics of interpersonal communication during the grieving process
3. To find out how cultural and societal factors contribute to the communication strategies employed by young individuals dealing with death
4. To determine the extent to which the type of relationship with the deceased influence the communication styles and coping mechanisms of young individuals.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Inter-Personal Communication in Teens and People in their Early Twenties

Allen et. al (2013) observed that Interpersonal communication in teens and people in their early twenties is a dynamic and evolving process influenced by various factors, including developmental stages, technological advancements, and societal changes. During these formative years, individuals are navigating the complexities of identity formation, social relationships, and independence. Interpersonal communication becomes a critical tool for expressing emotions, building connections, and negotiating the challenges inherent in adolescence and early adulthood.

Aliyu et al., (2023) pointed out that in adolescence, teens are often exploring their identities and seeking autonomy from parental figures. Interpersonal communication plays a pivotal role in this process, as teens engage in conversations with peers, family members, and mentors to express their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives. Peer relationships become increasingly significant, and communication within these relationships serves as a platform for self-disclosure, social support, and the development of social skills. The use of language and nonverbal cues becomes crucial as teens experiment with different communication styles to establish their social identities (Aondover et al., 2022; Hile et al., 2023).

The advent of technology, particularly social media, has reshaped the landscape of interpersonal communication for teens and young adults. Platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok provide avenues for self-expression, connection, and the construction of digital identities. Online communication becomes an extension of face-to-face interactions, influencing how individuals manage relationships, share experiences, and navigate the challenges of social dynamics. The digital realm introduces both opportunities and challenges, shaping the way teens and young adults communicate and maintain relationships (Idris & Msugther, 2022). As individuals transition from adolescence to early adulthood, interpersonal communication continues to evolve. The pursuit of independence, career aspirations, and the establishment of more intimate relationships contribute to shifts in communication patterns (Maikaba & Msugther, 2019). Young adults may engage in more nuanced and sophisticated forms of communication as they navigate professional environments, manage romantic relationships, and form networks of support. The ability to articulate goals, negotiate differences, and collaborate with others becomes essential in both personal and professional spheres.

During this life stage, interpersonal communication also plays a vital role in coping with life changes and challenges. The death of a loved one, for example, can have a profound impact on young adults. Communication becomes a means of expressing grief, seeking support, and negotiating the emotional complexities of loss. The way individuals in their early twenties communicate about death reflects not only personal coping

mechanisms but also societal and cultural influences that shape attitudes toward mortality and bereavement (Berger & Calabrese, 2015).

Moreover, interpersonal communication in teens and early twenties is strongly influenced by the ever-changing cultural and societal landscape. These individuals are often at the forefront of cultural shifts and evolving norms, impacting how they express themselves and connect with others. The language used, the topics deemed important, and the modes of communication are all subject to these broader societal changes. The influence of popular culture, including music, fashion, and online trends, further shapes the communicative styles of this demographic, fostering a shared language and cultural reference points (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022).

Additionally, the exploration of romantic and intimate relationships becomes a significant aspect of interpersonal communication during these years. Teens and young adults navigate the intricacies of expressing affection, establishing boundaries, and negotiating the challenges of romantic partnerships. Communication in this context involves not only verbal expression but also nonverbal cues, such as body language and gestures, as individuals learn to communicate their desires, emotions, and expectations. This aspect of interpersonal communication is vital for the development of relationship skills that will continue to be relevant throughout their lives, influencing how they form and maintain connections in both personal and professional realms.

Interpersonal communication in teens and people in their early twenties is characterized by its multifaceted nature, encompassing identity formation, peer relationships, digital communication, transitions to adulthood, and coping with life events. Understanding the intricacies of communication during this developmental stage is essential for educators, parents, and researchers to provide meaningful support and guidance (Msughter, 2019; Msughter & Aondover, 2023). It acknowledges the importance of effective communication in shaping relationships, fostering emotional well-being, and navigating the challenges inherent in the journey from adolescence to early adulthood.

2.2 Effect of Death on Interpersonal Communication

The effect of death on interpersonal communication is a profound and complex phenomenon that touches upon the deepest aspects of human experience. Death, as a universal and inevitable part of the human condition, has far-reaching implications for how individuals communicate, express grief, seek support, and negotiate the emotional terrain of loss. This multifaceted impact extends across various stages of life, relationships, and cultural contexts.

Apelian and Nesteruk in Msughter and Idris (2023) observed that the immediate aftermath of a death often triggers a range of emotional responses that find expression through interpersonal communication. Individuals may grapple with shock, disbelief, sadness, anger, or a myriad of complex emotions. Interpersonal communication becomes a crucial avenue for expressing these emotions, whether through verbal articulation, nonverbal cues, or shared rituals. The language used to discuss the deceased, the memories shared, and the narratives constructed around the loss are integral components of how individuals process and communicate their grief.

The effect of death on interpersonal communication is particularly evident in the process of mourning, where individuals engage in various rituals, ceremonies, and commemorations (Asgari & Naghavi, 2020). These acts of communication serve as a collective expression of grief, allowing individuals to come together, share their memories, and find solace in shared rituals. The funeral or memorial service becomes a significant platform for interpersonal communication, providing an opportunity for individuals to

support each other, reminisce about the life of the deceased, and collectively navigate the initial stages of grief (Berg et. al, 2016; Obasi & Msughter, 2023).

Furthermore, death has a lasting impact on the dynamics of existing relationships. The loss of a loved one reshapes the nature of connections, prompting individuals to reevaluate their roles, responsibilities, and emotional bonds. Taiwo et al., (2024) argued that Interpersonal communication within families, for instance, may involve negotiations about how to cope with the void left by the deceased, the redistribution of responsibilities, and discussions about the future. Siblings, parents, and other relatives may find themselves engaged in conversations that delve into the practical and emotional aspects of adjusting to life without the deceased family member.

In the realm of friendships, the effect of death on interpersonal communication is manifested in the delicate balance between providing support and respecting the grieving process. Friends may navigate conversations that involve offering condolences, providing empathy, and understanding the unique ways in which the loss impacts their friend. The language and gestures used in these interactions play a critical role in fostering a supportive environment and acknowledging the enduring impact of the death on the friendship. (Cinzia et. al, 2014)

Culturally, the effect of death on interpersonal communication is shaped by societal norms, religious beliefs, and traditions. Different cultures have distinct rituals, mourning periods, and expectations surrounding how individuals communicate about death. The influence of cultural factors is evident in expressions of condolences, memorial practices, and the language employed to discuss the deceased. The interplay between individual grief experiences and cultural expectations contributes to the diverse ways in which people communicate in the face of death.

Moreover, the effect of death on interpersonal communication extends beyond the immediate aftermath, influencing how individuals continue to navigate their lives in the absence of the deceased (Gobbi et. al, 2015). Ongoing conversations may revolve around preserving the memory of the departed, finding ways to honor their legacy, or discussing the impact of the loss on the future. Individuals may engage in storytelling as a means of keeping the memory alive, sharing anecdotes, and passing down the values or wisdom associated with the deceased.

The digital age has introduced new dimensions to the effect of death on interpersonal communication (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a). Online platforms, social media, and digital memorials provide additional spaces for individuals to express their grief, share memories, and connect with others who have experienced similar losses. The digital realm has altered the temporality and visibility of grief, enabling ongoing communication and memorialization that extends beyond traditional boundaries.

In professional settings, the effect of death on interpersonal communication is evident in how colleagues and supervisors respond to the grieving process. Individuals may navigate conversations about the deceased in the workplace, addressing the emotional impact on team dynamics, and finding ways to support grieving colleagues. The language and gestures used in these interactions reflect the workplace culture and the organization's approach to acknowledging and accommodating the grieving process.

Therefore, the effect of death on interpersonal communication is a deeply intricate and multifaceted phenomenon that spans the personal, social, cultural, and professional dimensions of human life (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024b). From the immediate aftermath of a loss to the enduring impact on relationships and cultural practices, the ways individuals communicate about death reveal the profound and enduring nature of the grieving process. Recognizing the diverse ways in which death shapes interpersonal

communication is crucial for fostering empathy, providing support, and acknowledging the intricate tapestry of human experiences in the face of mortality.

2.3 Effect of death on teens and people in early twenties

The effect of death on teens and individuals in their early twenties is a unique and complex experience marked by the intersection of developmental, emotional, and social factors. During this critical stage of life, characterized by identity formation and the pursuit of independence, the impact of death can be particularly profound, shaping individuals' understanding of mortality, relationships, and personal resilience (Usman et al., 2022). The death of a peer, family member, or close friend during adolescence and early adulthood can significantly influence identity development (Keenan, 2014). Teens and young adults are in the process of forming their sense of self, and the loss of someone close challenges their perceptions of life and mortality. The grieving process may prompt introspection, questioning, and reevaluation of personal values and aspirations, potentially altering the trajectory of identity development.

The emotional impact of death on teens and young adults is substantial, encompassing a range of emotions from grief and sadness to anger and confusion. The intensity of these emotions may be heightened by the still-developing emotional regulation skills characteristic of this age group. Coping with the loss may involve navigating a rollercoaster of emotions, affecting interpersonal relationships and communication as individuals seek support or grapple with the complexities of expressing their feelings (Kuntz, 2019; Yar'Adua et al., 2023). Death within the peer group can have a profound effect on the dynamics of friendships and social circles. The loss may lead to a heightened awareness of mortality, fostering a sense of vulnerability among peers. Interpersonal communication becomes a crucial tool for processing the shared grief, supporting each other, and navigating the challenges of discussing a topic often considered taboo among young people.

The death of a family member during adolescence or early adulthood disrupts family dynamics and communication patterns. It may prompt open conversations about mortality, the fragility of life, and the importance of familial bonds. Alternatively, family members may grapple with their grief individually, impacting the overall communication climate within the family unit. Meshot and Leitner (2013) argued that the effect of death on teens and young adults may extend to their educational experiences. Grieving individuals may find it challenging to concentrate on academic pursuits, leading to potential declines in performance. Educational institutions, teachers, and peers play a vital role in providing support and understanding, which may involve adapting communication strategies to accommodate the grieving process.

Adolescents and young adults may develop varied coping mechanisms in response to death, influencing their interpersonal communication styles. Some individuals may seek solace in social connections, expressing their grief openly and relying on friends and family for support (Yar'Adua et al., 2023). Others may adopt more internalized coping strategies, processing their emotions more privately. These coping mechanisms, in turn, shape how individuals communicate about the loss and their needs for support. The developmental stage of adolescence and early adulthood also introduces a potential vulnerability to complicated grief reactions. The impact of death during this period may contribute to prolonged and intense grieving processes, affecting mental health and well-being. Effective communication, both within personal networks and with mental health professionals, becomes crucial in identifying and addressing signs of complicated grief (Yar'Adua et al., 2021).

While the effect of death on teens and young adults can be challenging, it also presents an opportunity for the development of resilience. Navigating the complexities of grief during this formative period can contribute to the cultivation of coping skills, emotional intelligence, and an increased capacity for empathy. Interpersonal communication, particularly within support networks, plays a vital role in this process, offering a space for shared experiences, mutual understanding, and the gradual formation of resilience in the face of loss. Thus, the effect of death on teens and individuals in their early twenties is a multifaceted journey that encompasses emotional, social, and developmental dimensions. Understanding the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the grieving process during this critical stage of life is essential for providing meaningful support and fostering healthy communication patterns in the face of loss.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study employed the theoretical postulation of Attachment Theory. Attachment theory, proposed by John Bowlby and expanded by Mary Ainsworth, explores how early relationships with caregivers influence emotional and social development. In the context of your study, attachment theory could help understand how the loss of a significant person during the formative years might impact attachment styles and subsequent interpersonal communication patterns. Individuals with secure or insecure attachment may demonstrate different responses to death and grief, affecting their communication with others (Oreoluwa et al., 2024).

Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and later expanded upon by Mary Ainsworth, provides a valuable framework for understanding how individuals form emotional bonds and the impact of these bonds on their interpersonal relationships. Attachment theory posits those early relationships, especially those with primary caregivers, shape individuals' internal working models of relationships, influencing their expectations, behaviors, and emotional responses in subsequent relationships throughout life (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 2022).

In the context of the effect of death on interpersonal communication, attachment theory sheds light on how individuals may respond to loss and navigate grief based on their attachment styles. Securely attached individuals, who have experienced consistent and responsive caregiving in their formative years, tend to have more adaptive coping mechanisms when faced with the death of a loved one. They may seek support from others, express their emotions openly, and engage in effective communication to process their grief.

Conversely, individuals with insecure attachment styles, such as anxious or avoidant attachments, may exhibit different patterns of communication in the aftermath of death. Anxiously attached individuals, often fearing abandonment, might seek excessive reassurance and closeness, possibly leading to intensified and emotionally charged communication (Vitalis et al., 2023). Avoidantly attached individuals, on the other hand, may withdraw or downplay their emotions, finding it challenging to express vulnerability. Both patterns could impact interpersonal communication and complicate the grieving process (Msughter et al., 2022).

Moreover, the loss of an attachment figure can activate attachment-related dynamics within relationship. Survivors may experience a heightened need for connection or, conversely, struggle with the fear of losing others. Understanding the attachment dynamics can provide insight into how individuals navigate grief, approach communication about the death, and seek or avoid support from their social networks. The attachment theory offers a nuanced perspective on how early attachment experiences influence individuals' responses

to death and subsequent interpersonal communication (Aondover et al., 2022). By recognizing the diverse ways people may express grief based on their attachment styles, professionals and support networks can tailor communication strategies to better assist individuals in processing the effects of death on their relationships.

III. Research Methods

This study adopted the constructivism approach of research design, which believes in qualitative method. Based on the design, in-depth interview was employed. The data collection was conducted from September 07, 2023 to February 18, 2024, from selected teenagers in Lagos, Nigeria within their early twenties. The population of this work consists of the selected teenagers residing in Abule-Egba, Ogba and Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria within their early twenties. Purposive sampling methods was used to select the participants for the study which consist of fifteen (15) teenagers residing in Abule-Egba, Ogba and Oshodi. The method of data presentation was interpretative analysis based on the interview questions.

IV. Conclusion

The respondents for this study are selected teenagers in Lagos, Nigeria within their early twenties. They were carefully selected to ensure data used for the study is of high standards.

4.1 How does the experience of death influence the communication patterns of teens and individuals in their early twenties?

The experience of death can profoundly influence the communication patterns of teens and individuals in their early twenties in various ways. This impact can be seen in their verbal and non-verbal communication, emotional expressions, social interactions, and coping mechanisms. The experience of death significantly shapes the communication patterns of teens and young adults, influencing their emotional expression, social interactions, and coping mechanisms. Understanding these changes is crucial for providing appropriate support and fostering healthy communication during such a challenging period. Providing safe spaces for expression, encouraging open conversations, and offering professional support when needed can help these individuals navigate their grief and develop resilience.

A teenager in Lagos, identified what could be the role social and cultural factors play in shaping the communication patterns of teens and individuals in their early twenties following the death of a peer, family member, or friend.

Social and cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the communication patterns of teens and individuals in their early twenties following the death of a peer, family member, or friend. These factors influence how young people express grief, seek support, and cope with loss. Different cultures have specific rituals and practices for mourning and honoring the deceased, which can guide how young people communicate about their loss. For instance, some cultures might encourage open expression of grief and communal mourning, while others may emphasize stoicism and private mourning (TF1).

In today's digital age, social media plays a pivotal role in how young people communicate about death. They may use these platforms to share tributes, memories, and to seek support, influenced by the norms and behaviors of their online communities. Society's overall attitude toward death and mourning can affect how comfortable young people feel discussing their grief. In societies where death is openly acknowledged, there

might be more resources and support available. In some cases, the cause of death (such as suicide or overdose) can carry stigma, affecting how young people communicate about their loss and seek support.

Another respondent also gave his piece when asked in your opinion, how does the experience of death impact the way young people in their teens and early twenties express their emotions and feelings, both verbally and non-verbally?

In my opinion, this impact can be observed in several distinct ways: Many young people feel an intensified need to talk about their emotions and the deceased. They might seek out conversations with trusted friends, family members, or counselors to process their grief. They may use metaphors, euphemisms, and stories to articulate their feelings about death, as these can sometimes make discussing such a difficult topic more manageable. Some might become very open and candid about their grief, using detailed descriptions of their feelings and experiences, while others might struggle with verbal expression and provide minimal responses or vague descriptions (TM1).

Participating in or creating online memorials and tribute pages can be a significant way for them to express their feelings and keep the memory of the deceased alive. The cultural background of young individuals plays a crucial role in how they express grief. Some cultures encourage open expression of sorrow and communal mourning, while others may promote a more reserved approach. The reactions and support from peers can significantly affect how young people express their grief. Positive reinforcement from friends can encourage more open communication, while a lack of understanding can lead to further withdrawal. The experience of death can significantly alter the emotional and communicative landscape for young people. It can lead to a wide range of expressions, both verbal and non-verbal, influenced by personal, cultural, and social factors. Understanding these variations is essential for providing appropriate support and fostering an environment where young individuals feel safe to express their grief in ways that are meaningful and healing for them.

4.2 What role does grief play in shaping the dynamics of interpersonal communication during the grieving process?

Grief significantly influences the dynamics of interpersonal communication during the grieving process. The way individuals communicate with each other during this time can be profoundly affected by their emotional states, the need for support, and the social and cultural contexts in which they are grieving. Grief often brings heightened emotions such as sadness, anger, guilt, and confusion. These intense feelings can lead to more emotionally charged conversations, where individuals may express themselves more openly or, conversely, struggle to articulate their thoughts. People may become more vulnerable and open about their feelings, seeking comfort and understanding from others. This can lead to deeper, more intimate conversations that might not occur under normal circumstances. Grieving individuals often seek reassurance and empathy from their social circle. This need for support can strengthen relationships as people come together to provide comfort and share memories. There may be an increased dependency on close friends and family members for emotional support, leading to more frequent and meaningful interactions.

A teenager identified how grief impacts the way individuals communicate with their support networks, such as family, friends, or counselors, as they navigate through the grieving process?

A primary Grief significantly impacts the way individuals communicate with their support networks, such as family, friends, or counselors, as they navigate through the

grieving process. Individuals often turn to their support networks for comfort and understanding. This can lead to more frequent and emotionally intense conversations where they express their sorrow, fears, and memories of the deceased. Grief can break down usual social barriers, leading to more open and honest communication (TM2).

Another respondent also gave his piece when asked similar question

The dynamics within relationships may shift, with some people stepping into more supportive roles while others may become more dependent. Grief can make individuals more emotionally vulnerable, leading to raw and unfiltered communication. They might share their deepest fears, regrets, and hopes with their support networks. This period can foster authentic connections, as people are often more honest about their feelings and needs during grief, seeking genuine understanding and empathy. Individuals in grief might be more sensitive to the words and actions of their support networks, which can lead to conflicts or feelings of isolation if not handled with care (TF2).

Another respondent also gave his piece when asked “In your experience or observations, how does the expression of grief vary across different cultural or social contexts, and how does this influence the dynamics of interpersonal communication during the grieving process?”

my experience and observations of grief vary significantly across different cultural and social contexts, profoundly influencing the dynamics of interpersonal communication during the grieving process. In some cultures, grief is expressed openly and publicly, with rituals and ceremonies that encourage vocal expressions of sorrow, communal mourning, and physical displays of grief. For example, in many Mediterranean cultures, it is common to have public displays of mourning. In contrast, cultures that value stoicism and emotional restraint, such as some East Asian cultures, may encourage more subdued and private expressions of grief. Cultural rituals surrounding death, such as funerals, memorials, and mourning periods, dictate how grief is expressed. These practices can provide structured ways for individuals to communicate their grief and receive support, fostering a shared understanding and communal support system.

(TM3)

Another respondent also gave his piece when asked “In your experience or observations, how does the expression of grief vary across different cultural or social contexts, and how does this influence the dynamics of interpersonal communication during the grieving process?”

In many societies, gender roles can influence how grief is expressed. Men might be expected to be strong and stoic, while women may have more social permission to openly express their sorrow. This can affect interpersonal communication, as individuals navigate these expectations within their support networks.

Older generations might adhere more closely to traditional expressions of grief, while younger generations may blend these traditions with more contemporary practices, such as using social media to mourn and remember the deceased.

Religious beliefs play a significant role in shaping grief expression. For instance, in Christianity, expressions of hope and faith in an afterlife may be emphasized, while in Buddhism, the focus might be on acceptance and the impermanence of life. These

beliefs influence how individuals communicate their grief and seek solace within their religious communities (TF4).

Another respondent also gave his piece when asked “In your experience or observations, how does the expression of grief vary across different cultural or social contexts, and how does this influence the dynamics of interpersonal communication during the grieving process?”.

Religious rituals, such as prayer services, mourning periods, and memorials, provide structured ways for expressing grief and receiving communal support, shaping how individuals communicate and process their loss. In some cultures, grief is a communal experience where the entire community comes together to support the bereaved. This can lead to more collective forms of communication, with shared rituals and public displays of mourning, strengthening social bonds and providing a sense of solidarity. Societies with a more individualistic orientation might focus on personal grief journeys and private expressions of sorrow, while collectivist societies emphasize shared experiences and communal support, influencing how grief is communicated and processed (TM4).

In cultures where open expression of grief is encouraged, interpersonal communication during the grieving process can become more empathetic and supportive. People feel more comfortable sharing their feelings, leading to deeper emotional connections and mutual support. In multicultural contexts, differing grief expressions can lead to misunderstandings. For example, a person from a culture that values private grieving might be perceived as detached or unemotional by someone from a culture that practices open mourning, affecting interpersonal dynamics. Individuals may struggle to balance their personal grief expression with cultural or social expectations, impacting their communication with others. This can lead to internal conflicts and affect how they seek and receive support. The expression of grief varies widely across cultural and social contexts, shaping the dynamics of interpersonal communication during the grieving process. Understanding these cultural and social nuances is crucial for providing appropriate support and fostering effective communication. By being aware of and respectful towards different grief expressions, individuals and communities can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for those navigating the complex journey of grief.

4.3 How do cultural and societal factors contribute to the communication strategies employed by young individuals dealing with death?

Cultural and societal factors play a significant role in shaping the communication strategies that young individuals employ when dealing with death. These factors influence not only the language and rituals associated with mourning but also the psychological and emotional processes through which young people navigate their grief. Different cultures have specific rituals and practices related to death and mourning, which provide a framework for young people to express their grief. For example, some cultures have elaborate ceremonies that help individuals process their emotions, while others may have more subdued or private mourning practices. The way grief is communicated varies widely. In some cultures, open expressions of sorrow, such as crying and wailing, are common and accepted, while in others, maintaining composure and restraint is valued. This influences how young individuals feel they can or should express their emotions. Societal expectations regarding whether grief should be expressed publicly or privately can significantly affect young people. In societies where public displays of grief are accepted

or even encouraged, young individuals may feel more supported and less isolated in their mourning process.

4.4 A teenager in Lagos, identified how cultural and societal factors contribute to the communication strategies employed by young individuals dealing with death?

In some cultures, discussing death and grief openly may be considered taboo. This can lead to young individuals feeling isolated or unable to express their feelings, potentially exacerbating their grief and hindering their ability to seek support. Family structure and dynamics play a crucial role. In collectivist cultures where family ties are strong, young people might find comfort and guidance from their extended family network. In contrast, in more individualistic cultures, they might rely more on friends or professional counselors. How different generations within a family handle grief can influence young people's communication strategies. If older generations model open and supportive grieving practices, younger individuals may feel more empowered to express their own grief. Religious and spiritual beliefs about the afterlife can provide comfort and a sense of continuity, influencing how young people talk about death. For instance, beliefs in reincarnation or heaven can frame death in a less final and more hopeful context (TF5).

4.5 Another respondent also gave his piece

The role of religious communities can also be vital, providing structured support and a sense of belonging that helps young individuals navigate their grief. The rise of social media has changed how young people communicate about death, allowing for public expressions of grief and support networks that transcend geographical boundaries. Online memorials, tributes, and grief support groups can provide young people with additional platforms to express and process their emotions. Media exposure to different cultural practices around death can broaden young individuals' understanding and acceptance of diverse ways of grieving, potentially influencing their own communication strategies. The role of educational institutions in providing resources and support for grieving students can shape how young people communicate about death. Programs and counseling services that address grief can normalize these conversations and provide essential support. The availability of peer support groups within educational settings can also influence how young individuals communicate about and process their grief (TM5).

Cultural and societal factors deeply influence the communication strategies that young individuals employ when dealing with death. Understanding these influences can help in providing more effective support and creating environments that respect diverse grieving processes. By acknowledging and integrating these cultural and societal nuances, caregivers, educators, and peers can better assist young people in navigating their grief.

A teenager, identified how cultural and societal norms influence the ways young individuals communicate about death and grief, both within their own cultural communities and in broader society.

Cultural and societal norms significantly influence how young individuals communicate about death and grief, both within their cultural communities and in broader society. These norms shape the language, behaviors, and support systems available to them, impacting their ability to process and express their emotions. Each culture has its own set of terms and phrases used to talk about death and grief. These can range from euphemisms that soften the harshness of death to more direct

expressions. The language used can either facilitate or hinder open communication about loss (TM6).

Cultural norms dictate how emotions related to grief are expressed. In some cultures, outward displays of emotion such as crying or wailing are expected and accepted, while in others, maintaining composure and not showing grief publicly is valued. Young individuals learn these norms and often adhere to them in their expressions of grief. Specific mourning rituals, such as funerals, wakes, or memorial services, provide structured ways for individuals to express grief. Participation in these rituals can offer a sense of community and support, helping young people navigate their emotions. Practices such as wearing specific colors, observing periods of mourning, or engaging in commemorative activities are influenced by cultural norms. These practices provide a framework for expressing and dealing with grief. The role of family in the grieving process varies across cultures. In some cultures, family members play a central role in providing support and guiding young individuals through their grief. In others, there may be an expectation to deal with grief more independently.

Another respondent

The level of community involvement in the grieving process also varies. In tightly-knit communities, there may be a collective effort to support the bereaved, while in more individualistic cultures, support may come from a smaller, more private circle (TM7).

Another respondent

Societal norms determine whether grief is considered a private matter or something that can be shared publicly. In societies where public expressions of grief are normalized, young individuals might feel more comfortable sharing their feelings openly. In contrast, in societies where grief is seen as a private affair, they might struggle to find appropriate outlets for their emotions (TF7).

Awareness of cultural diversity can also foster more sensitive and inclusive conversations about grief in broader society. Institutions such as schools and workplaces that acknowledge and respect cultural differences in grieving practices can provide better support to young individuals. Schools and universities that provide education on death, dying, and grief can help young people develop a more nuanced understanding of these experiences. Programs that include cultural perspectives on grief can be particularly beneficial. Access to culturally competent counseling services can greatly influence how young individuals process and communicate about grief. Counselors who understand and respect cultural norms can provide more effective support.

Cultural and societal norms deeply influence how young individuals communicate about death and grief, shaping their experiences and expressions within their cultural communities and in broader society. By understanding these influences, caregivers, educators, and support networks can better assist young people in navigating their grief, ensuring that their cultural and personal needs are met.

4.6 To what extent does the type of relationship with the deceased influence the communication styles and coping mechanisms of young individuals?

The type of relationship with the deceased significantly influences the communication styles and coping mechanisms of young individuals. The nature of this relationship can affect the intensity of grief, the ways in which grief is expressed, and the strategies employed to cope with the loss. Losing a parent is often one of the most profound losses for young individuals. This type of loss can lead to intense grief and a

deep sense of instability. Communication styles may include frequent emotional expressions such as crying, talking about memories, and seeking comfort from other family members and close friends. Coping mechanisms might involve seeking out parental figures, engaging in activities that maintain a connection to the deceased parent (e.g., continuing family traditions), and attending grief counseling or support groups.

The intensity or closeness of the relationship with the deceased significantly impacts the communication styles and coping mechanisms employed by young individuals during the grieving process. Closer relationships, such as those with parents, siblings, or close friends, often lead to more intense and frequent expressions of grief. Young individuals in these situations are likely to communicate openly about their feelings, share memories, and seek support from family, close friends, or professional counselors. They may engage in personal rituals, such as continuing traditions or preserving mementos, to maintain a connection to the deceased (TF8).

The death of a grandparent can be deeply impactful, especially if the grandparent was a significant part of the young individual's life. Communication about the loss might involve recounting fond memories and family stories, often within the context of family gatherings. Coping mechanisms might include visiting the grandparent's grave, keeping mementos, and talking to other family members who share similar memories.

4.7 Discussion of Findings

The rise of social media has created new public spaces for expressing grief. Young individuals often turn to platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to share memories, express sorrow, and receive support from a wider community. This can help bridge the gap between private and public mourning. Societal attitudes towards mental health can influence how openly young people talk about their grief. In societies where mental health issues are stigmatized, young individuals might be less likely to seek help or talk about their grief for fear of being judged. In societies where grief and loss are openly discussed and normalized, young individuals are more likely to feel validated in their experiences and more willing to seek support. Young individuals in multicultural societies may be exposed to diverse ways of dealing with death and grief. This exposure can broaden their understanding and acceptance of different grieving processes, influencing how they communicate about their own grief.

The study discovered that the impact of losing extended family members like aunts, uncles, or cousins can vary widely based on the closeness of the relationship. Communication might be less frequent but still significant, often involving family discussions and shared stories. Coping mechanisms might include engaging in family support networks and participating in family rituals.

It was unraveled during the study that losing a close friend can be as devastating as losing a family member, especially during formative years. Communication about this loss often involves talking with mutual friends, sharing memories, and expressing emotions in peer support groups. Coping mechanisms can include continuing activities or hobbies they enjoyed together, creating memorials (such as social media

The death of an acquaintance or classmate might lead to a different type of grief, often characterized by a mix of shock and empathy. Communication might be less personal but can involve participating in school-wide or community memorials. Coping mechanisms might include writing condolences, attending memorial services, and engaging in reflective activities. The loss of a romantic partner can be particularly traumatic for young individuals, often leading to intense emotional pain and feelings of future uncertainty. Communication about this loss might involve confiding in close friends,

family, or counselors. Coping mechanisms can include preserving shared mementos, participating in activities that honor the partner's memory, and seeking professional grief counseling.

The death of an ex-partner can bring complex emotions, including unresolved issues and mixed feelings of grief and guilt. Communication might involve talking with friends who understand the history of the relationship. Coping mechanisms might include reflective journaling, talking through emotions with a therapist, and finding ways to achieve closure. The death of a mentor, such as a teacher or coach, can significantly impact a young person's sense of guidance and support. Communication about this loss might involve discussions with peers who were also mentored by the deceased. Coping mechanisms can include dedicating achievements to the mentor's memory, participating in memorial events, and seeking new mentorship relationships.

The intensity and style of grief expression often correlate with the closeness and nature of the relationship. The closer the relationship, the more intense and frequent the grief expressions might be. Young individuals might openly share their feelings, cry, or seek constant reassurance from others.

The study opined that engaging in personal rituals and activities that were shared with the deceased is a common coping mechanism across all types of relationships. The form and frequency of these rituals can vary based on the closeness of the relationship. It also discovered that the need for professional help, such as grief counseling, can be more pronounced in cases of profound losses like the death of a parent, sibling, or romantic partner.

V. Conclusion

The study concludes that the death of a significant person profoundly impacts the interpersonal communication and coping mechanisms of teens and individuals in their early twenties. Young individuals exhibit diverse communication responses to grief, ranging from increased openness and the need for emotional sharing to withdrawal and internal processing of grief. The closeness of the relationship with the deceased plays a critical role in the intensity and nature of grief communication. Closer relationships typically lead to more intense grief and frequent discussions about the deceased, while less close relationships result in more situational grief expressions. Peer support emerges as a crucial factor in helping young individuals navigate their grief. Additionally, professional help, such as counseling and support groups, is sought more frequently in cases of profound losses. Experiencing loss can lead to the development of more mature and empathetic communication skills over time. However, the extent of long-term adaptation varies among individuals, with some developing strong coping mechanisms and others facing prolonged challenges.

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