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PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF EXPERIENCES SUDDEN LOSS OF A CLOSE PERSON

Abstract. The article focuses on changes in people's mental state during the period of death of a loved one, taking into account age and gender. To this end, the analysis of recent research and publications on the mental state of a person experiencing grief due to the loss of a loved one, analyzed and highlighted the content of various changes in human life due to such loss, formed a research hypothesis and developed an author's questionnaire to verify its validity. The questionnaire was developed based on the assumption that respondents who have experienced the sudden loss of a loved one will be divided into two groups: the first - those experiencing complicated grief, and the second - those who have experienced loss in the normal mode. In this case, the type of grief is to some extent determined by time and depth of experience, and these criteria are not crucial in the empirical study of the complicated experience of a sudden loss of a loved one. Thus, in the study of the psychological characteristics of the experience of a sudden loss of a loved one, the criteria of complicated and average experience were chosen. The results of the empirical study presented in the article indicate the presence of insignificant differences in the experience of a sudden loss of a relative by respondents of different age groups and the dominance of complicated experience in female respondents. It is also emphasized that the outlined issues require a comprehensive and multilevel study of the impact of sudden death on the individual's psychological state, as this issue is complex in its structure. It is concluded that the criteria selected for the study are only part of the system and do not allow to form a holistic picture and indicate the feasibility of distinguishing respondents by the role of the deceased in the respondent's life and direct relationship to it.

Keywords: loss, psychological crisis, death, experience, emotion.

The importance of the research problem. Death is a part of human life. It is a cause of stress for people of all ages, genders, social statuses. The death of loved ones, especially sudden and premature, is a shock. The degree of the trauma of sudden death of a loved one is highly individual, so the manifestations of the experience can vary significantly - from apathy to depression and the desire to commit suicide. Accordingly, there are destructive changes in a person's mental health that affect various aspects of life.

Analysis of recent research and publications. A person's mental state problems experiencing grief due to losing a loved one were examined by well-known local and foreign scientists:

D. Bowlby, F.E. Vasilyuk, E. Kubler-Ross, K.U. Perrish-Harra, V.Yu. Sidorova, B.A. Smirnov, N.V. Tarabrina and others. Z. Freud and I. Yalom thoroughly investigated psychological trauma. In local psychology, these studies were actively developed by Academician T.S. Yatsenko.

The purpose of the study is to identify and characterize the psychological features of experiencing the sudden loss of a loved one.

Presentation of the primary material. The phenomenon of loss is characterized as an event that has a significant impact on the physical and mental health of the individual at a particular stage of life, generating complex psychological changes that

occur in the planes of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral spheres. A new psychological reality is formed for the individual, which determines psychological adaptation in new, often radically revised, conditions of existence [2].

Grief involves internal and external regulation that a person must feel after a loss, with specific individual duration and intensity, depending on internal and external factors. Changes take place gradually. The external manifestations of

mourning determine the meaningful content of internal experiences, including the course of the experience of grief, which has external manifestations and causes the course of mourning. The process of experiencing loss proceeds in the same way and is considered by different theoreticians as stages, phases, and tasks. Define the main phases - shock and denial, awareness, disorganization, search for new meaning, reorganization [6].

Unbelief/denial and numbness	Anger	Feelings of guilt
Depression and sadness	Internal disorder and disorientation	Fear of losing another loved one
Flashbacks	Attitude to death	Sleep

Fig. 1. Changes in human life because of experiencing the sudden loss of a loved one

The experience of loss is one of the acute crises in life, which significantly impacts health for most people. Providing qualified care in the event of a sudden loss is one of the priority areas of palliative care, including caring both for the patient’s body after his death and psychological assistance to relatives and friends of the deceased [1].

The period of severe loss is considered the time of experiencing the death of a loved one, and grief is a reaction to the anguish and torment that arise after death. Experiencing grief is a transitional process during which people adapt to the reality of loss and learn to

live without a dead loved one. Grief is not just an emotional experience; it highlights behavioral, cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual aspects. Thus, grief requires a holistic approach.

The child’s general psycho-emotional state at the time of death of a loved one and after it depends on the behavior of the reference environment. Emotional suffering between children is not as pronounced and prolonged as between adults. In case of the sudden death of a parent, children feel deeply unhappy if they do not see the suffering of a living adult. They need physical intimacy and emotional support, the

confidence that someone who understands them and feels similar or identical emotions. The child can take the deceased's belongings with him to bed. Often a child is afraid to leave one of his parents alive: it seems to him that he will also die alone [8].

In the study of psychological features of experiencing the sudden loss of a loved one, it is advisable to differentiate children and adults because they react differently and have different mental and social development, which causes significant differences in response to traumatic situations [5].

Table 1. Meaningful characteristics of the types of changes in human life due to the experience of a sudden loss of a loved one

Name of change	Characteristics of change
Unbelief/denial and numbness	As soon as a person learns about the sudden death of a loved one, he/she often reacts with such statements: "It must be a mistake! Cannot be!". In this case, a person should not believe in the fact of death because this unbelief makes his/her life restrained. After a few hours or days, he/she realizes that the loved one has died on an intellectual level but may continue to accept this fact. Such a person may feel trapped, moving, and living as if in a dream. At this point, he/she is experiencing grief, shock. The person prefers to separate himself from the events, thus suppressing his/her physical and psychological state to avoid "emotional death." Avoiding current traumatic emotions can be a reason to deny the loss of a loved one
Anger	A loved one had to live, enjoy life, and had to have more time. With the fact of death, hopes for the implementation of plans are going to dash. As a result, death becomes more tragic. Perceptions of life are changing dramatically. The formed system of beliefs is destroyed, which leads to the dominance of anger. Anger is a logical and natural component of grief
Feelings of guilt	The feeling of guilt - the whole range of emotions and experiences, is the most common in a situation of sudden loss. It often is felt by people who are involved in the death of a loved one. The fault may arise from entirely different sources for different reasons. "People can identify a large number of reasons that make them feel guilty."
Depression and sadness	In a situation of experiencing loss, a person understands that the loss is real and irreversible, so that he/she may fall into a state of deep depression or severe sadness. A person usually feels loss, loneliness, and hopelessness. He/she may also feel remorse, regret, sorrow, constantly scrolling through the situation and analyzing what could be done differently. The person may also feel guilty for living and no longer dead. This sadness takes away almost all energy, so there is very little energy left for homework or business outside the home. Such people often cry a lot, even over every little thing, all the time.

Table 1 (continued)

Internal disorder and disorientation	One cannot concentrate on daily worries and basic needs. Things that used to be important are losing priority.
Fear of losing another loved one	Having lost the loved one, one is afraid of losing another because anything can happen to anyone. Such people are afraid that before they can cope with the death, they will have to try to cope with the death of another relative or friend. Often such people become more strict, do not let children walk, or do not allow anyone to do anything. Usually, after a while, this fear passes, as it arises immediately after the death of a loved one, and then gradually recedes, it is replaced by other emotions and experiences, and being too irrational, it recedes into the background and then disappears completely.
Flashbacks	Flashbacks are a return to past emotionally charged significant events, which are often negative. It can be expressed in the form of memories or nightmares (when a person screams at night, wakes up, this can be repeated several times a night)
Attitude to death	Death is often taken seriously by people as an injustice. Furthermore, of course, it is not easy to find any logic in this event. Depending on death and religious knowledge, death can be perceived to range from a wholly mystical and mysterious state of which nothing is known to the fact that it is a fact that is only slightly confusing because most of its aspects are understood and accepted by man, of course, is within its understanding and concept
Sleep	When experiencing a sudden loss, sleep is a particular area, vital and significant. The sleep of most people who experience grief is not restless. They often have nightmares that complicate the process of experiencing loss. First, such a person physically feels terrible because he/she does not regain strength during the night, which and so, in general, is not enough. Secondly, he is very emotionally involved in the death of a loved one, which complicates the process of experience and prolongs it. If the person himself was injured, say, in an accident, but survived, then his wounds or fractures, while healing, will act as a constant reminder, reminiscent of the death of a loved one

In connection with the death of a loved one, people demonstrate emotional shock with numbness and "fossilization" or anxiety, crying, sleep disturbances, appetite, narrowing of consciousness on traumatic experiences, constant memories of the deceased, mental anguish, and so on. With such

symptoms, patients who face the death of loved ones often turn to psychiatrists and psychotherapists.

The reaction to the loss of a loved one is a specific mental process that develops according to its laws. This period of life, accompanied by mourning, unique attributes, and rituals,

has an essential task - adapting the subject who suffered the loss to the "new" life, life without the deceased.

Detailed characteristics of the identified changes are presented in Table 1.

In order to characterize the basic features of experiencing the sudden loss of a loved one by study participants, it was essential to determine the fundamental difficulties they encountered

during suffering, as well as the current state in which the respondent is at the time of the study, and a specialized questionnaire was used.

The questionnaire was developed based on a specialized interview of the same name, developed by O.A. Buryk. This interview was conducted with 30 respondents as part of a dissertation study and confirmed its informativeness.

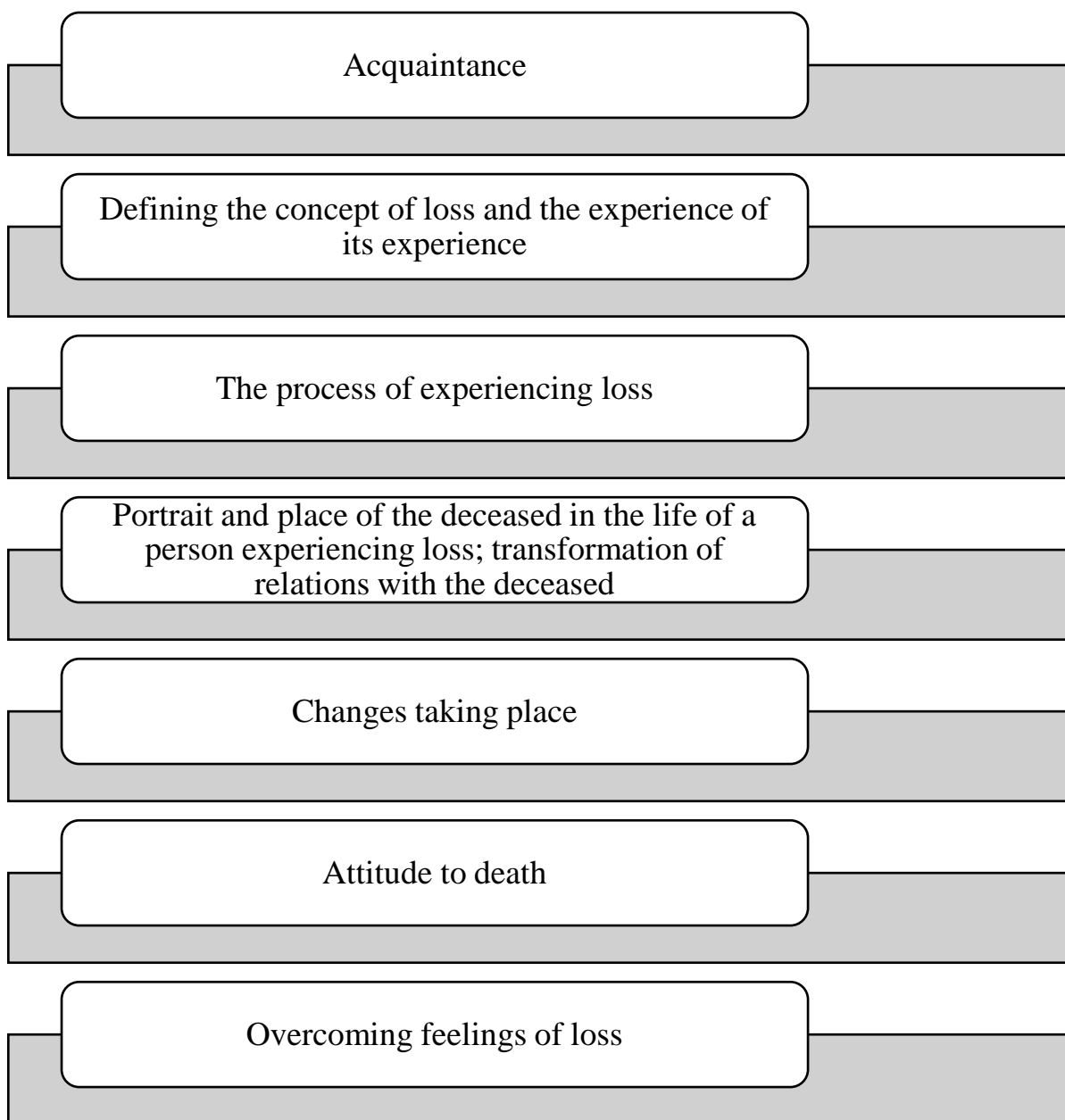


Fig. 2. Semantic blocks of the author's questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 32 questions divided into seven main

blocks. In addition, there is one indoor unit ("suddenness"), designed for those

subjects who are experiencing or have experienced the sudden death of a loved one (Fig. 2).

The first block of questions is designed to collect general information about the respondent - to differentiate the sample by age and gender.

The second block aims to direct the answers in the correct thematic direction settings on current research topics.

The third block aims to identify the main problem areas, thoughts, emotions, feelings, and experiences, which worry the respondent the most. Selected questions in this block provide an opportunity to obtain information about events that occurred and determine the context of the loss (expected and/or sudden (tragic)).

The answers provided by the respondents allow them to identify the current psycho-emotional state and understand the direction of the subject's anger to identify the presence or absence of flashbacks.

The fourth block is devoted to establishing the peculiarities of the attitude to the deceased. The questions are focused on finding out the place of the deceased in the respondent's life, the importance of his person, qualitative characteristics, and the depth of their relationship. The relationship transformation is determined at this stage, including changes in the respondent's external and internal world.

The fifth block records the specific changes that have taken place in the respondent's life after the sudden loss of a loved one and their content, quality, reasons, acceptance, or rejection of these changes. The answer to this question allows one to find out the relevance of various areas in the respondent's life and identify among them problematic.

The sixth block aims to determine the respondent's attitude to death and

consider his/her position on existential and philosophical interpretations of death.

The seventh block indicates intermediate results. The questions of this block allow to find out the peculiarities of the person's social environment, respondent's efforts and actions to optimize the experience of sudden loss, and also help to determine the degree of constructive or destructive experience of loss by the respondent and understand his attitudes to the future.

The additional "Suddenness" block, structurally located between the third and fourth blocks, is used to find out the meaning of the sudden death of the respondent, as well as to distinguish between expected and tragic death.

We hypothesized that respondents who experienced the sudden loss of a loved one would be divided into two groups: the first - those experiencing complicated grief, and the second - those who have experienced loss in the normal mode. At the same time, the type of grief is determined by temporal indicators and depth of experiences, and these criteria are not crucial in the empirical study of the complicated experience of the sudden loss of a loved one. Thus, in studying the psychological characteristics of the experience of the sudden loss of a loved one, we chose the criteria of complicated and ordinary experience.

For the qualitative analysis of psychological features of the experience of the sudden loss of the close person, the following blocks and the questions corresponding to them are applied:

Block 3 "The process of experiencing loss";

Block 4 "Portrait and place of the deceased in the life of a person experiencing loss; transformation of relations with the deceased";

Block 5 "Changes that occur";

Block 7 "Overcoming the feeling of loss."

These blocks were selected based on their informativeness, because thanks to the answers to selected groups of questions, we can note the presence of emotional stress of respondents, focusing on problematic aspects and experiences of loss, manifested in "stuck" at any stage and lack of resources the next stage. Mentioned above directly confirms that experiencing the sudden loss of a loved one, attitudes toward the loss, the deceased, oneself, and immediate changes in the context of the experience of loss and elucidating the tools used by respondents to alleviate intense negative emotional experiences.

Consider the features of experiencing the sudden loss of a loved one in different age groups (Fig. 3).

The peculiarities of the experience of loss in the group of respondents aged 20–30 were distributed so that both the variant of the complicated and the variant of the normal experience of loss amounted to the same percentage, namely - 40%.

As a rule, complications of experiencing loss occur in the presence of certain circumstances:

- conflicts with the deceased, unresolved before his death;
- unfulfilled promises;
- terrible circumstances of a death - violence, suddenness, cruelty, and so on;

- lack of support from loved ones.

Complications of grief may include the following:

- disconnection of emotions and inability to survive the feeling of loss;
- violation of sociality, changing the circle of communication and all communication skills;
- endless longing and inability to think about anything but loss;
- development of psychosomatic diseases resembling the last symptoms of the deceased.

In a sample of 45 years and older, the distribution of the complicated experience of sudden loss was 30% and 40% for the complicated and ordinary experience of loss, respectively. Stated indicates a somewhat contradictory difference in the trends of loss experience in different age groups. The presented number of respondents does not allow the dominance of a complicated type of loss experience in older respondents and is directly in the process of experience. However, it can be assumed that the dynamics will remain with the increase in the number of respondents in the sample.

The obtained indicators can become a priority in determining the personal characteristics of respondents and their impact on the course of the direct experience of feeling lost.

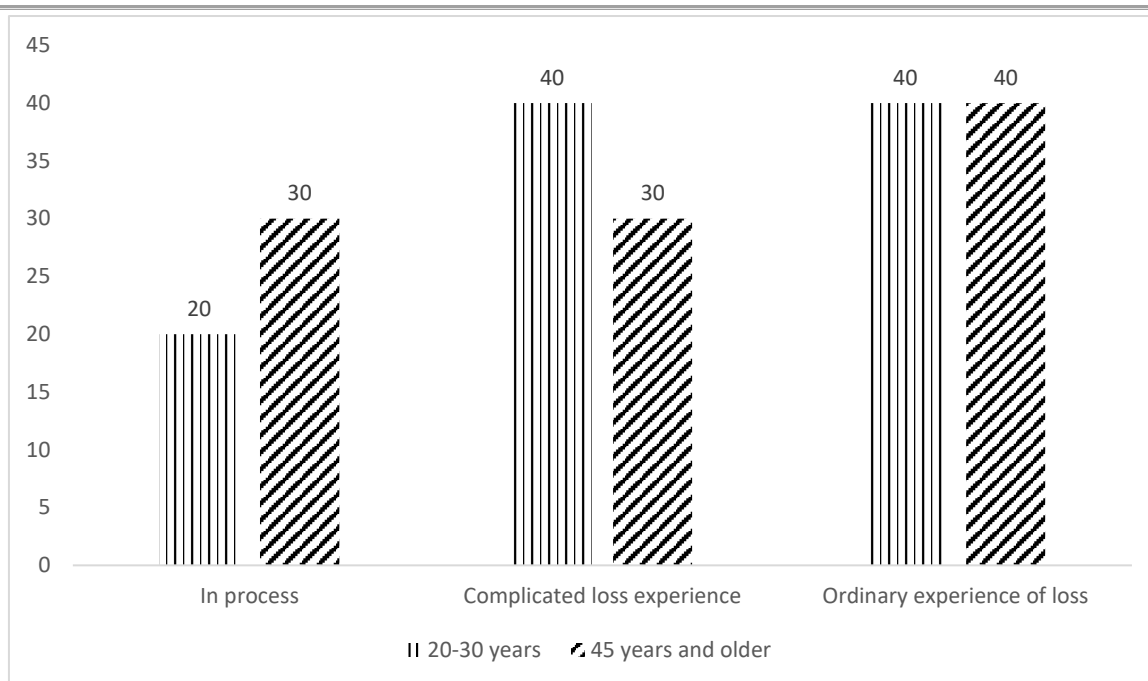


Fig. 3. Distribution of features of the experience of loss in different age groups

The analysis identified a third group of respondents who are in the active process of experiencing a loss (the time since the loss of a loved one in these respondents is about six months, so draw some conclusions about the peculiarities of a sudden loss of a loved one or its complicated version is impractical. This group is represented by the minor respondents (20% and 30%, respectively).

One of the research assumptions was the influence of the context of a sudden loss of a loved one on the characteristics of experience. However, the distribution of different sampling groups with this criterion confirmed that the ratio of groups with complicated and ordinary loss experience, in this case, is approximately the same.

In the group of the expected loss in young people, the distribution of complicated and normal grief was the same - 40%, respondents in the process were 10%. The sample of 45 years and older in this group was divided into 20% (complicated experience of loss), 40% (ordinary experience of loss), and 40% (in progress).

In the group with a sudden experience of loss for young respondents, the distribution of complicated grief was 30%, ordinary - 30%, in the process - 40%. The distribution for 45 years and older was as follows: complicated loss experience - 40%, ordinary loss experience - 50%, in the process - 10%.

Consider the features of experiencing the sudden loss of a loved one in heterosexual groups (Fig. 4).

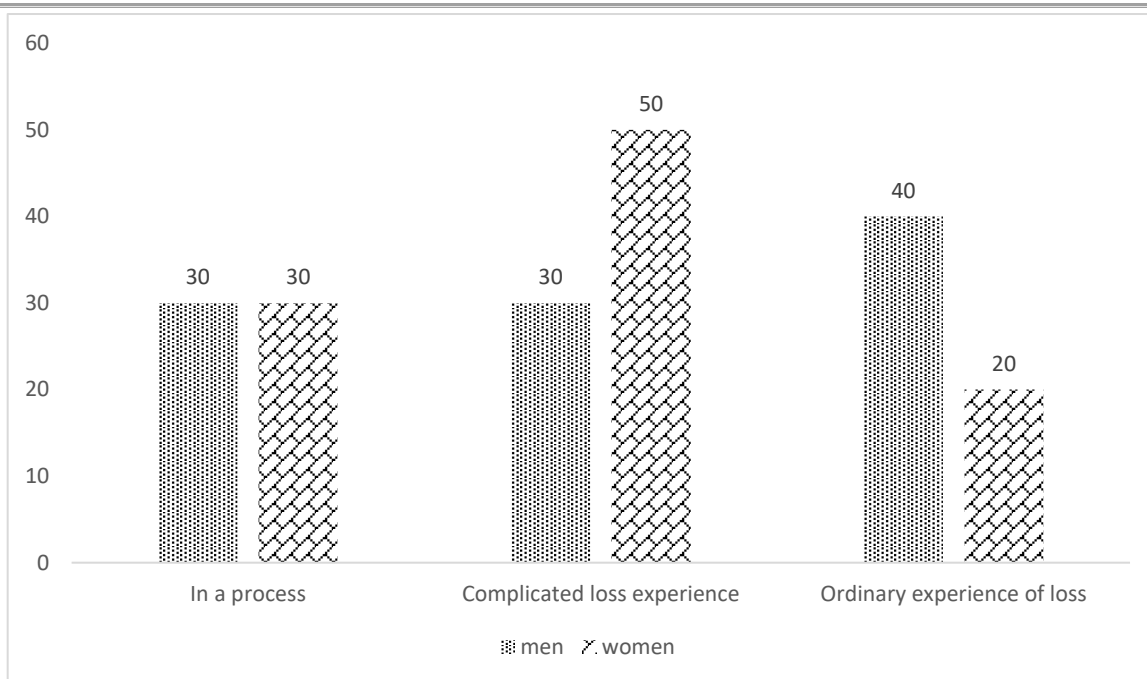


Fig. 4. Distribution of features of loss experience in heterosexual groups

Peculiarities of loss experience in the group of male respondents have distributed in such a way that the variant of ordinary loss experience was 40%, at the same time referring to the loss experienced in the process and complicating the same percentage of respondents by 30%, respectively.

In the female sample, the distribution of the complicated experience of sudden loss was 50%, which is predominant for this group and suggests that women are at a more prolonged stage of living with destructive mental moods.

Conclusions. Given the above, it is worth emphasizing that the outlined issues require a comprehensive and multilevel study of the impact of sudden death on the individual's psychological state, as this issue is complex in its structure. Thus, the selected criteria in this article are only part of the system and do not allow to form a holistic picture. It will be expedient to differentiate between respondents according to the role of the deceased person in the life of the respondent and

direct relation to him/her. Based on the study, we can note insignificant differences in the experience of the sudden loss of a loved one by respondents of different age groups and the dominance of complicated experiences in female respondents.

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ПСИХОЛОГІЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПЕРЕЖИВАННЯ РАПТОВОЇ ВТРАТИ БЛИЗЬКОЇ ЛЮДИНИ

Анотація. У статті акцентовано увагу на зміні психічного стану людей в період переживання смерті близької людини з урахуванням вікового та статевого розподілу. З цією метою проведено аналіз останніх досліджень і публікацій з проблеми психічного стану особи, яка переживає горе через втрату близької людини, проаналізовано та виділено змістовну характеристику різновидів змін в житті людини внаслідок такої втрати, сформовано гіпотезу дослідження та розроблено авторську анкету для перевірки її обґрунтованості. Анкету розроблено виходячи з припущення про те, що респонденти, які мають досвід раптової втрати близької людини, будуть розподілені на дві групи: перша – тих, хто переживає ускладнене горе, і друга – тих, хто пережив втрату в нормальному режимі. При цьому, тип горя в певній мірі обумовлюється часовими показниками і глибиною переживань, дані критерії не є ключовими в емпіричному дослідженні ускладненого переживання раптової втрати близької людини. Таким чином, при дослідженні психологічних особливостей переживання раптової втрати близької

людини було обрано критерії ускладненого і нормального переживання. У представлених в статті результатах емпіричного дослідження зазначено наявність не суттєвих відмінностей у переживанні раптової втрати рідної людини респондентами різних вікових груп та домінування ускладненого переживання у респондентів жіночої статі. Також наголошується, що окреслена проблематика потребує проведення комплексного та багаторівневого дослідження впливу раптової смерті на психологічний стан особистості, оскільки дане питання є складним за своєю структурою. Робиться висновок, що обрані у цілях дослідження критерії є лише частиною системи та не дозволяють сформулювати цілісну картину та вказується на доцільність розмежування респондентів за роллю померлої людини в житті респондента та безпосереднього ставлення до неї.

Ключові слова: втрата, психологічна криза, смерть, переживання, емоція.

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