

# Grieving and coping processes of pet owners: Philippine context

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## Abstract

This paper aims to examine the grieving and coping processes of pet owners in Sariaya, Quezon, Philippines, with a focus on the factors that influence these processes, specifically, posthumous and bonding practices, as well as the role of demographic variables. The study gathered data from fifty-four (54) purposively selected respondents who had experienced the loss of a pet. A descriptive research design was employed, utilizing a survey guided by a researcher-made questionnaire and an interview guide. The collected data were analyzed using ANOVA. The results revealed that not all pet owners experience the same stages of grief; these vary depending on several influencing factors. Posthumous practices such as cremation and taxidermy are still uncommon due to the limited availability of facilities. Moreover, not all pet owners go through all seven stages of grief. However, it was found that all respondents experienced the stages of guilt, depression, loneliness, reflection, and reconstruction. The study concludes that posthumous and bonding practices significantly influence the grieving and coping processes of pet owners. Furthermore, these processes vary according to sex, socioeconomic status, and the cause of the pet's death.

**Keywords:** *pet owners, grieving, coping processes, pet loss, grief, pet attachment*

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## 1. Introduction

Pets are often taken from the wild or domestically raised for the sole purpose of providing companionship to their owners. They help reduce stress and feelings of loneliness, offer emotional support, and foster more social interactions. Additionally, they contribute to a child's healthy emotional development and sense of self (Yu, 2024). The selection of a pet is typically made by one or more individuals who take on the responsibility of caring for the animal throughout its life, regardless of the quality of their efforts. Companion animals usually live in close proximity to their owners, often within the household. The primary purpose of keeping a pet is to offer emotional support and companionship (Merkouri et al., 2022; Brooks et al., 2018; Hoy-Gerlach et al., 2022).

Pet ownership brings numerous benefits. Since pets cannot advocate for themselves, it becomes the responsibility of their owners to speak on their behalf and ensure they receive the necessary care and resources to lead long, healthy lives. Although there are no official statistics, experts estimate that the Philippine pet market is currently valued at around 6 billion PHP or approximately \$108 million USD (Buid, 2023). According to Buid (2023), the Philippines ranks among the top seven countries in the world with the largest dog population, estimated at over 20 million dogs and 8 million cats. In 2021, a year after the COVID-19 crisis began, a study by the iPrice Group (2021) found that Filipinos demonstrated the highest interest in pet ownership across Southeast Asia, with nearly seven million pet-related online searches in September of that year. Further data from Rakuten Insight (2021) indicated that the Philippines has the highest percentage of dog owners in Asia (67%). Moreover, more than four in ten pet owners also have cats, while 10% own birds. A Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey conducted in the first quarter of 2023 reported that 64% of Filipino households own pets, with dogs and cats being the most common, accounting for 78% and 50%, respectively (Marcelino, 2023).

Grief is a complex emotional experience influenced by multiple factors that determine its intensity and duration. The nature of the loss, the individual's relationship with the deceased, and the level of social support received all affect how one experiences grief (Bellet et al., 2018). These same factors are expected to influence grief following the death of a pet, particularly among owners who share a strong emotional bond with their animals. Sudden or accidental deaths, as opposed to those resulting from prolonged illness or natural causes, tend to result in more intense grief and trauma. Given the strong emotional ties people develop with

their pets, an area that has received substantial academic attention, it follows that the loss of a pet can elicit grief reactions similar to those experienced after the death of a human loved one. However, grief following a pet's death is often not acknowledged or validated by others, particularly those who do not own pets (Behler et al., 2020). This lack of social support can invalidate the grieving pet owner's emotions, compounding the distress and lowering their quality of life (O'Dwyer et al., 2019).

While some research has examined pet loss grief, most of it has focused on the emotional effects and the support systems recommended from counseling or social work perspectives. Less attention has been given to exploring the psychological experience in both theoretical and practical terms. Enhancing the understanding of this experience can lead to more effective strategies for alleviating grief. According to Behler et al. (2020), 30% of individuals who recently lost a pet reported experiencing profound sadness. The severity of grief was found to correlate with the strength of the bond between the person and the pet, and whether the animal had been euthanized. Notably, the researchers observed that societal attitudes toward pet loss also influenced grief severity. Because prevailing social norms often discourage extended mourning for pets, individuals may feel compelled to hide or suppress their emotions, for instance, by returning immediately to their regular routines. More than half of the study's participants felt that society did not view pet loss as a valid reason for mourning, although this was measured in the immediate days and weeks following the loss.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the grieving and coping processes of pet owners in Sariaya, Quezon, Philippines. It aims to understand how pet owners manage their grief and adapt after the loss of a beloved animal. The primary objective is to identify these coping mechanisms to inform the development of a targeted intervention, titled the Coping Management Program, which will support pet owners in processing their grief in a healthy and constructive manner.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Posthumous Practices***

An ongoing emotional bond with a deceased pet can trigger somatic symptoms of grief similar to those experienced after the loss of a family member or friend. However, this bond may also reduce loneliness and ease the grieving process. Rituals, memorials, memories, and even dreams serve as coping mechanisms that help maintain attachment and reduce grief

severity (Hughes & Harkin, 2022). Evidence highlights the importance of support systems and the need for emotional expression among grieving pet owners. Many incorporate their pets into religious beliefs, finding comfort in God's love and care. Belief in an afterlife for both humans and animals was linked to stronger attachments and healthier grieving, whereas belief in an afterlife only for humans was associated with greater sadness. Negative religious coping, such as feeling punished by God, also emerged. Overall, spirituality, a personal search for meaning, proved helpful in managing grief.

### ***2.2. Bonding Practices***

Pets are increasingly regarded as family members, involved in daily life and valued for their companionship. Studies confirm that pet ownership promotes social interaction, reduces loneliness, and improves mental health. Seniors with pets, for example, report lower depression levels. The unconditional love pets offer fosters emotional stability and happiness, positioning pets not merely as animals, but as sources of emotional fulfillment (Park & Jeong, 2022). However, losing a pet, regardless of cause, is often traumatic. Grief may disrupt daily life and lead to emotional and physical distress. While some resume normal routines within six months, others face prolonged, maladaptive grief depending on individual differences and attachment strength. Those with strong emotional bonds to their pets may experience deeper separation distress, which can hinder post-traumatic growth. Adaptive strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal and acceptance, can ease the grieving process and promote healing. High levels of anxious attachment have been linked to more intense grief and guilt after pet loss. This suggests that individuals benefit from cognitive emotion regulation strategies, such as acceptance and refraining from self-blame, to manage painful separations (Kwak & Lim, 2019).

### ***2.3. Shock and Disbelief***

Sudden pet loss can trigger a range of physical and psychological shock symptoms, including palpitations, migraines, insomnia, and even signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Notably, these intense reactions may occur regardless of whether the owner was present at the time of the pet's death. Common emotional responses also include guilt, anger, despair, loss of appetite, and intrusive, recurrent thoughts related to the loss. Such symptoms illustrate the profound impact of pet loss on mental health, highlighting the depth of attachment owners form with their pets. Recent research underscores the significance of psychological

support for individuals coping with pet loss, especially in cases of complicated grief. For instance, Ahn et al. (2023) found that individuals who experienced childhood trauma are at greater risk for complicated grief after losing a pet, emphasizing the critical need for targeted mental health interventions in such populations. Similarly, Crawford et al. (2021) examined the mental health effects of pet death during childhood, suggesting that early exposure to pet loss can have lasting psychological impacts, which may influence one's emotional resilience and coping strategies in adulthood. These findings collectively suggest that the grieving process for pet loss is not only emotionally challenging but may also have deep-seated psychological consequences, especially for vulnerable individuals. The presence of symptoms akin to PTSD indicates that pet loss can be a traumatic event necessitating appropriate mental health care and social support to facilitate healthy coping and prevent prolonged suffering.

#### ***2.4. Denial***

Even in cases of anticipated death, pet owners often experience shock and deep loss once the pet passes. Denial acts as a natural coping mechanism, helping buffer the initial impact of grief. It provides emotional protection, allowing the bereaved to process pain gradually. While it may feel confusing, denial helps affirm the depth of one's love and loss (Farricelli, 2023; America, 2018).

#### ***2.5. Guilt***

Grieving pet owners may struggle with guilt, believing they should have acted sooner or differently. This stage is marked by self-doubt and second-guessing, such as: "What if I had done more?" or "Did I wait too long?" Though guilt is a common part of grief, it can be emotionally overwhelming and slow down the healing process. Guilt is one of the most painful stages of grief (Farricelli, 2023).

#### ***2.6. Anger and Bargaining***

Following denial, grief often transitions into anger as the reality of loss sets in. This anger may be directed at veterinarians, friends, family, or even the deceased pet. While pet owners may understand the situation logically, emotionally they may still assign blame, sometimes to themselves (America, 2018). Anger may mask deeper feelings of hurt or fear and may manifest physically as tension or discomfort (Koenig, 2022). This frustration can lead to

unfair blame or outbursts, potentially harming supportive relationships. If anger becomes persistent or aggressive, professional help may be necessary. Bargaining, typically seen in anticipatory grief, involves attempts to regain control, wishing the pet hadn't gotten sick, wouldn't suffer, or might pass peacefully. After a pet's death, owners may hope to reunite with them in the afterlife or believe their other pets will be spared. As bargaining fades, acceptance of the pet's passing gradually emerges (Farricelli, 2023). This stage often involves "if only" or "what if" thoughts and may lead owners to question their faith or reevaluate life's purpose (Koenig, 2022).

### ***2.7. Depression, Loneliness, and Reflection***

Depression during grief is not a disorder but a natural response that allows individuals to adapt to life without their pet. Pet owners may feel overwhelmed, withdraw from others, or believe their grief is invalid, especially if others fail to acknowledge the loss (Koenig, 2022). During this period, some may isolate, while others begin to reach out. Both responses require compassion and support (America, 2018). As the loss becomes more real, mourners may experience emptiness, loss of interest, and discouragement (Allan, 2023). If untreated, this stage can hinder emotional recovery. Well-meaning comments that dismiss grief are unhelpful, and professional support may be necessary when depression interferes with daily life.

### ***2.8. Reconstruction***

As healing begins, the pet owner starts to regain a sense of normalcy. Emotional and physical symptoms begin to ease, and the grieving individual begins solving everyday problems and adapting to life without the pet (Brighton Pet Cremations, 2023). Social support plays a key role in recovery. Lower attachment anxiety and avoidance are associated with greater perceived support. Those living alone, lacking close support, or grieving children are particularly in need. However, studies suggest pet loss does not always activate the same level of support as human loss. Nonetheless, professional care has been shown to help some bereaved individuals (Fairholm et al., 2018).

### ***2.9. Acceptance***

Acceptance involves acknowledging the loss and learning to live without the pet. It is not about being "okay" with the death or resuming life as before, but about moving forward

with a renewed perspective. Over time, good days outnumber bad ones, though moments of sadness may remain (Farricelli, 2023). Acceptance allows the pet owner to redirect their energy toward new routines and relationships while honoring the pet's memory (Koenig, 2022). Acceptance differs from resignation. Rather than silently enduring the loss, the owner actively engages in coping and healing. Though life may never fully return to how it was, acceptance helps reduce the intensity of past emotional pain. Some owners maintain a connection to the deceased pet through a new animal, though evidence is mixed on whether this alleviates grief or simply delays it. If a pet was seen as a family member, replacing them may complicate healing. In such cases, focusing too quickly on replacement may even hinder recovery (Hughes & Harkin, 2022).

### **3. Methodology**

The study used descriptive research design. Descriptive research is an effective method for gaining deeper insights into a specific population or topic. It provides a thorough and accurate representation of the characteristics and behaviors of a particular group or subject. The study employed a mixed-methods approach. In mixed-methods research, both qualitative and quantitative techniques are utilized to address the research problem. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding by combining the strengths of both methods (George, 2023).

A purposive sampling technique was used in the study. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method, involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Also known as judgmental sampling, this technique relies on the researcher's expertise to identify individuals, cases, or events that are most likely to provide valuable information for the study. It is especially effective when the researcher has substantial prior knowledge about the research topic (Nikolopoulou, 2023).

The respondents of the study were pet owners in Sariaya, Quezon who had experienced the loss of a pet. A total of 54 respondents were purposively selected; 6 participated in interviews, while the remaining respondents completed a survey questionnaire. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of age, sex, and socioeconomic status. It also discloses the number of years they have their pets, the type of pet and the cause of death.

**Table 1***The demographic profile of respondents*

		<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Age (in years)	18 to 21	21	38.9
	22 to 25	21	38.9
	26 to 29	6	11.1
	30 to 33	3	5.6
	34 to 37	1	1.9
	42 to 45	1	1.9
	46 to 49	1	1.9
Sex	Male	15	27.8
	Female	39	72.2
Years Together with the Pet	1-3	38	70.4
	4-6	10	18.5
	7-9	2	3.7
	10-12	1	1.9
	13 years above	3	5.6
Socioeconomic Status	Low Class	50	92.6
	Middle Class	4	7.4
Type of Pet	Cat	6	11.1
	Chicken	1	1.9
	Dog	37	68.5
	Dog, Cat	5	9.3
	Fish	1	1.9
	Bird	2	3.7
	Dog, Cat, Bird	1	1.9
Cause of Death	Dog, Cat, Bird, Fish	1	1.9
	Accident	14	25.9
	Food Poison	10	18.4
	Killed	3	5.6
	Lost	1	1.9
	Old age	7	13.0
	Sickness	18	33.3
Unknown	1	1.9	

The primary instruments used in this study were a researcher-made questionnaire and an interview guide. For online respondents, the study utilized Google Forms as the data collection platform, while printed questionnaires were distributed to in-person participants. The questionnaire was developed based on insights gathered from the literature review and initial scoping. It consisted of three parts: Demographics, to gather background information about the respondents; Factors affecting grieving and coping processes, to assess influences on how pet owners manage their grief; Grieving Processes, to explore the emotional and behavioral responses of pet owners after pet loss.

The primary statistical tool used in the study was Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which provided comprehensive insights into the relationships among variables. To supplement the findings, Weighted Mean and Percentage computations were also conducted. Rigorous methodological procedures were employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. These measures enhanced the precision and generalizability of the study's findings.

The study received approval from the appropriate ethics review board and adhered to established ethical standards to safeguard participant rights. The research objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits were thoroughly explained to each participant. Informed consent was obtained, ensuring that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time without consequence. All collected data were anonymized and securely stored, accessible only to authorized personnel. Confidentiality of both the participants and their families was strictly maintained. Data were used solely for academic purposes. High standards of integrity and ethical responsibility were observed throughout the research process. Upon completion of the study, all data were permanently deleted to prevent misuse or unauthorized access.

## 4. Results and Discussion

**Table 2**

*Factors affecting the grieving and coping processes of pet owners*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>WM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Rank</b>
<b>Posthumous Practices</b>			
I buried my pet properly when it died.	3.5185	Strongly Agree	1
I prepared a memorial for my pet after it died.	2.7222	Agree	2
I cremated the remains of my pet after it died.	1.6111	Strongly Disagree	4
I arranged a funeral for my pet after it died.	2.3704	Disagree	3
I preserved my pet's body through taxidermy.	1.5185	Strongly Disagree	5
<b>Bonding Practices</b>			
I always make time to play with my pet.	3.5741	Strongly Agree	3
I spend time cleaning its shelter regularly.	3.5556	Strongly Agree	4
I spend time feeding my pet.	3.6852	Strongly Agree	1
I spend time teaching tricks to my pet.	3.0185	Agree	5
I talk to my pet.	3.6481	Strongly Agree	2

**Legend:** 1.00-1.74 Strongly Disagree; 1.75-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.24 Agree; 3.25-4.00 Strongly Agree

Among the factors affecting the grieving and coping processes of pet owners in terms of posthumous practices, the statement "I buried my pet properly when it died" ranked highest, with a weighted mean of 3.5185 (Strongly Agree), followed by "I prepared a memorial for my pet after it died", which had a weighted mean of 2.7222 (Agree). The lowest-ranked statement was "I preserved

my pet’s body through taxidermy”, with a weighted mean of 1.5185 (Strongly Disagree). Overall, the weighted mean for posthumous practices was 2.3481, indicating a general tendency to disagree with engagement in such practices, particularly less conventional ones. Maintaining an ongoing emotional bond with a deceased pet can lead to somatic symptoms of grief similar to those experienced after the loss of a family member or close friend. However, this emotional connection can also help reduce feelings of loneliness and mitigate the impact of grief. Practices such as rituals, memorials, recollections, and dreams have been identified as effective coping strategies that sustain attachment and reduce the intensity of grief (Hughes & Harkin, 2022). In the Philippine context, a study on pet ownership and bereavement practices revealed that 71.4% of pet owners chose to bury their pets, while 14.3% opted for cremation. Only 1.4% mentioned the use of taxidermy to preserve their pet's remains. These findings indicate that cremation and taxidermy are not widely practiced in the Philippines, which may be influenced by deep-rooted cultural and religious beliefs regarding the afterlife and the respectful treatment of the deceased (Jose et al., 2021).

Among the factors affecting the grieving and coping processes of pet owners in terms of bonding practices, the statement “I spend time feeding my pet” ranked highest, with a weighted mean of 3.6852 (Strongly Agree), followed closely by “I talk to my pet” with a weighted mean of 3.6481 (Strongly Agree). The lowest-ranked item was “I spend time teaching tricks to my pet,” with a weighted mean of 3.0185 (Agree). Overall, the bonding practices received a mean score of 3.4963, indicating a strong agreement among respondents that such practices significantly impact their emotional connection with their pets. According to Park and Jeong (2022), numerous studies have affirmed the emotional and physical benefits of pet ownership. It is well-established that having a pet enhances both social interactions and physical well-being. Pet owners often report reduced feelings of loneliness and more active interpersonal relationships compared to those without pets. Furthermore, seniors who live with pets tend to experience lower levels of depression, suggesting that pet companionship plays a critical role in promoting positive emotions.

**Table 3**

*Grieving processes of pet owners*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Shock and Disbelief	2.8814	Agree
Denial	2.5703	Agree
Guilt	3.2481	Agree
Anger and Bargaining	2.0444	Disagree
Depression, loneliness, and reflection	3.2074	Agree
Reconstruction	3.2518	Strongly Agree
Acceptance	3.2814	Strongly Agree

**Legend:** 1.00-1.74 Strongly Disagree; 1.75-2.49 Disagree; 2.50-3.24 Agree; 3.25-4.00 Strongly Agree

In terms of shock and disbelief, the overall weighted mean was 2.8814, indicating that respondents generally agreed that shock and disbelief played a significant role in their grieving process. According to Allan (2023), many individuals initially experience numbness, confusion, and emotional disorientation after the death of a pet. It is common for pet owners to expect their pet to walk into the room or be lying in their usual spot, which reflects a state of disbelief rather than denial. The cognitive dissonance often leads to intense emotional reactions such as crying, not because of denial, but because of the profound emotional shock. Even when obvious signs of shock are absent, many pet owners report difficulty functioning, along with feelings of guilt, anger, despair, loss of appetite, and recurring thoughts about their pet's death (Farricelli, 2023). These are hallmark symptoms of acute grief, indicating how deeply bonded relationships with pets can affect emotional well-being.

In terms of denial, the weighted mean of 2.5703 indicates that respondents generally agreed that denial played a role in their grieving process. According to America (2018), denial serves as an initial coping mechanism that helps pet owners endure the immediate pain of loss. It lessens the emotional impact and provides a temporary buffer from the harsh reality of death. While denial can seem confusing, it also offers comfort by allowing the bereaved to slowly come to terms with the loss. Similarly, Farricelli (2023) emphasizes that shock, denial, and numbness are natural defenses that protect individuals from becoming overwhelmed by grief. Denial, in particular, functions as nature's way of shielding grieving individuals from emotional overload, enabling them to process their pain gradually. It allows for the piecemeal management of distressing emotions, creating brief moments of emotional relief during an otherwise painful experience.

In terms of guilt, a weighted mean of 3.2481, indicating general agreement that guilt is a significant aspect of the grieving process. According to Farricelli (2023), guilt can spread like an invasive plant, quickly becoming overwhelming and affecting how pet owners perceive their actions during their pet's illness or death. This mental torment is counterproductive and can slow down the healing process.

In terms of anger and bargaining, the weighted mean of 2.0444 indicates general disagreement. According to America (2018), anger during grief may be directed toward veterinarians, friends, family, or even the pet itself. While pet owners logically understand this, emotionally it is often easier to assign blame to others or themselves. Pet owners may feel upset or question how or why their pet died. Anger can be a surface emotion that masks deeper feelings such as hurt or panic. Physically, it may manifest as tension in the chest or body. According to Koenig (2022), this anger often stems from frustration over the inability to prevent the loss, leading some to unfairly blame others. While expressing anger can be a natural part of grieving, persistent or misplaced anger may harm relationships and could require professional support.

In terms of depression, loneliness, and reflection, the weighted mean of 3.2074 indicates general agreement. The loss of a pet can result in disenfranchised grief, causing individuals to feel undeserving of mourning their companion. They may encounter others who minimize or fail to recognize their loss, which can lead to feelings of isolation. It is important to understand that grieving for a pet is a valid process, and pet owners have the right to mourn (Koenig, 2022).

In terms of reconstruction, weighted mean of 3.2518 indicates strong agreement. According to Fairholm et al. (2018), social support plays a crucial role in helping individuals cope, maintain their quality of life, and express their emotions after losing a pet. Lower levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance are associated with higher perceived social support, and vice versa. Social support is particularly important for people who live alone, those whose relatives or friends cannot provide assistance, and children. However, other studies have shown that social networks may be less significant in cases of pet loss compared to human loss, suggesting that not all pet owners experience the same level of attachment, grief, or support. Despite this, professional support and care have been shown to benefit those grieving the loss of a pet.

In terms of acceptance, the weighted mean of 3.4814 indicates strong agreement. According to Farricelli (2023), acceptance involves acknowledging the loss and making peace with what has happened. At this stage, pet owners should shift their energy from grieving toward making new investments in life. Acceptance often emerges when the pain becomes overwhelming, and individuals begin to experience more good days than bad. Life starts to bring joy again, although some may feel occasional regret, believing that moving on feels like betraying their beloved pet. Some owners maintain a connection to their deceased pet through a current or new pet; however, research by Hughes and Harkin (2022) shows inconclusive evidence on whether this reduces grief or simply delays it. Replacing one pet with another is often more complicated and less successful when the pet is seen as a family member. The irreversible nature of death can make focusing on a replacement emotionally challenging.

**Table 4**

*Factors with significant differences in the grieving and coping processes according to type of pet*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Sig.*</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Bonding Practices		
I always make time to play with my pet.	0.0350	With significant difference

\* Significant at 0.05

In Table 4, it was observed that at the 0.05 level of significance and given the degrees of freedom, the differences in the factors affecting the grieving and coping processes of pet owners, when grouped according to the type of pet, were significant only in the following areas:

**Posthumous Practices:** Since all of the posthumous practice p-values were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the statistical decision was to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that all posthumous practices were not significantly different when grouped according to socioeconomic status.

**Bonding Practices:** Specifically, in the item “I always make time to play with my pet”, the result was significant ( $p = 0.0350$ ).

The Philippines is among the top five dog-owning nations in the world, with 11.6 million dogs (Walden, 2019). It is believed that pets make up more than half of the world's population (Brown, 2023; Lutz, 2023).

**Table 5**

*Factors with significant differences in the grieving and coping processes of the pet owners*

Indicators	Sig.*	Remarks
<b>A. Shock and Disbelief</b>		
I was confused and heartbroken when my pet died.	0.004	With significant difference
<b>B. Denial</b>		
I was not able to accept the death of my pet immediately.	0.014	With significant difference
I refuse to believe that my pet is already dead.	0.007	With significant difference
<b>D. Anger and Bargaining</b>		
I am angry at my friends/family for not being more helpful.	0.026	With significant difference
I cried when my pet died.	0.008	With significant difference
I cry when I think about my pet.	0.043	With significant difference
My life feels empty without my pet.	0.033	With significant difference
<b>F. Reconstruction</b>		
I was able to cope with my pet's death because my friends and family understood how I felt.	0.004	With significant difference

\* *Significant at 0.05*

In Table 5, it was observed that at the 0.05 level of significance and given the degrees of freedom, the differences in the processes of grieving and coping, when grouped according to sex, were significant only in the following areas:

**Shock and Disbelief:** In the statement “I was confused and heartbroken when my pet died” ( $p = 0.004$ );

**Denial:** In the statements “I was not able to accept the death of my pet immediately” ( $p = 0.014$ ) and “I refuse to believe that my pet is already dead” ( $p = 0.007$ );

**Guilt:** Since all p-values related to guilt were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the statistical decision was to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that feelings of guilt were not significantly different when grouped according to sex;

Anger and Bargaining: In the statement “I am angry at my friends/family for not being more helpful” ( $p = 0.026$ );

Depression, Loneliness, and Reflection: In the statements “I cried when my pet died” ( $p = 0.008$ ), “I cry when I think about my pet” ( $p = 0.043$ ), and “My life feels empty without my pet” ( $p = 0.033$ );

Reconstruction: In the statement “I was able to cope with my pet's death because my friends and family understood how I felt” ( $p = 0.004$ );

Acceptance: Since all p-values related to acceptance were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the statistical decision was to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that acceptance was not significantly different when grouped according to sex.

Grieving can also be influenced by gender and culture, as both shape emotional expression and processing. While grieving is a universal experience, it often manifests differently in men and women. Men are typically less inclined to seek support or talk about their loss, often turning to work or distractions to cope. In contrast, women are more likely to talk to others and seek emotional support during times of grief (Stelzer et al., 2019; McKenzie et al., 2022; Andriessen et al., 2025; Scott et al., 2025; Padavic et al., 2019; Frydenberg, 2014).

**Table 6**

*Factors with significant differences in the anger and bargaining processes*

Indicators	Sig.*	Remarks
<b>D. Anger and Bargaining</b>		
I felt very angry when my pet died.	0.027	With significant difference
I am angry at other people for contributing to the death of my pet.	0.013	With significant difference

\* Significant at 0.05

In Table 6, it was observed that at the 0.05 level of significance and given the degrees of freedom, the differences in the processes of grieving and coping, when grouped according to the cause of death, were significant only in the following areas:

Shock and Disbelief: Since all p-values for shock and disbelief were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the statistical decision was to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that shock and disbelief were not significantly different when grouped according to the cause of death.

Denial: Since all p-values for denial were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the statistical decision was to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that denial was not significantly different when grouped according to the cause of death.

Guilt: Since all p-values for guilt were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the statistical decision was to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that guilt was not significantly different when grouped according to the cause of death.

Anger and Bargaining: Significant differences were observed in the statements “I felt very angry when my pet died” ( $p = 0.027$ ) and “I am angry at other people for contributing to the death of my pet” ( $p = 0.013$ ).

Depression, Loneliness, and Reflection: Since all p-values for this category were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the statistical decision was to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that depression, loneliness, and reflection were not significantly different when grouped according to the cause of death.

Reconstruction: Since all p-values for reconstruction were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the statistical decision was to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that reconstruction was not significantly different when grouped according to the cause of death.

Acceptance: Since all p-values for acceptance were greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the statistical decision was to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that acceptance was not significantly different when grouped according to the cause of death.

The loss of a pet can have a profound effect on an owner's grieving process, especially if the pet's death was caused by factors such as food poisoning. When a beloved animal passes away, it typically triggers a range of emotions, including grief, guilt, anger, and mental confusion. Cases in which the pet dies from food poisoning often intensify feelings of guilt and responsibility, particularly when the owner had provided the food that caused the illness. This may lead to deep guilt and reflection on how the incident could have been prevented. Consequently, the grieving process can become more intense, complex, and varied.

Grieving the loss of a pet due to euthanasia can also be especially difficult. While euthanasia is often the most humane option to relieve a pet's suffering, the knowledge that the owner's decision contributed to the pet's death can add layers of guilt and amplify the pain and sorrow associated with the loss (Knesl et al., 2017; Hoummady et al., 2025; Testoni et al., 2023; Wilson et al., 2021).

This study employed focused interviews with six (6) pet owners. The interviews aimed to supplement the quantitative results by exploring the emotions and behaviors of the participants in relation to their pets. The participants were asked to elaborate on their grieving and coping processes, as well as the various factors that influenced these experiences. Their responses were transcribed verbatim, then grouped, coded, and organized according to themes and sub-themes.

Table 7 presents the themes, sub-themes, and exact statements from the participants regarding the factors that affected their grieving and coping processes. Meanwhile, Table 8 summarizes the participants' grieving and coping practices.

Table 7

Factors that affect the grieving and coping processes of pet owners

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
Acceptance to the Cause of Death of the Pet	Learned to Accept it as Days Go By	<p>“Ano, sa paglipas lang ng panahon saka ko lang natanggap.” (Well, I only came to accept it over time.) Respondent 3</p> <p>“Natanggap ko na kasi nahhirapan na siya eh kaysa maghirap pa siya.” (I accepted it because it was already suffering, and I'd rather it not suffer anymore) Respondent 4</p> <p>“Ah sa mga araw na duma, mga taon natanggap ko na din siya natutuna ko na din siyang tanggapin dahil yun ang katotohanan.” (Ah, during the days that passed, the years, I also came to accept it, I also learned to accept it because that's the truth) Respondent 6</p>
	Take Care of a New Pet	<p>““Bumili ng bago.” (Bought a new one) Respondent 1</p> <p>“Nag-alaga ng bago.” (Took care of a new one) Respondent 2</p>
Effects of the Cause of Death to the Owner	Extreme Sadness	<p>“Nalungkot sobra.” (Was very sad) Respondent 1</p> <p>“Nalungkot.” (Was sad) Respondent 2</p> <p>“Ah, ano nalungkot sobra, sobrang nalungkot tapos nagalit na rin sa gumawa non.” (Ah, I was really sad, extremely sad, and then I also got angry at the one who did it) Respondent 3</p> <p>“Ah, syempre nagdulot ito ng kalungkutan saken dahil don alaga ko siya parang best friend ko na rin.” (Ah, of course this brought sadness to me because it was my pet—it was like my best friend too) Respondent 6</p>
Things Done for the Pet after it Died	Bury the pet properly	<p>“Nilibing ko ng maayos.” (I buried it properly) Respondent 1</p> <p>“Nilibing.” (Buried) Respondent 2</p> <p>“Na-sad tsaka ano yung pagkatapos ng libing niya talagang hinahanap-hanap ko siya.” (I was sad, and then after the burial, I really kept looking for it) Respondent 4</p>
	Not able to do something	<p>“Actually, wala pa akong nagawa, kasi nasa, that time nasa elementary pa ako non pagdating ko saka ko lang nabalitaan na wala na siya and kinatay na siya ng mga mag-iinom kasi binigay ng lola ko sa mga mag-iinom.” (Actually, I hadn't done anything yet, because at that time I was still in elementary school. When I got home, that's when I found out it was gone and had been slaughtered by drunk men because my grandma gave it to them.) Respondent 3</p> <p>“Ano ginawa, kasi nga wala ako nong namatay yung isda. Medyo ano nagalit ako at nasaktan or ano kasi di man lang</p>

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
		<p><i>siya nilibing sa lupa kasi basta na lang siya tinapon na lang kasi nga isda lang naman so ayun.</i>” (What did I do? Well, I wasn’t there when the fish died. I was kind of angry and hurt because it wasn’t even buried in the ground—it was just thrown away because it was just a fish, so yeah) Respondent 5</p> <p><i>“Dahil nga yung alaga kong ibon ay nawala, ay parang wala na rin akong nagawa pagkatapos non di ko man lang alam kung san siya pumunta dahil yun nga nawala siya.”</i> (Because my pet bird got lost, I wasn’t able to do anything afterward. I didn’t even know where it went because, yeah, it was lost) Respondent 6</p>
<b>Bonding Practices done with the Pet</b>	Play with the pet	<p><i>“Naglalaro.”</i> (Playing) Respondent 2</p> <p><i>“Naghahabulan.”</i> (Chasing each other) Respondent 3</p> <p><i>“Naglalaro sa loob ng bahay at tsaka pinapa-poop ko siya sa labas.”</i> (Playing inside the house and I let it poop outside) Respondent 4</p>
	Spend Quality Time	<p><i>“Basta magkasama kami maghapon.”</i> 9(We were just together all day) Respondent 1</p> <p><i>“Minsan kasi pag di ko siya napapaarawan, nag-iiba ng kulay yung isda ko, so meaning to say, parang kulang siya sa ano sa sunlight so para ano, ang ginagawa naming bonding pag kaming dalawa lang ay pinapainitan ko siya, pinapalitan ko siya ng tubig yung aquarium.”</i> (Sometimes, when I couldn’t expose it to sunlight, my fish would change color—so, meaning to say, it kind of lacked sunlight. So what we did for bonding, when it was just the two of us, I’d let it sunbathe and change the water in the aquarium) Respondent 5</p> <p><i>“Ah, lagi ko siya pinapakain tapos yung ibon ko din yun kasi sumasayaw siya kaya lagi din kami, alam mo na mga ganong bagay.”</i> (Ah, I always fed it, and also my bird—because it danced—so we always, you know, did those kinds of things) Respondent 6</p>
<b>Frequency of Bonding</b>	Everyday	<p><i>“Oras-oras.”</i> (Every hour) Respondent 1</p> <p><i>“Madalas, pag umuuwi ako galing school nag-aano kami, naghahabulan.”</i> (Often, when I got home from school, we would, you know, chase each other) Respondent 3</p> <p><i>“Ahm, araw-araw naman halos.”</i> (“Ahm, almost every day) Respondent 4</p> <p><i>“Halos araw-araw.”</i> (Almost every day) Respondent 6</p>

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
	Every week	<p><i>“Isang beses sa isang linggo.” (Once a week) Respondent 2</i></p> <p><i>“Every week, every week ako nagpapalit ng tubig or ng ano sa tank.” (Every week, every week I would change the water or something in the tank) Respondent 5</i></p>
<b>Bonding Practices</b>	Playing with the Pet	<p><i>“Naghahabulan.” (Chasing each other) Respondents 2&amp;3</i></p> <p><i>“Ah laro, kulitan, kagatan.” (Ah, play, teasing, biting) Respondent 4</i></p> <p><i>“Pinapakain, pinapasayaw.” (Feeding, making it dance) Respondent 6</i></p>
	Talking with the Pet	<p><i>“Kinakausap, tinuturuan.” (Talking to it, teaching it) Respondent 1</i></p>
<b>Feelings while Bonding with the Pet</b>	Happy	<p><i>“Masaya.” (Happy) Respondents 1,2&amp;3</i></p> <p><i>“Sobrang saya syempre.” (Extremely happy, of course) Respondent 4</i></p> <p><i>“Ah, masaya dahil nga kami yung pinaka magbest friend sa isat isa, yun masaya.” (Ah, happy because we were really best friends with each other—that’s it, happy) Respondent 6</i></p>

The statements from the participants reflect a deep emotional connection with their pets, highlighting the various ways people experience, cope with, and process the loss of a beloved animal companion. Initial reactions to loss included profound sadness, anger, and confusion, especially when the pet's death was sudden or handled insensitively, as seen in Respondents 3 and 5. Over time, however, acceptance gradually took place, driven either by the natural passage of time or the recognition of the pet's suffering, as noted by Respondents 3, 4, and 6. The grieving process was also shaped by memorial actions like proper burials and emotional expressions of longing. Meanwhile, coping mechanisms varied, some chose to care for a new pet, while others simply held on to memories. The strong bond formed with the pets is evident in their daily routines of feeding, playing, and mutual companionship, which made the animals feel like best friends or family. Overall, the statements paint a picture of pets as significant emotional anchors in the lives of their owners, and their loss as a meaningful and painful experience that required emotional adaptation and healing.

**Table 8***Grieving and coping processes of pet owners*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-Theme</b>	<b>Statement</b>
<b>Feelings after the Death of the Pet</b>	Extreme Sadness	<p>“Ay! Syempre nalungkot.” (Oh! Of course, I was sad) Respondent 1</p> <p>“Nalungkot.” (Was sad) Respondent 2</p> <p>“Sobrang lungkot.” (Extremely sad) Respondents 3&amp;4</p> <p>“Ayun nga, nanghinayang ako tapos nalungkot kasi antagal ko din siyang inalagan and then hindi siya naasikaso nong nag ojt ako so parang nakakapanghinayang sa loob ng 3 years parang ganon nalang siya namatay.” (Well, I regretted it and felt sad because I had taken care of it for so long, and then I couldn’t look after it during my internship, so it felt like such a waste that it just died after 3 years like that) Respondent 5</p> <p>“Syempre nalungkot ako ganon parang medyo ano, wala nalungkot talaga ako nong nawala ang alaga ko.” (Of course, I was sad, kind of like... really, I was truly sad when I lost my pet) Respondent 6</p>
<b>Effects of the Death to Everyday Tasks of the Owner</b>	Longs for the presence of their pets	<p>“Namimiss ko siya kahit saan ako pumunta.” (I miss it no matter where I go) Respondent 1</p> <p>“Naiisip ko siya kasi sanay ako ng andiyan siya.” (I think about it because I’m used to it being there) Respondent 2</p> <p>“Wala lang, halimbawa nagwawalis or kung ano ginagawa ko, napapahinto talaga ako kumbaga.” (It just happens, like when I’m sweeping or doing something—I really pause, you know?) Respondent 6</p>
<b>Grieving Process</b>	Frequent crying	<p>“Umiiyak gabi-gabi pag nagigising.” (Cried every night when I woke up) Respondent 1</p> <p>“Umiiyak.” (Cried) Respondent 2</p> <p>“Ano, umiyak pag naalala ko siya, umiiyak ako noon.” (Well, I cried when I remembered it—I used to cry back then) Respondent 3</p> <p>“Ahm, sa una sobrang lungkot ko talaga na parang umiiyak na ako basta parang na trauma na ako mag-alaga ulit dahil baka ganon na naman ang mangyari.” (Ahm, at first I was really very sad, like I’d just start crying. It’s like I was traumatized to take care of another pet because the same thing might happen again) Respondent 6</p>

Theme	Sub-Theme	Statement
<b>Anger felt towards other people</b>	Angry at family members	<p><i>"Hmm, marami. Unang-una yung lola ko kasi yun nga wala kasi siyang hilig sa pet kaya hindi niya nararamdaman, pinamigay niya sa ano mga mag-iinom and yung mga mag-iinom naman, ganon kinain nila."</i> (Hmm, a lot. First of all, my grandma—she doesn't really like pets so she didn't feel the same way. She gave it away to some drunk men, and those men ate it.) Respondent 3</p> <p><i>"Oo, yung kapatid ko tinapon lang kasi isda lang daw."</i> (Yes, my sibling just threw it away because it was 'just a fish,' they said) Respondent 5</p>
		<p><i>"1 month."</i> Respondents 1&amp;2</p> <p><i>"Isang buwan, yung mga ganong weeks lang."</i> (A month, around that number of weeks) Respondent 6</p>
<b>Have a Support System</b>	Family and Friends	<p><i>"Oo, kinomfort nila ako."</i> (Yes, they comforted me) Respondent 2</p> <p><i>"Hmmm, oo don sa para makalimot ako tapos na, ano ko yun nga."</i> (Hmm, yes, to help me forget, and then, you know, that's it) Respondent 3</p> <p><i>"Oo naman, kinomfort saka binigyan ng advice."</i> (Yes, of course—they comforted me and gave advice) Respondent 4</p> <p><i>"Nakatulong dahil sa suporta nila ako sa pagluluksa ko kung baga binibigyan nila ako ng advice para maka-recover ganon."</i> (It helped because of their support in my grieving—they gave me advice to recover, things like that) Respondent 6</p>
		<p><i>"Bumili ako ng bagong alaga para pang palit sa kanya."</i> (I bought a new pet to replace it) Respondent 1</p> <p><i>"Nag-alaga ako ng bago."</i> (I took care of a new one) Respondent 2</p> <p><i>"Schooling lang tapos bahay, yun lang, yun lang yung araw-araw na gawain."</i> (Just school and then home—that's it, that's the daily routine) Respondent 3</p> <p><i>"Ano lang, normal lang kasi ganon naman talaga kapag may alaga kang pet medyo maiksi lang kaya dapat ready ka na din so ayun lang."</i> (It was just normal, because that's really how it is when you have a pet—their lifespan is kind of short so you have to be ready, that's all) Respondent 5</p> <p><i>"Tinanggap ko na lang din, kung baga nililibang ko yung sarili ko sa mga ibang bagay may alaga din akong iba."</i> (I just accepted it, like I distract myself with other things—I also have another pet) Respondent 6</p>
<b>Things they Have Done to Accept the Death of their Pet</b>	Take Care of Another Pet	<p><i>"Bumili ako ng bagong alaga para pang palit sa kanya."</i> (I bought a new pet to replace it) Respondent 1</p> <p><i>"Nag-alaga ako ng bago."</i> (I took care of a new one) Respondent 2</p>
	Accepted the Death as time Pass By	<p><i>"Schooling lang tapos bahay, yun lang, yun lang yung araw-araw na gawain."</i> (Just school and then home—that's it, that's the daily routine) Respondent 3</p> <p><i>"Ano lang, normal lang kasi ganon naman talaga kapag may alaga kang pet medyo maiksi lang kaya dapat ready ka na din so ayun lang."</i> (It was just normal, because that's really how it is when you have a pet—their lifespan is kind of short so you have to be ready, that's all) Respondent 5</p> <p><i>"Tinanggap ko na lang din, kung baga nililibang ko yung sarili ko sa mga ibang bagay may alaga din akong iba."</i> (I just accepted it, like I distract myself with other things—I also have another pet) Respondent 6</p>

The statements reveal the deep emotional impact that losing a pet had on the respondents, highlighting feelings of sadness, regret, longing, and even trauma. Many

expressed intense grief, with some crying frequently and feeling a lingering emotional void, especially when the pet had been a constant presence in their daily lives. The loss was often accompanied by regret, particularly when they felt they had unintentionally neglected their pet, as in Respondent 5's case. Others struggled with how their families treated the pet's passing, particularly when it was dismissed as unimportant due to being "just a fish" or when the pet was carelessly given away or killed. Despite the pain, most respondents eventually found ways to cope, whether through the support of friends and family, getting a new pet, or emotionally accepting the reality of loss. Some also noted the necessity of being prepared for a pet's shorter lifespan, showing a growing sense of emotional maturity in the face of grief. Overall, the responses reflect how pets are not just animals but companions whose absence creates a significant emotional impact, requiring time, support, and personal strategies for healing.

## **5. Conclusion**

A typical participant of the study is 18-21 and 22-25 years old, female, spend 1-3 years with their pet, belongs to a low-class socioeconomic status, owns a dog and their pet died due to sickness. Posthumous practices through cremation and taxidermy were still not widely used in Sariaya, Quezon due to the lack of facilities and center that can provide such services so most of the pet owners buried their pet properly after their death. When it comes to bonding practices, the most common is spending time feeding their pets.

The pet owners' grieving processes are not the same depending on the person who had experienced losing a pet. Not all pet owners go through the seven stages of grief namely shock and disbelief, denial, guilt, anger and bargaining, depression, loneliness, and reflection, reconstruction, and acceptance. However, it has been found that all the respondents go through the stage of guilt, depression, loneliness, and reflection, and reconstruction.

There is no significant difference between the posthumous practices and demographic of the respondents such as age, sex, years together with the pet, socioeconomic status, type of pet, and cause of death. However, there was a significant difference between the bonding practices and the type of pet. The study also found that there is no significant difference between the grieving processes and the demographics of the respondents such as age, sex, years together with the pet, socioeconomic status, type of pet, and cause of death. There was a significant difference in the grieving processes of the respondents and their demographic profile in terms of sex, socioeconomic status, and cause of death.

The study concluded that posthumous and bonding practices greatly affect the grieving and coping processes of the pet owners. Furthermore, the grieving processes of pet owners differ depending

on their sex, socioeconomic status, and cause of death. This research also highlights the importance of grieving properly for a pet in order to cope up and accept the death of the said animal. Overall, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the grieving and coping processes of pet owners, which could help lessen the disenfranchised grief that pet owners' experience.

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