

Stress related growth among suicide survivors: the moderate effect of bereavement process, self-disclosure and coping strategies

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INTRODUCTION AND AIMS:

Individuals grieving a suicide death (suicide survivors) may be at greater risk for psychiatric complications and suicide than other bereaved individuals. On the other hand, researches show that traumatic event can also generate a stress related growth process (SRG), which defined as a process of acquiring new coping skills, developing personal and social resources and obtaining a broadened and positive perspectives.

The objective of this study was to explore the differences between suicide survivors and other types of bereavement in relating to personal growth process, and to examine self disclosure, self regulation and bereavement processes as moderators.

METHODS:

162 bereaved individuals divided to one of three groups: 63 suicide survivors compared with 48 bereaved after sudden death (not suicide) and 50 bereaved after expected death. All participants completed questionnaires covering the two-track model of bereavement (Track 1- psychosocial functioning Track 2- ongoing emotional attachment to the deceased ; Rubin, 1999), DDI- Distress self-disclosure (Kahn & Hessling, 2001), CERQ- cognitive emotion regulation (Garfenski et al., 2001) and SRG- stress related growth (Park et al., 1996).

RESULTS:

Significant correlations were found between the two-track model of bereavement and stress related growth among suicide survivors (Track 1: $r=0.42$, $p<.01$; Track 2: $r= -0.347$, $p<.01$), meaning that higher growth associated with higher functioning and lower emotional attachment with the deceased).

Furthermore, as expected, in ANOVA we found main effects to type of loss and to self-disclosure on SRG (see Fig. 1). Moreover, we found significant interaction between the two predictors: while no differences in SRG were found between levels of self-disclosure among participant who experienced sudden or predicted death, among suicide survivors low self disclose participant showed the lowest SRG comparing all other subgroups [$F(2, 127)=5.48$, $p<0.01$].

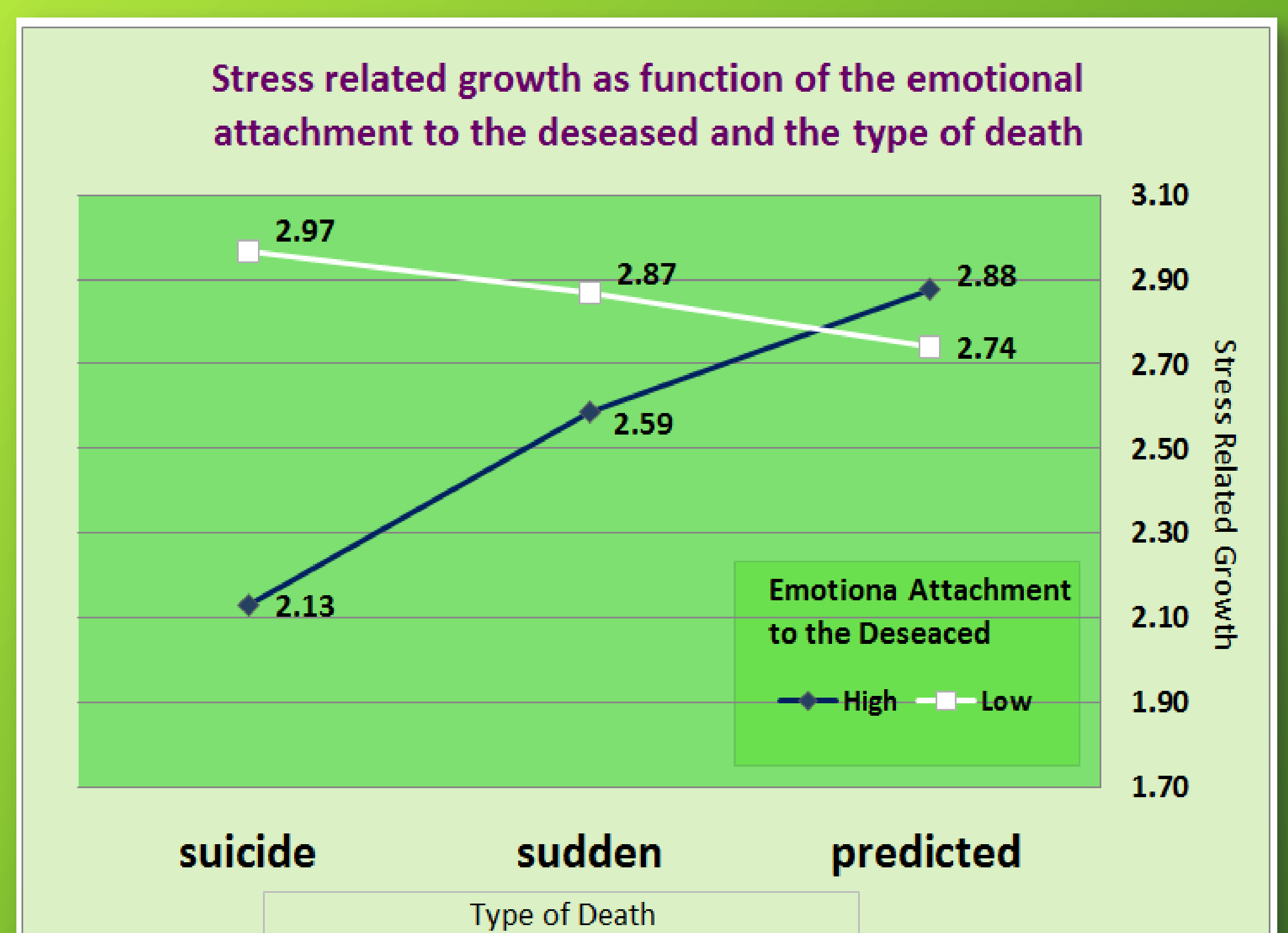
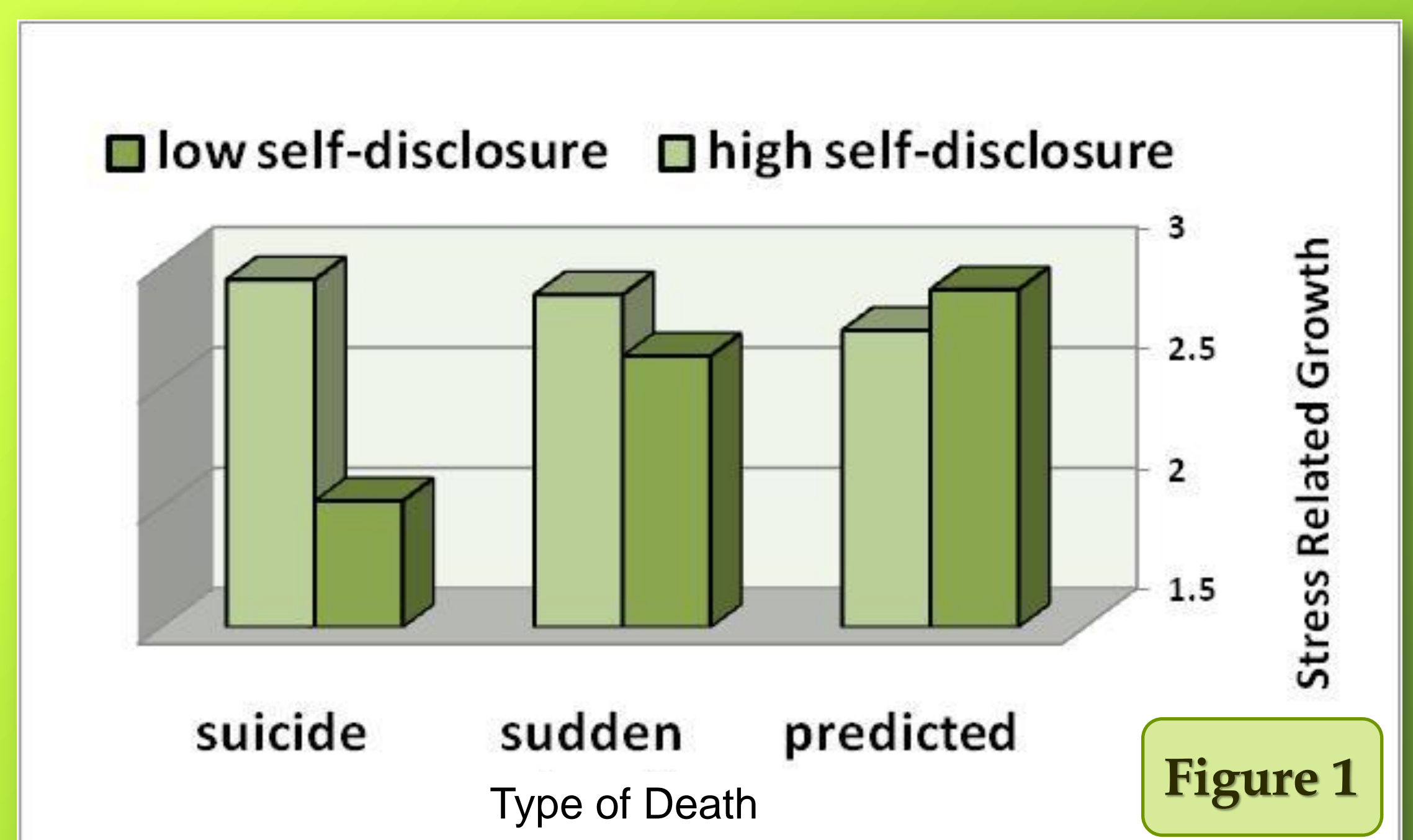
In addition, significant interaction were found, which indicate similar growth levels in both samples when the relationship with the deceased was not complicated, but substantially lower levels of growth among suicide survivors when the emotional attachment was high (see Fig.2).

In general, emotional relationship to the deceased, together with self-disclosure and cognitive self-regulation explained more than 38% of the variance in stress related growth (see Table 1).

Table 1. Findings of multiple hierarchical regression analysis for stress related growth

Model step	Predictor variables	R ²	ΔR ²	Sig.
1	The two track model of bereavement- Functioning & emotional attachment with the deceased	0.19	0.19	.000
2	Self disclosure	0.22	0.03	.041
3	Cognitive emotion regulation	0.39	0.17	.000

Stress related growth as function of self disclosure and the type of death(N=162)



CONCLUSIONS:

self disclosure and adaptive coping strategies can facilitate personal growth among suicide survivors. Moreover, lower levels of emotional attachment with the deceased is an essential aspect associated with stress related growth. Together, these factors can be beneficial tools to enhance recovery after suicide loss, and support groups can focus on them as some of their therapeutic goals.

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