

SUPPORT GROUPS FOR SUICIDE SURVIVORS: SELF REGULATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AS MEDIATING THE EFFECT OF RECOVERY

Levi, Y.¹, Weinberg, S.¹, Nadjar, R.¹

¹ Department of Behavioral Sciences, Ruppín Academic Center, Israel

Introduction

Individuals grieving a suicide death (suicide survivors) may be at risk for psychiatric complications and suicidal behaviors. Support groups may provide valuable resource for survivors, who often do not seek out mental health treatment.

Social support and self regulation which are at the nature of the support groups can facilitate growth from crisis.

Objectives & Aims

The objective of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of support groups for suicide survivors and to assess the role of self regulation and social support as mediating variables.

Methods

74 suicide survivors belonged to one of two groups: 32 survivors who participate in a support group, compared with 42 survivors who did not participate. All participants completed questionnaires covering of self regulation, social support and stress related growth.

Results

Survivors who participated in a support group showed better recovery from stress than those who didn't participate. The effect was stronger in survivors who lost their offspring (Figure 1). High level of interpersonal activities (self disclosure and social support) can help to enhance recovery for all suicide survivors, particularly to parents (Figure 2). Moreover, we found that interpersonal activities can improve recovery, especially in the first year after suicide (Figure 3). However, the main effect for recovery happened to diminish over time (two years or more after suicide).

A hierarchical regression (Table 1) indicates that time past from the event as well as self regulation, social support and self disclosure explained more than 30% of the variance of stress related growth (Recovery levels).

Figure 2. Recovery levels as function of family relatedness to person who commit suicide and interpersonal activities (N=74).

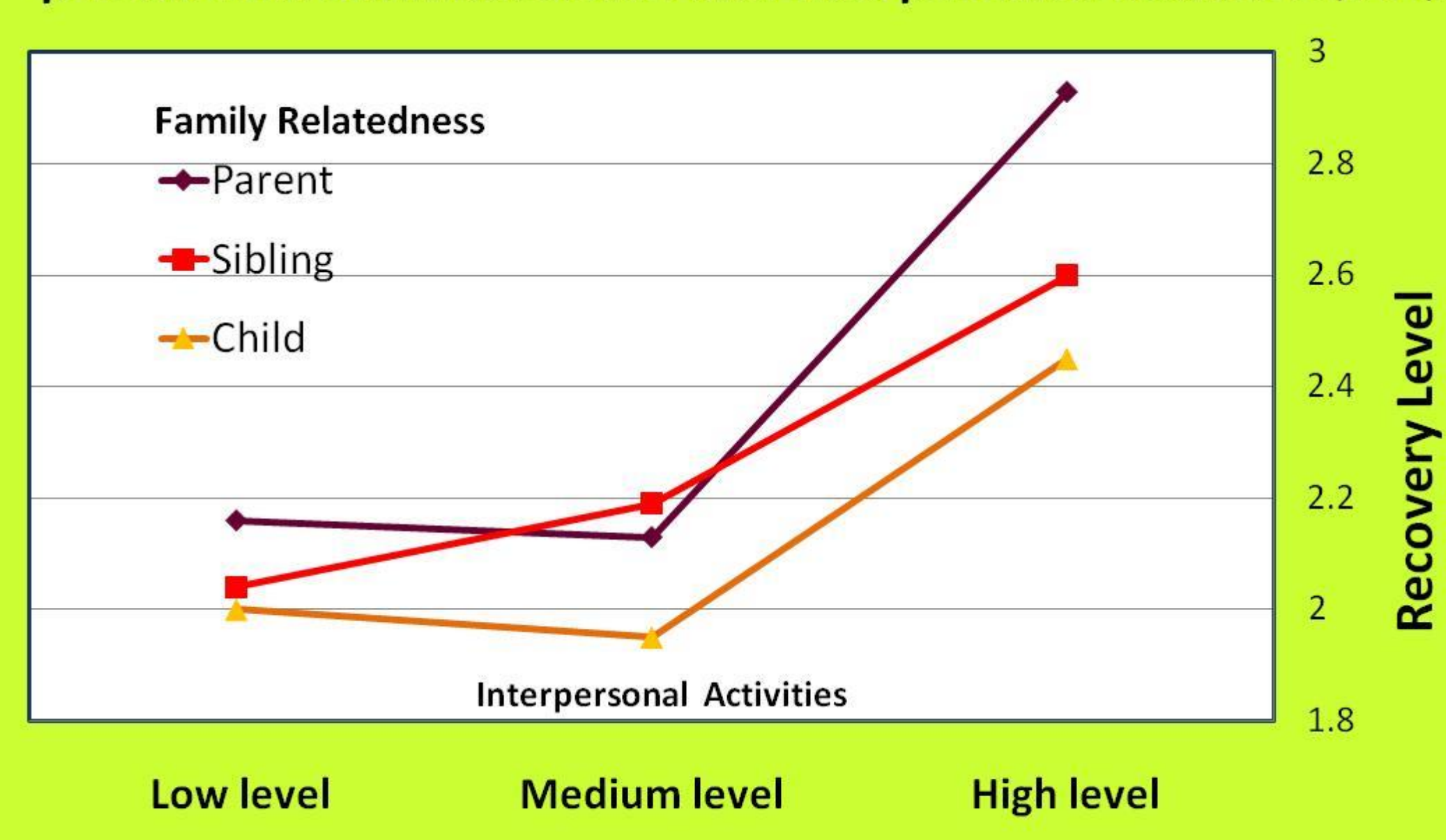


Figure 1. Recovery levels as function of participating in support group and family relatedness (n=74).

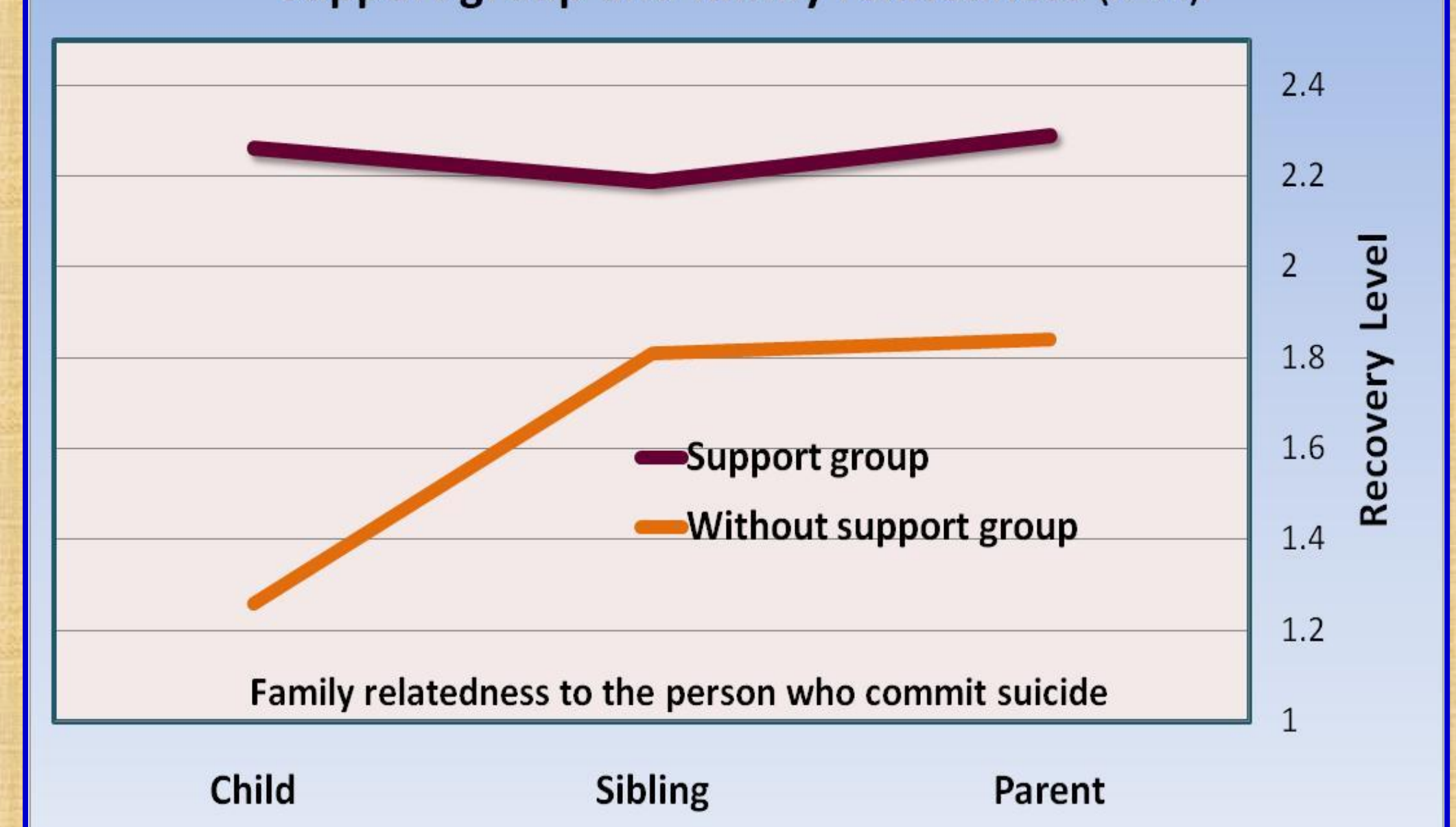


Figure 2. Recovery levels as function of interpersonal activities and time from loss (N=74).

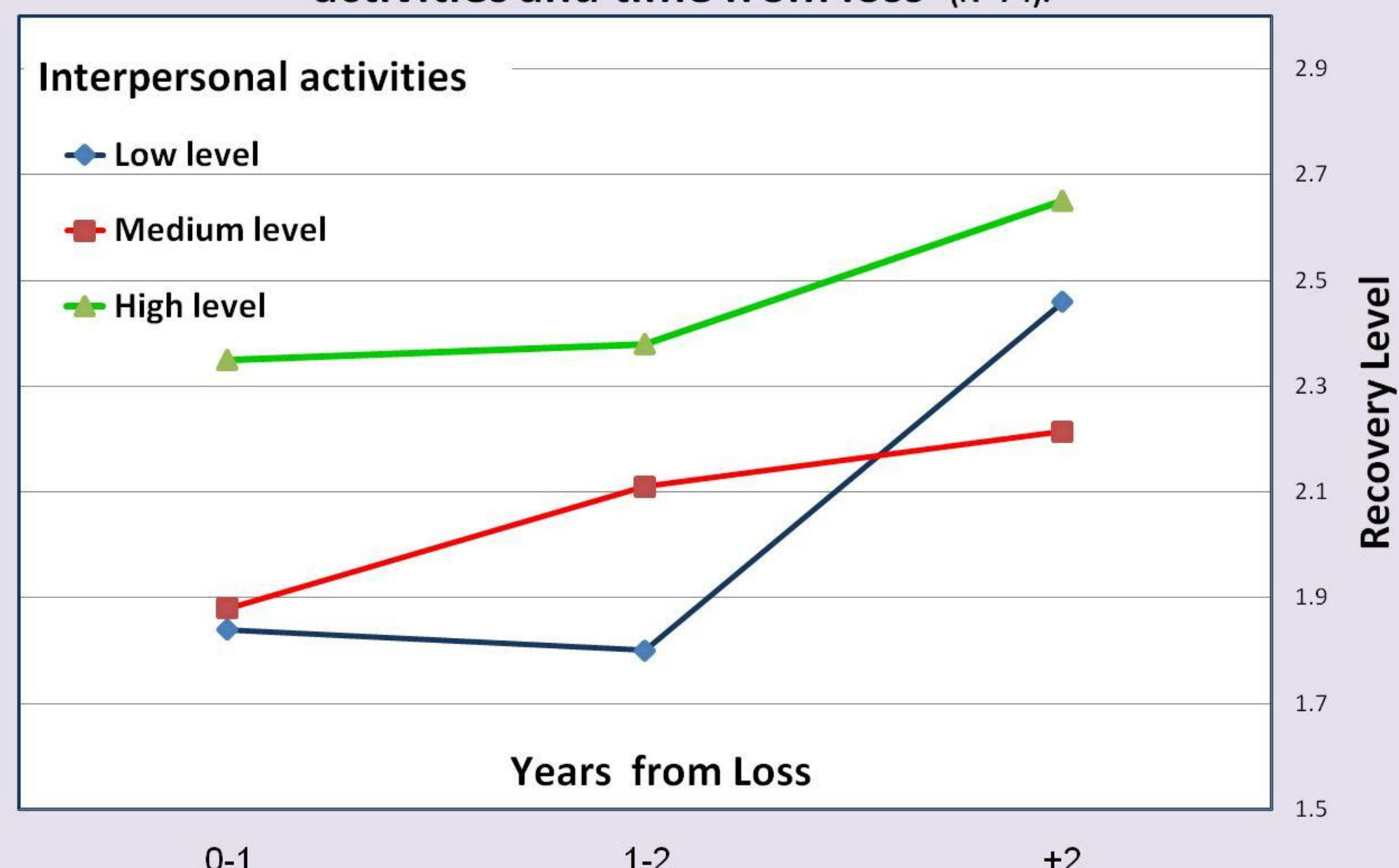


Table 1. Findings of multiple hierarchical regression analysis for recovery from stress levels in suicide survivors (N=74)

Model steps	Predictor variable	R ²	ΔR ²	Sig
1	Participation in Support Group	.049	.049	.031*
2	Time from Loss	.154	.105	.004**
3	Self Regulation	.256	.102	.003**
4	Social Support+ Self Disclosure	.308	.052	.027*

Conclusions

Support groups for suicide survivors are a helpful intervention tool and can serve as a powerful form of primary and secondary prevention. Social support as well as self disclosure to other survivors can facilitate growth from crisis (especially right after loss) and diminish feelings of guilt, shame and other psychiatric complications.