

EGAS MONIZ
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DAYS



IMPACT OF PET LOSS IN MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the emotional and psychological impact of pet loss in 70 adults aged 18–57. It aimed to assess grief, anxiety, coping strategies, and changes in social behavior. Results showed that younger adults reported stronger emotional bonds and more intense grief ($p = 0.035$). Most participants adapted over time, and no significant gender differences were found. Findings emphasize the need to recognize pet loss as a meaningful emotional experience, particularly in younger individuals.

INTRODUCTION

The loss of a pet can cause intense grief, often overlooked by society and mental health professionals. This study examines the emotional and social impacts of pet loss, including grief, anxiety, and coping strategies. It also explores how factors like age and the human-animal bond influence grief. By framing pet loss within the One Health framework, the study underscores the need for greater recognition of pet bereavement as a public mental health issue.

METHODOLOGY

Seventy adults (ages 18–57) who experienced pet loss completed an anonymous online survey. The survey included Likert-scale and closed-ended questions assessing emotional, behavioral, and coping responses. After providing informed consent, participants completed the 3–5 minute survey. Data were analyzed using SPSS with chi-square tests ($\alpha = 0.05$) to examine age and gender associations.

Scan to see the references:



RESULTS

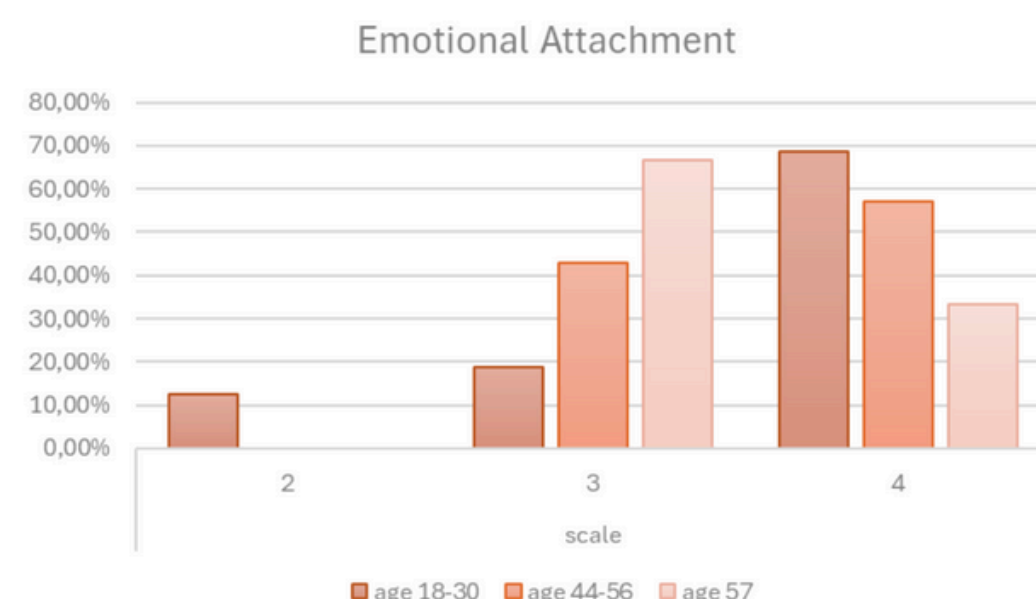


Fig. 1: comparison of values between age and emotional attachment.

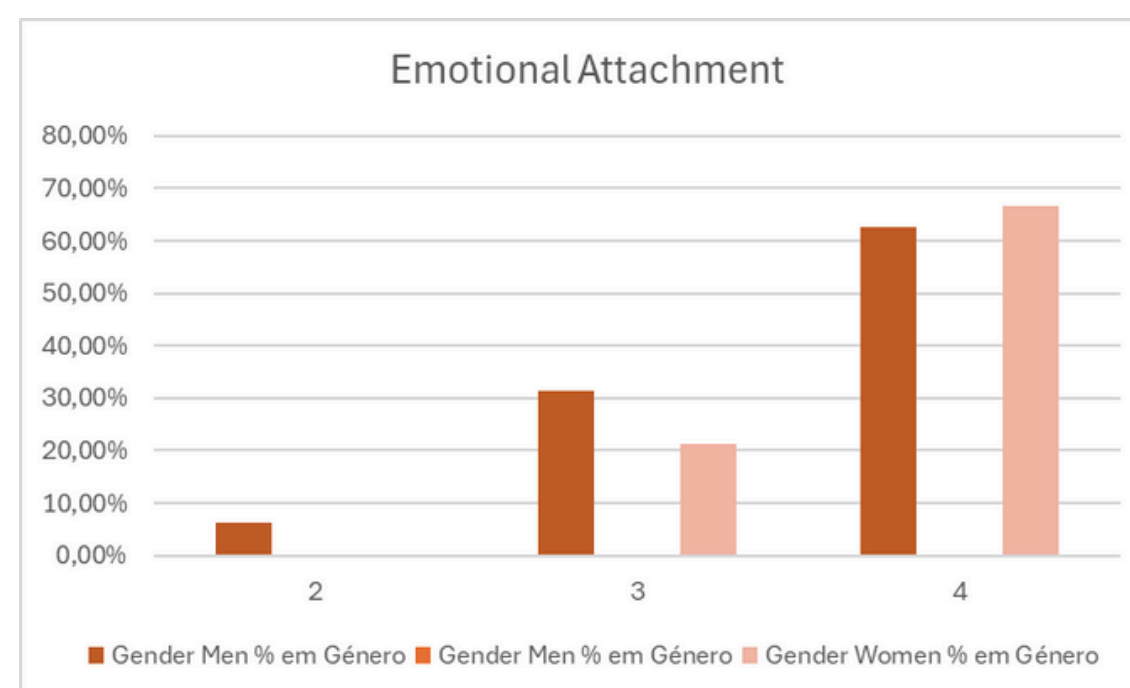


Fig.2: comparison of values between gender and emotional attachment

DISCUSSION

Pet loss affected all ages, with younger adults (18–30) showing stronger grief, attachment, and emotional impact. Older adults reported milder grief and more benefit from adopting a new pet. Most participants adapted over time, though religion was not a major coping tool. Social withdrawal and missed work were uncommon but more frequent in younger adults. Gender differences were minimal and not statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

Pet loss can trigger deep emotional responses, with grief varying by age, attachment, and coping style. While most adjust over time, some may need support. Recognizing pet loss as a meaningful event is essential, especially as pets are seen as family. Future research should explore long-term coping to better support the bereaved.