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A Comparative Study of Parental Bereavement's Impact on Resilience, Coping Mechanisms

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ABSTRACT

It has been reported that parental bereavement impacts the whole life of a person. The aim of this study was to compare the resilience and coping mechanisms of two groups consisting of people who lost their parents at two different age groups. Sample of 160 people above the age of 18 was taken and divided into two groups. The first group contained individuals who lost their parent/s between the ages 2-7 and group 2 contained individuals who lost their parent/s between the ages 16-21. The responses were collected using convenience sampling method and

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participants were asked for consent beforehand. The data was analysed using SPSS. The findings suggested that individuals who lost their parents between the age 2-7 showed more emotion focused avoidant focused coping whereas individuals who lost their parents between the age 16-21 showed more problem focused coping. Findings also indicated that there is no significant difference between resilience regardless of the age when the individual suffered parental bereavement.

Keywords: *Parental bereavement, resilience, coping*

INTRODUCTION

Parental bereavement is an expression for enduring the death of one or both parents. This is a highly life-changing experience which can have profound emotional, psychological and social effects on the individual's well-being. The death of a parent creates a lasting effect on the children or dependents and can sometimes also affect their attachment styles, resilience and coping mechanisms.

Dealing with a parental bereavement may appear to be quite challenging with lasting impacts on various aspects of life. It may involve a broad range of emotions including sadness, fury, loss of direction etc.

Kübler-Ross (1969) suggested the stages of grief, also known as Five Change stages. This model was proposed with the assumption that people accepting their death, or the death of a loved one might experience a series of emotional stages before finally accepting it. The five stages of grief include denial, anger, bargain, depression and acceptance.

However, it must be acknowledged that the Kübler-Ross model was originally developed from her work with terminally ill patients, and since has been popularized to the

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experience of grief. However, its applicability to grief has been a point of controversy and criticism.

Resilience

In definition, resilience is the ability to cope during the times of adversity, or when somebody experiences events which could be emotionally draining. It can also be defined as the ability to deal with challenges without excessive emotional stress. Resilience doesn't mean you will be immune to stress or other emotional trials, on the contrary, it manifests itself in the ability to handle every challenge flexibly, consistently and confidently. It is the availability of personal and contextual strategies such as social support, problem-solving skills, and coping strategies to overcome different kinds of difficulty. Resilience can be either a positive or a negative trait. To what extent a person is resilient to certain challenges depends not only on individual circumstances, but on the challenges they experience.

Coping Mechanism

Coping mechanisms are techniques which enable people to cope with stressful situations and the resultant unpleasant emotions. These habits assist in reducing stress levels or can sometimes even lead to undesirable outcomes depending on event appraisal.

Lazarus and Folkman identified two main types of coping strategies, (1) Problem-Focused Coping, which is a proactive technique to manage stress as it involves taking direct and immediate actions to reduce the stressor, and (2) Emotion-Focused Coping which involves controlling and managing emotional responses towards the stressor.

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METHODOLOGY

Aim

To understand the impact of parental bereavement on resilience and coping mechanisms.

Research Objectives

- To compare the resilience between two groups of people who suffered parental bereavement at different age groups.
- To compare the difference in coping mechanism between two group of people of suffered parental bereavement at different age groups.

Hypothesis

- There is no significant difference in resilience levels between individuals who experienced parental bereavement at different age groups.
- There is no significant difference in coping mechanisms between individuals who experienced parental bereavement at different age groups.

Variables

Independent variable: Parental bereavement

Dependent variable: Resilience, coping mechanism.

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Sample

Data of 160 individual has been collected. The ratio in both the age groups was kept same and the ratio of male and female was also maintained.

Measures

- **The Brief Resilience Scale:** Developed by Smith et al. (2008), the questionnaires for each sample were not identical but measured many of the same constructs. These questionnaires assessed a range of resilience-related constructs, other personal characteristics, coping styles, social relationships, and health related outcomes. The BRS is scored by reverse coding items 2, 4, and 6 and finding the mean of the six items.
- **The Brief-COPE:** It is a 28 item self-report questionnaire designed to measure effective and ineffective ways to cope with a stressful life event. The scale is often used in health-care settings to ascertain how patients are emotionally responding to a serious circumstance. The scale can determine an individual's primary coping styles with scores on three subscales; problem-focussed coping, emotion-focussed coping, and avoidant coping.

Analysis of Data

The research aims to compare the resilience and difference in coping mechanisms between people who lost their parents at two different ages.

Group 1(age 2-7)

Group 2 (age 16-21)

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The tools used to study included brief resilience scale and brief COPE. A sample of 160 individual was collected using snowball sampling method. Participants consented to the research and the confidentiality was maintained. The data was analysed using SPSS. The result table and graphs are as follows:

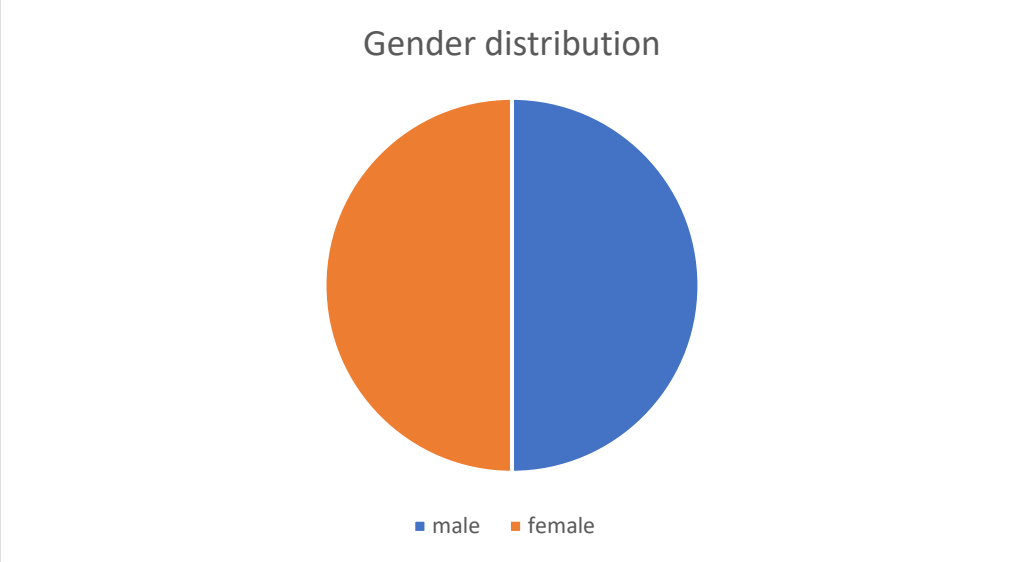

Figure 1

Gender Distribution in Sample

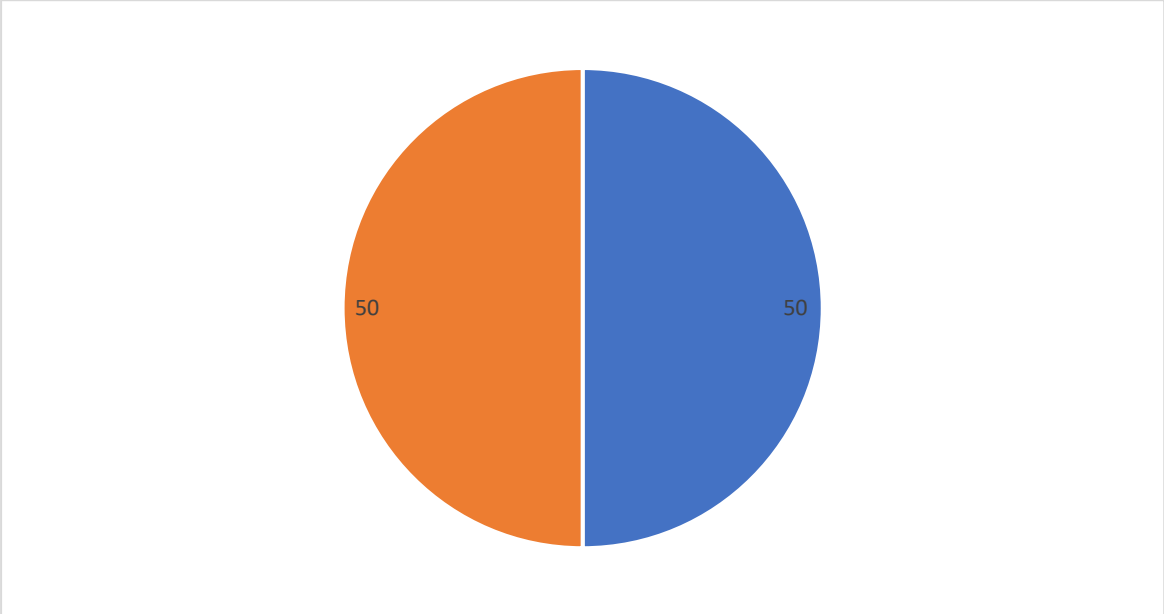

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Figure2

Sample group distribution

Group Statistics					
	age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
scores	2-9	80	2.7854	.77912	.08711
	16-23	80	2.9252	.60699	.06873

Table 3.1

Table 3.1 shows the mean and standard deviation of resilience scores. The mean scores indicate a little difference in the scores of resilience in the two groups. The mean value of group 1 is 2.785 and the mean value for group 2 is 2.9252. the standard deviation of both the groups were .0871 and .06873 for a total of 80 people in both groups.

Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
scores	Equal variances assumed	5.730	.018	-1.256	156
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.260	148.807

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Table 3.2

Independent Samples Test					
		t-test for Equality of Means			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
					Lower
scores	Equal variances assumed	.211	-.13980	.11130	-.35965
	Equal variances not assumed	.210	-.13980	.11096	-.35905

Independent Samples Test		
		t-test for Equality of Means
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
		Upper
scores	Equal variances assumed	.08006
	Equal variances not assumed	.07946

Table 3.3

Table 3.2 and 3.3 indicate the t test scores for resilience. The obtained p value is 0.018 indicating a significant difference in variance between the two groups. As the violation of the assumption of equal variances occurred, the test for equal means was done so under the assumption of unequal variances. The t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups (t = -1.256, df = 156, p = .211) in their scores (2-tailed).

The scores shows that no matter what are you suffer parental bereavement, it affects the resilience in almost the same way, which is why there was no difference in the resilience scores.

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Coping mechanism

Avoidant coping

Group Statistics					
	V2	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
avoidantcoping1	2-9	80	15.74	5.081	.568
	16-23	80	18.71	4.174	.467

Table 3.4

Table 3.4 shows the mean and the standard deviation of individual and their avoidant coping scores. The mean for group 1 comes out to be 15.74 and the mean for group 2 came out to be 18.71. the standard deviation of both group 1 and group 2 came out to be 0.566 and 0.467. this shows that there is a significant difference in the type of coping people do in their daily functioning.

Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
avoidantcoping1	Equal variances assumed	6.022	.015	-4.047	158
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.047	152.262

Independent Samples Test			
	t-test for Equality of Means		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference

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avoidantcoping1	Equal variances assumed	.000	-2.975	.735
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	-2.975	.735

Independent Samples Test			
		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
avoidantcoping1	Equal variances assumed	-4.427	-1.523
	Equal variances not assumed	-4.427	-1.523

Table 3.5

The above table shows that The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances does not show any significant finding for an assumption of equal variances ($F(158) = 6.022$, $p = .015$) indicating that the variances of the two groups being compared are not and will not be equal. Hence, a t-test for the Equality of Means can be utilized taking Equal variances into account.

The t-test for comparison of means shows a significant result ($t(158) = -4.047$, $p < .001$), this is, the difference between the means is statistically significant. The value of the Mean Difference is -2.975 (95% Confidence Interval – 4.427 1.523). In other words, the average scoring value of a group on avoidant-coping1 is -2.975 (SD)units below the group with the higher mean score, and we are(CI) 95% confident that the true difference is between -4.427 and -1.523.

On this basis, by means of the Independent Samples test, we could reach the conclusion that

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there is a significant difference of avoidant coping1 measures score between the two compared groups.

Problem focused coping

Group Statistics					
	age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
problemfocused	2-9	80	16.40	4.226	.473
	16-23	80	26.08	5.495	.614

Table 3.6

The above table shows the mean and the standard deviation of individual on problem focused domain. Group 1 has a mean of 16.40 and group 2 has a mean of 26.80. standard deviation of both groups being 0.473 and 0.614. this indicates a significant difference in coping of both the groups.

Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
problemfocused	Equal variances assumed	.734	.393	-12.483	158
	Equal variances not assumed			-12.483	148.237

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Independent Samples Test				
		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
problem focused	Equal variances assumed	.000	-9.675	.775
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	-9.675	.775

Independent Samples Test			
		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
Problem focused	Equal variances assumed	-11.206	-8.144
	Equal variances not assumed	-11.207	-8.143

Table 3.7

The t-test for The Equality of Means is a test on determination of significant difference between the means for two independent groups. On the left, there are two organizations: one for the Equal variances assumption and one for the Equal variances not assumed option.

For Equal variances assumed:

• with the test statistic (-12.483) being the number of degrees of freedom being 158.

• The p-value (Sig. (2-talling)) is 0.000, which is below the chosen significance level (0.05) (0.05).

• The average weighted result is -9.675, thence, the mean of the first group is less than the mean of the second group.

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For Equal variances not assumed

• The value of test statistic is -12.483 having the degrees of freedom 148.237.

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• The value of the test statistic is -12.483 , and the degrees of freedom is 148.237.

• The test statistics are -12.483 and df is 148.237.

• The value of the test statistic is -12.483 and the degrees of freedom is 148.237.

• The test statistic is -12.483 and the degrees of freedom is 148.237.

• The p-value (Sig. Hence, the (p-value) p-value comes to be 0.000 which is lesser the set significance level (0.05).

• This MD implies that the mean of group A is lower than the mean of group B.

The significance of p-value is lower than selected significance value (0.05) in both above cases and this suggests that there is a real difference between the means of the two groups. A Mean Difference hints that the average of first group falls besides the mean of second group.

Emotion focused coping

Group Statistics					
	V2	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
emotionfocused1	2-9	80	24.38	4.493	.502
	16-23	80	17.24	3.776	.422

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Table 3.8

The above table indicates the mean and standard deviation for scored on the problem focused domain. The mean of group 1 being 24.38 and mean of second group being 17.24, and the standard deviation being 0.502 and 0.422 respectively.

Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
emotionfocused1	Equal variances assumed	4.202	.042	10.877	158
	Equal variances not assumed			10.877	153.456

Independent Samples Test				
		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
emotionfocused1	Equal variances assumed	.000	7.138	.656
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	7.138	.656

Independent Samples Test			
		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
emotionfocused1	Equal variances assumed	5.841	8.434
	Equal variances not assumed	5.841	8.434

Table 3.8

The above table indicates that , According to Leven's test, the hypothesis of equal variances stands, but the obtained (F=4.202, p=0.042) p-value is a little bit close to the conventional level of significance of 0.05. Henceforth the testing process may proceed convincingly with the t-test supposing the common variance.

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The obtained t-test statistic is 10.877, yet with degrees of freedom number 158, and with two-tailed p-value being equal to 0.000, which is very significant. This says that we can be in the presence of moderate visual and auditory attention because the difference in the means of the two groups on the variable emotion-focused1 is statistically significant.

The difference between the two means is 7.138, with 0.656 as the standard error. On the 95% confidence interval distribution of the mean difference the range goes from 5.841 to 8.434 and does not cover zero, it can therefore been said that the mean of the two groups is significantly dissimilar.

In total, the finding reflects the statistically significant difference in the two groups on the parameter emotion focused coping by the highest mean scores of the first group than the second one.

DISCUSSION

80 people in each group making a equal ratio in both groups coming from the same socioeconomic background. This was done using snowball sampling. Brief COPE inventory is used to access coping mechanisms of people and how they deal with stress and Brief resilience scale is used to study the level of resilience in people from both the groups. Those agreed participated in the research and confidentiality was maintained. The data was analysed using SPSS.

Table 2 and 3shows the and mean as one of the scores of resilience and the mean differences of the groups are also taken into account. The independent sample t-test was made use of jointly

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with Levene test for the equalities of variances in order to discover the significance of the differences between groups' scores.

In case of violation of the homogeneity of variances assumption, the test for the equality of means was declared under the assumption of the unequal variance. The outcome of the selection of T has shown that there was no significant difference in the mean of both groups. in addition, the analysis also revealed these parts i.e. Levene's test for equality of variances and t-test for equality of means which are the value evoking parts laying the groundwork for the outcome of resilience differences between person with parental bereavement at different age groups.

Research yielded the result that confirms that there is undoubtedly a more significant change in the variance between the two groups variance that is statistically significant. This then means either different degrees of variability where the two groups should get resilience scores leading to that or the differences might be due to other factors such as age at which the bereavement occurred, or, the processes used to cope, and the level of individual differences. It is possible that the obstruction of knowledge might even be caused by the inner chaos of differences in understanding. Resiliency shows itself through different facets of our personalities and what shape it takes depends on the intricacy of factors like your biological predispositions, psychological health, or the environment and its impact on you. This is associated with the need to find the equal resilience scores between the group without and the group with parental bereavement. Such a combination can demonstrate that parental loss regardless of whether you are a child or adult has no association with resilience rate

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Table 3.4 and 3.5 show the scores of the avoidant coping mechanism individual use to deal with stress and conflicts. Scores indicate that there is a significant difference between the means of two groups. It shows that individuals lying in 16-21 age group show lower avoidant coping styles as compared to individuals lying in 2-7age group. Avoidant coping is a psychological strategy people resort to when dealing with stress or countering emotional pain by just avoiding the trigger of stress or absorbing themselves for some time in something that diverts their mind away from the problem instead of facing or managing the problem efficiently. Diverse mechanisms that eventually allow people to evade the emotional turmoil are applied, which involve for example denial, suppression of emotions, alcohol/drug abuse, delay of action, or isolation from social relations. While avoidant coping might help to calm down for a while, it is more likely to result in long-term consequences as these issues will be left unspotted and might even becoming worse. It is not only a form of denial which can make victims exclude themselves from support they might need but also can be a very serious barrier which does not even let them attempt the adequate actions to deal with their issues.

A number of research has evinced the fact that it is believed that children who have lost the presence of their parents are more like to apply avoidant coping styles to deal with their sorrow. The style of avoidant coping is to try to just bypass or to dismiss thoughts and feeling that may relate to loss. A study conducted implies that this type of coping mechanism is more like a short relief and an obstruction to a long-lasting adaptation to the grief if no thorough processing of grief takes place (e.g., Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

Table 3.6 and table 3.7 shows the coping scores of individual in the problem focused domain, indicating that there is a significant difference in their coping styles. Group 2 which contains the people who lost their parents between the age of 16-21 show more problem focused coping than people who lost their parents between the ages 2-7. Problem-oriented coping is a method of stressor management whereby individuals actively work to resolve the

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stress or problem that is the main issue or source of stress. Instead of running from it or unable to get any, they actively search for answers and help instigate procedures and strategies which turn the situation round. Problem-focused coping is particularly efficient when the person has some degree of control over the matter and is able to engage in specific classes of actions aimed at alleviating the stressor. Research conducted by Bonanno and Kaltman (1999) explored the coping mechanisms of adults who had learned to manage without their parents They discovered that individuals who lost their parents typically used less problem-focused coping styles, such as appealing for practical solutions to the stressor.

Table 3.8 and table 3.9 show the coping scores on the emotion focused domain. The scores indicate that group 1 shows more emotion focussed coping as compared to group 1. We can say that individual who lose their parents at a younger age show more emotion focused coping than who lost at an older age. When an individual utilizes emotion-focused coping, they are employing a psychological technique to deal with the emotional strain that is brought on by a stressor, instead of trying to address the stressor itself. Individuals do not address the circumstances but how they liken their feeling and find ways cope with this emotion. Emotion-focused coping can come of good help when a person is unable to have immediate control over the situation or does not as such have to power to address or combat it. Rationally, there is no direct solution to the problem but it can aid the individual to maintain emotional composure, and ultimately can boost a person's general wellness and ability to adapt to unfavourable situations.

Attachment theory claims that the way in which people attach to caregivers like, parents on the one hand is linked with their ability to face stress and the experience of loss in all future periods of their lives. A teenage child who loses parent at a young age may disrupt childhood attachments, which can be a reason for those who wants get emotional support and comfort from other people during grieving.

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Many longitudinal studies that followed individuals who lost a parent at different times at different ages have typically shown that those who went through this at childhood and adolescence levels tend to deal with emotional distress and rely more on emotion-based coping mechanisms as compared to those who lost their parents by adulthood.

It should be highlighted that in this regard both strategy of problem-solving and emotion-focusing are of great importance and it may be a good idea to combine both kinds when needed, depending on the traits of the stressor and person's personal preferences and resources.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand the impact of parental bereavement on attachment styles, resilience, coping mechanisms on individuals who suffered the loss at different age groups. Studies have shown a significant impact of parental bereavement on coping mechanisms. Brief COPE inventory is used to access coping mechanisms of people and how they deal with stress and Brief resilience scale is used to study the level of resilience in people from both the groups. A sample of 160 individuals was taken who were 18 and older.

Results indicated that there is no significant difference in the resilience of people who lost their parents at an early age than at an older age. There may be other factors contributing to the resilience, but age was not one. The scores also indicated that individuals who lost their parents between the ages 2-7 showed more emotion focused coping and avoidant coping techniques whereas individual who lost their parent(s) between the ages of 16-21 showed more problem focused coping techniques.

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