

# Research on Emotional Support Provided by Online Community

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**Abstract:** Psychological studies have demonstrated that, like physical help, emotional support can hasten the grieving process. My selected area of study is how the /r/petloss forum of the internet Reddit community can support people going through the mourning process of losing a pet emotionally. I mostly looked into two issues. First, whether griever can get emotional support in internet networks. In order to determine whether the six most popular posts offered emotional support to people who were in need of assistance and those who were experiencing distress, I looked at and recorded the psychological changes of the posters themselves as well as the number of encouraging comments and replies each post received. Second, what practices are the majority in the neighborhood among mourners? Write lengthy articles, brief videos, or other? I looked for 15 mourning postings and organized the data in Word and Excel to list the six most popular posts so I could monitor how each mourned. Two sections make up the majority of the conclusion. The first finding is that mourners might receive emotional assistance from online networks in the form of inspiration and consolation. The second conclusion is that, because lengthy words are better able to capture people's inner selves, writing long words is the most typical approach for people to communicate their grief after losing a pet.

**Keywords:** Online community, Emotional support, Pet lost.

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## 1. Introduction

My chosen research topic is to study how an online community can provide emotional support for people in the process of grief through the theme of /r/petloss in subreddit. I think sadness, as a psychological process, has been deeply studied by various disciplines. Psychological research shows that emotional support is similar to physical support, and plays a positive role in accelerating the process of sadness. In today's world, network culture, together with network community, has become an indispensable part of many people's lives. Subreddit provides insights into the interaction between members of the online community about specific grief processes. I also chose this subreddit to learn how an online community can provide emotional support to people in the process of grief.

In my research, I mainly studied two problems. RQ1: Does online community provide emotional support for mourners? I use the original subreddit to see if the community provides emotional support for those seeking help and those in distress. I plan to survey the six most viewed posts to see how many supportive comments/responses there are in each. RQ2: How do mourners like to mourn? Write a long Lyric? Photos of the past with little pets? Or a little video? I plan to look for the first 15 mourning posts and see how they express their mourning. I plan to use Excel and word to organize the data. I plan to get a spreadsheet listing six of the most popular mourning posts to track how each post mourns the little pet.

The conclusion I got mainly consists of two parts. The first conclusion is that online community can provide emotional support such as encouragement and comfort for mourners. The second conclusion is that after people lose their pets, the most common way is to write long lyric words to express their

sadness, because long words can better reflect people's inner world.

## 2. Literature Review

Walter investigated into the newly emerged online mourning practice [1]. The study suggested that while online mourners get greater freedom compared with traditional mourners, they also faces increased pressure to conform to group norms as to who should be mourned and how. The idea of increased social pressure to conform is particularly interesting as most posts I observed in the subreddit takes really similar format, which includes the pets' names, the fact that it passed away, and sometime remarkably similar methods of narratives.

Phillips suggested that online community served as a vehicle in moving the traditionally private grief process more public. [2]

Hartig and Viola suggested positive influence of online grief [3]. Through a longitudinal study on 185 subject, the paper concluded a promotive effect of online support communities in helping relieve the grief. A positive correlation between tenure in an online support community and severity of grief was found.

## 3. Methods

I used a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. As for data mobile phone, I mainly use Excel and word to organize data, and then get a spreadsheet to list the six most popular Memorial posts, so as to track the number of supporting comments / replies in each post. I also prepared a word document, listed 15 most popular Memorial posts, and observed their similarities in narrative method, choice of specific words, sentence structure and so on. In terms of data visualization, I use a bar chart to show the

number of supporting comments / replies for each of the six most viewed posts. I also used a pie chart to show the percentage of the 15 most viewed posts with similar attributes.

#### 4. Findings and Analysis

I have analyzed three problems, which can be summarized as follows: Whether online community can provide emotional support for mourners or not, what ways do mourners like to mourn and why do people prefer to use long text to express the grief of losing pets

#### 4.1. Whether online community can provide emotional support for mourners or not

Can online community provide emotional support for mourners? I use the original subreddit to see if the community provides emotional support for those who seek help and those who are in the process of grief. I surveyed six of the most viewed posts to see how many supportive comments/responses there were in each. Each post has more than 20 encouraging or comforting responses. I selected 30 comments, and counted the responses of each author with "encouragement", "comfort" and "blessing", and got the following pie chart.

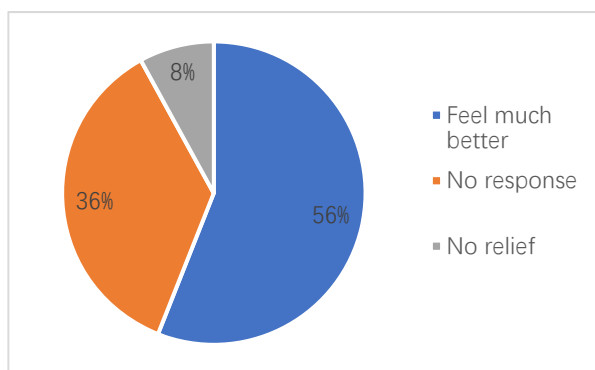


Figure 1. Whether online community can provide emotional support for mourners

We can clearly see that 56% of the authors said that under the comfort of netizens, the pain of losing their pets has been alleviated. From this we can see that the network community can certainly provide emotional support for mourners. I have made the following analysis based on the theory of psychology. In fact, everyone hopes to be comforted in the most difficult time. The comfort on the Internet is that it requires us to connect our mental strength with each other and try to experience the inner activities they may be experiencing. It's a sense of empathy. When you sympathize with each other and comfort each other, everyone is no longer a spectator. The

Internet connects all the people who have emotional resonance.

#### 4.2. What ways do mourners like to mourn

Sorted by hot, I searched for the top 20 mourning posts. I have made a hypothesis that when the author writes more than 150 words, it will be recorded as "long writing", while those less than 150 words will be recorded as "short writing". Based on the statistics of these 20 Memorial posts, I draw the following bar chart:

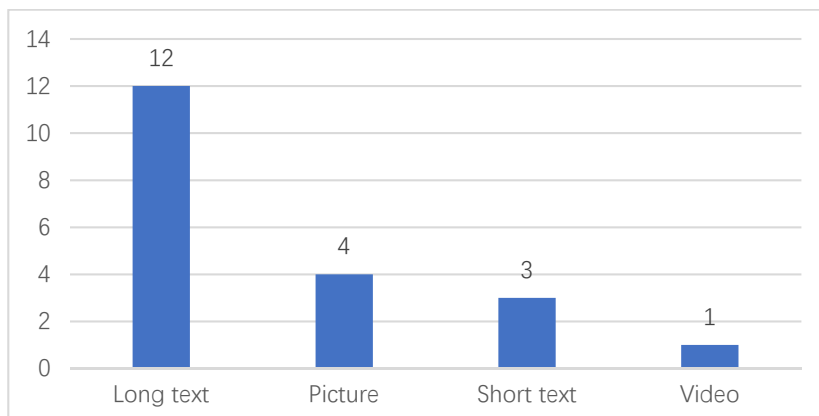


Figure 2. What ways do mourners like to mourn

By looking at the bar chart, we can see that the most common way of mourning for the loss of pets is to write long texts, followed by pictures and short texts. There are also a small number of people who use small videos. From this, I come to the conclusion that compared with other multimedia means, words can better reflect people's inner world. I made

the following analysis. Words are used to express thoughts and feelings. All kinds of feelings and thoughts can be expressed. I think it's very easy for long texts to arouse people's "empathy.". Empathy is that it requires us to connect our mental energy with each other and try to experience the

inner activities that they may be experiencing. It's a sense of empathy.

### 4.3. Why do people prefer to use long text to express the grief of losing pets

I searched for the first 15 mourning posts in the form of long words. The most common way of mourning is to write

long text, followed by long words and a few pictures. Compared with other multimedia means, maybe words can better reflect people's inner world. Here's my ranking of how words resonate with me and I draw a bar chart and a pie chart:

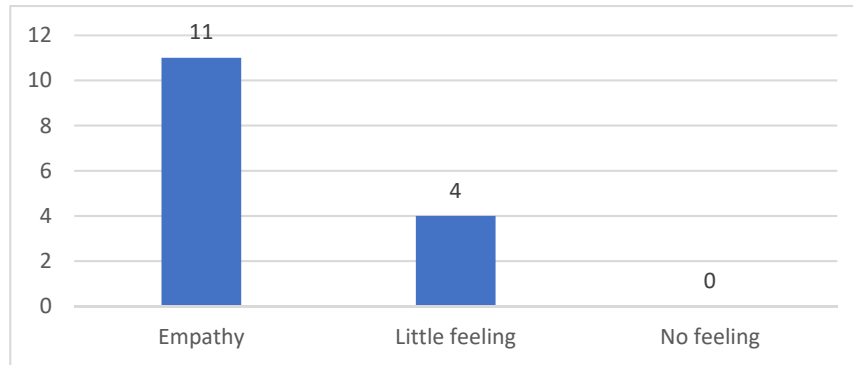


Figure 3. The feeling that long article brings to me

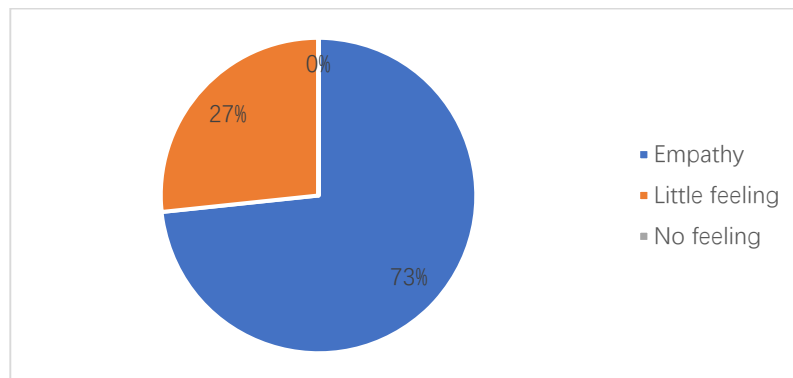


Figure 4. The feeling that long article brings to me

Through the analysis, I think people prefer to use long words to express their grief about the loss of pets. There are three reasons. First, because of the restriction of the Internet, people can't speak. In this case, long words can really express feelings. When people have strong feelings. You can always go on and on, and this way is reflected as "long text" on the Internet. Second, the use of long words can arouse people's empathy. Empathy requires us to expend psychological energy, which is a process of willpower. As a recipient, when you feel this empathy, you will feel the sincere concern and unconditional love of the giver. Third, the use of long text is also convenient for the author to recall, look back on his mind at that time, and really bid farewell to his pet.

## 5. Conclusion

The conclusion I got mainly consists of two parts. The first conclusion is that online community can certainly provide emotional support for mourners. Using the original subreddit, I surveyed six of the most viewed posts, each of which had more than 20 encouraging or comforting responses. The second conclusion is that the most common way for people to express their sadness after losing their pets is to write long

lyric words. I searched for the first 15 mourning posts. The most common way of mourning is to write long texts, followed by long texts and a small number of pictures. Compared with other multimedia means, long text can better reflect people's inner world.

The data sample group is limited because I only gathered 5 postings and their first and second level comments. Increase the sample size of the data by collecting more posts and associated comments. More precise results can be formed from the study of massive data samples.

## References

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