

“I’m Going to Church Anyway”

The Impact of Spirituality on Parental Grief

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Background

Bereaved parents have spiritual needs

Spirituality helps parents find meaning in loss

Spiritual coping strategies improve mental health outcomes among bereaved parents

Study Aims

To describe the impact of spirituality on bereavement for parents who have lost children to cancer

To evaluate how bereaved parents' spiritual journeys impact grief and meaning making

Methods

29 parents; 1-3 years after the loss of their child to cancer

Semi-structured interview specific to bereavement coping strategies

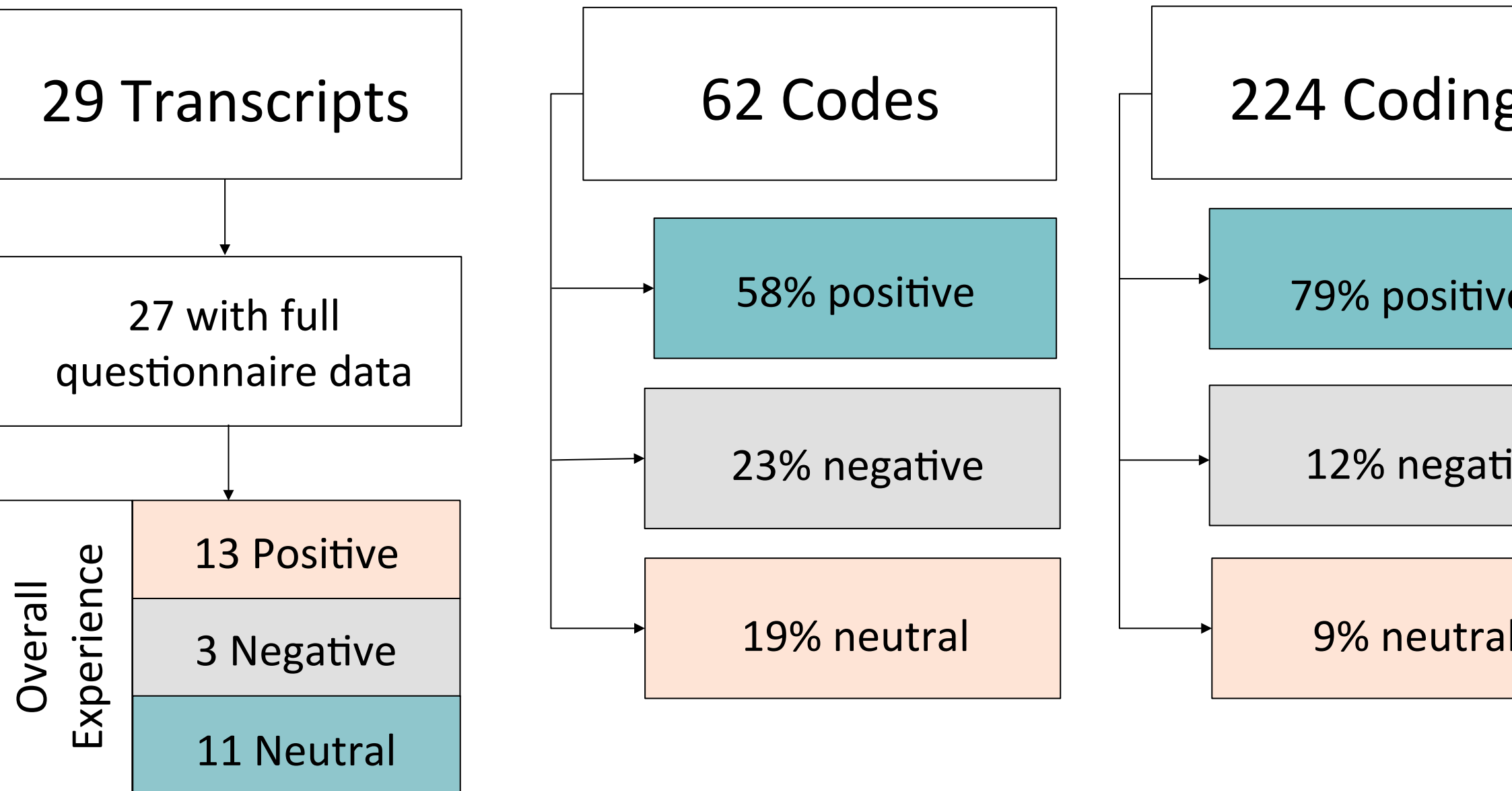
Did not specifically query spirituality

Completed grief-related questionnaires

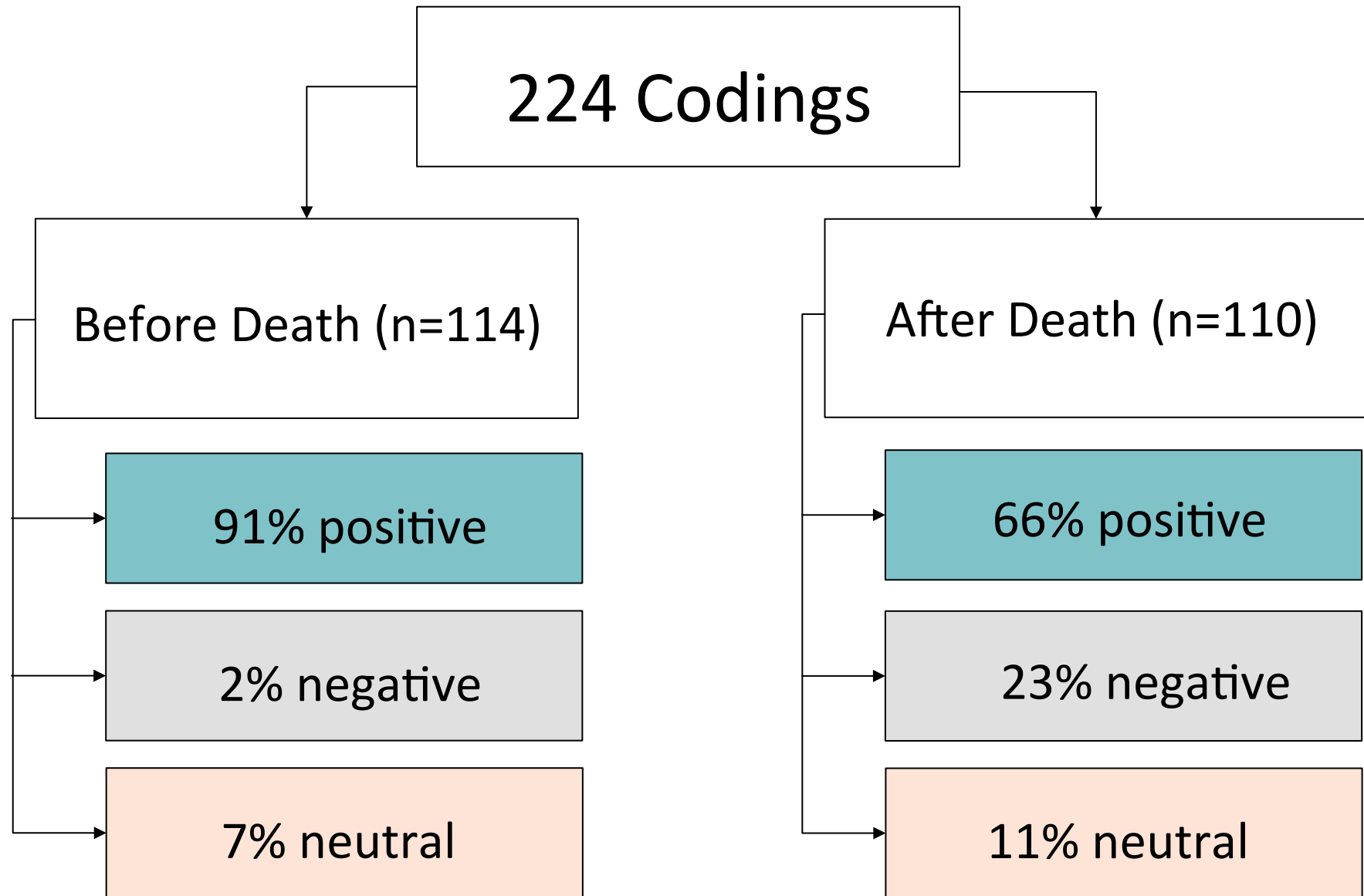
Interviews were transcribed then coded using content analysis technique; spirituality codes were noted

Spirituality codes were categorized as having positive, negative, or neutral valence

Valence of Spiritual Experiences



Spirituality Before and After Dea

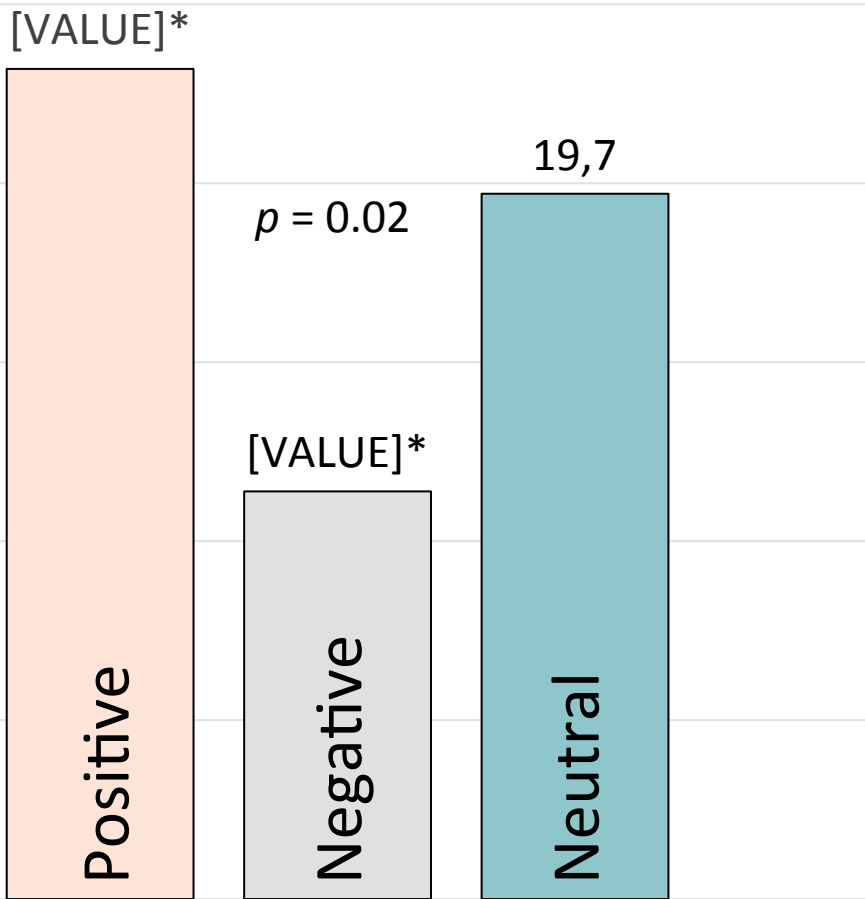


Representative Statements

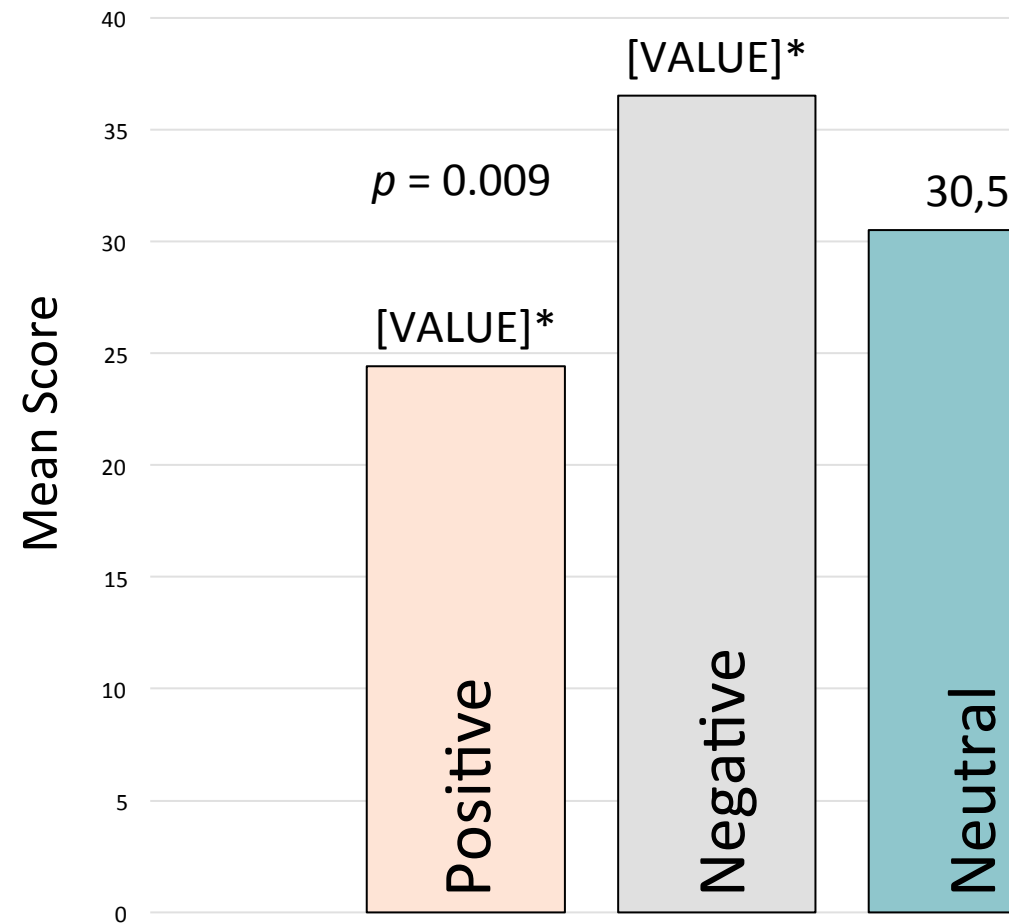
| Code | | Codes (n=224) | Transcripts (n=29) | Representative Quote |
|----------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Positive | Heaven | 29 (12%) | 15 (52%) | <i>"We're one day closer to seeing her again"</i> |
| | Prayer | 24 (11%) | 10 (34%) | <i>"You know, I still, every night, I say my prayers for my son, I come to finish with my prayers and (Child)."</i> |
| Negative | Prayers not answered | 7 (3%) | 5 (17%) | <i>"God answers your prayers, and... we pray for our children, but our prayers weren't answered... what happened?"</i> |
| | Why God? | 6 (3%) | 5 (17%) | <i>"But, you know, at the end of the day, I still wonder why God saves one child but dies another (Child)."</i> |
| Neutral | Faith is a struggle | 5 (2%) | 3 (10%) | <i>"As far as faith... that's been a struggle since my son passed."</i> |
| | Bargaining with God | 3 (1%) | 2 (7%) | <i>"Take me instead of him."</i> |

Impact of Valence of Spirituality on Gr

Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale



Parental Grief Questionnaire



Conclusions

Many bereaved parents rely on spirituality to cope during their children's illnesses, death and bereavement

Parents' experiences with spirituality are complicated by their children's deaths

Positive spiritual experiences in bereavement are associated with increased meaning-making and decreased symptoms of prolonged grief among bereaved parents

Clinical Implications

Clinicians must recognize the importance of spirituality in coping and provide spiritual support (either personally or via other team members)

Many bereaved parents are comforted by beliefs in seeing their child in the afterlife and the belief that they maintain a connection with their children

Families for whom spirituality is not an important coping mechanism still benefit from exploring ongoing connectedness with their deceased children