

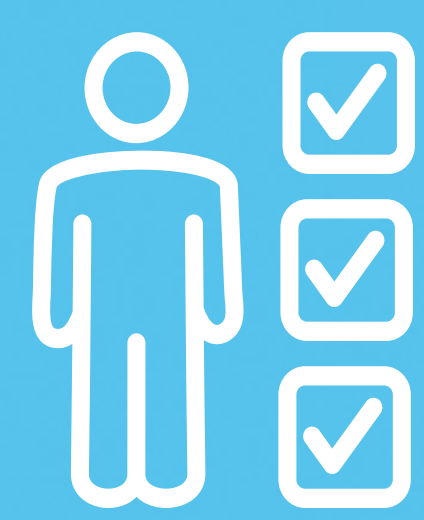
Grief Over the Loss of a Partner: The Bed as a Trigger for Emotional Distress

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Introduction

Partner bereavement is associated with depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and increased mortality. Everyday cues such as significant dates, objects, or shared places may trigger emotional distress. Although the shared bed is a central space of intimacy, attachment, and security, its role as a grief trigger has received little empirical attention.

The objective was to examine the extent to which the shared bed triggers distress after partner loss and compare its impact with other common grief-related cues.



Method

A cross-sectional study was conducted with 174 adults. Participants rated the distress associated with 10 common grief-related cues, including the previously shared bed, photographs, special dates, songs, holidays, and places. Repeated-measures ANOVA was used to compare distress across cues, exploratory factor analysis examined the underlying structure of the scale, and Spearman correlation analyses assessed the relationships between the different grief-related cues.

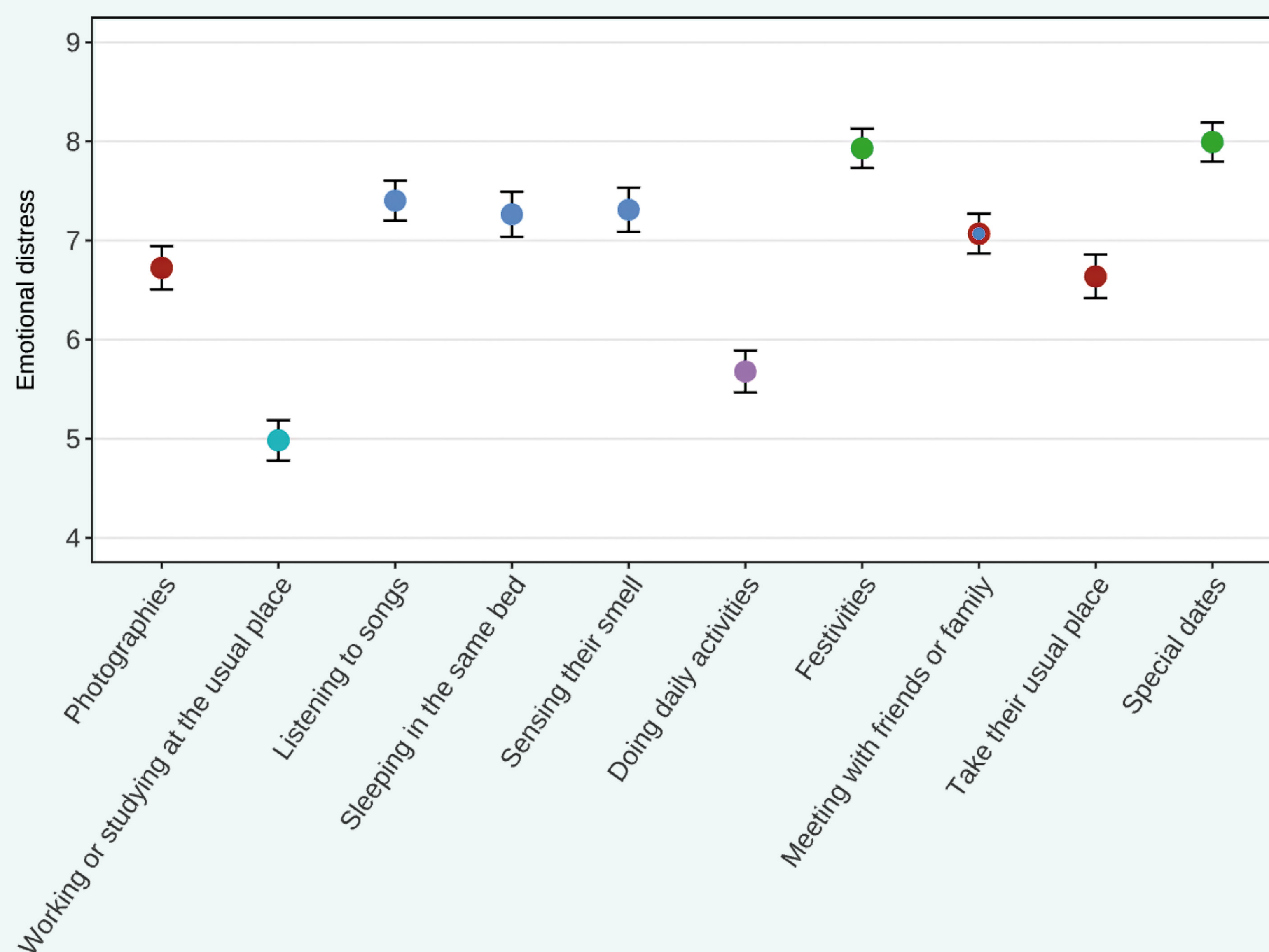


Results

The shared bed emerged as one of the strongest grief triggers, ranking alongside hearing a meaningful song and smelling the deceased partner's scent. Only holidays and special dates were associated with higher distress (Figure 1).

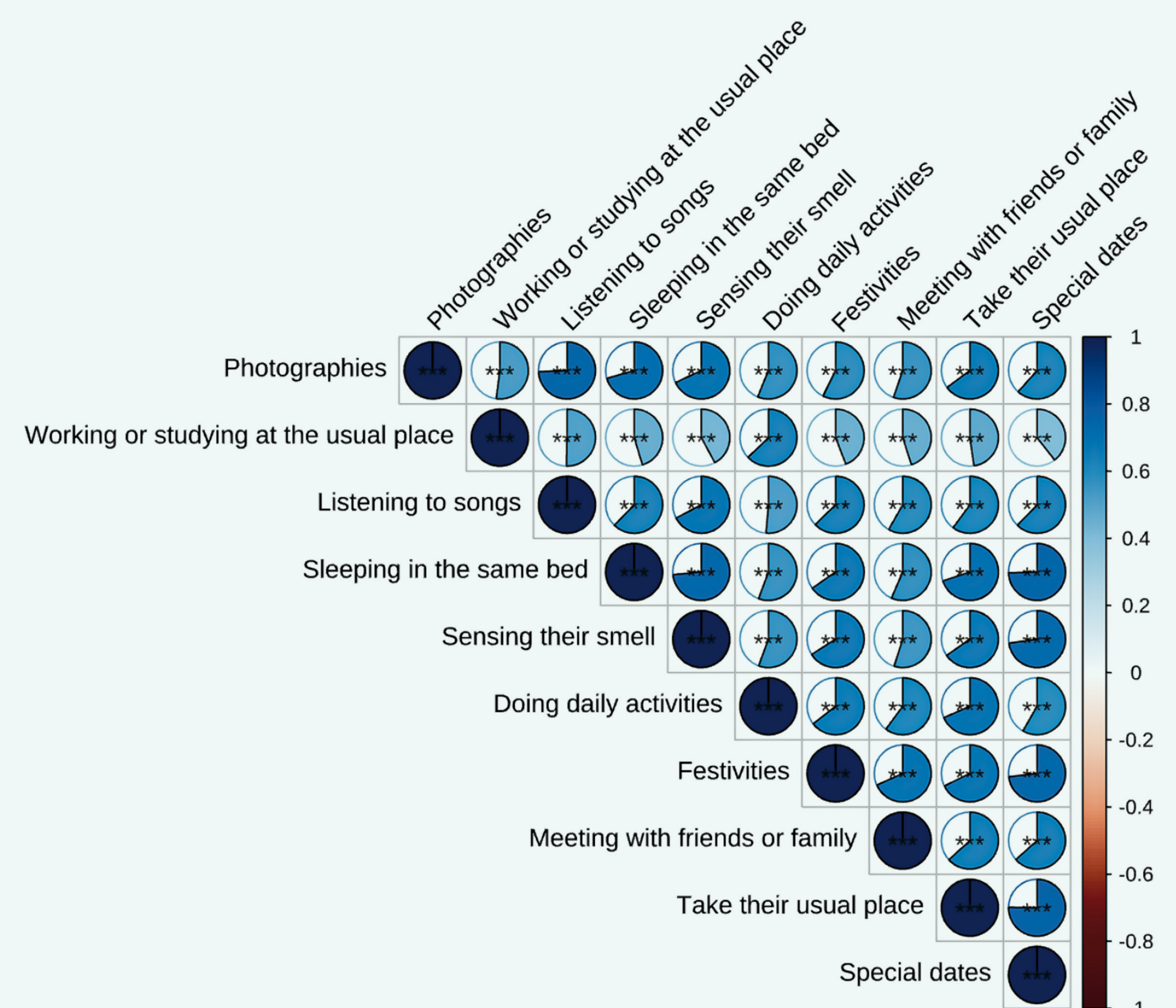
Correlation analyses showed that all grief cues were positively associated. The shared bed displayed particularly strong relationships with viewing photographs and special dates (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Multiple Comparisons for Repeated Measures



Note: Items with different colors are statistically significantly different, whereas those with the same color are not statistically distinguishable.

Figure 2. Spearman Correlation Coefficients Between the Different Items



Exploratory factor analysis supported a single underlying construct, suggesting that all cues reflect a common dimension of grief-triggering capacity ($KMO = .935$; Bartlett's $\chi^2(45) = 1670.57$, $p < .001$).



Conclusion

The shared bed is one of the most emotionally salient everyday grief triggers following partner loss. These findings emphasize that grief is shaped not only by the absence of the loved one but also by the everyday environments that preserve the attachment bond. Recognising these triggers may improve grief assessment and support more targeted psychological interventions.