



Original Article:

Factors Related to Life satisfaction, Meaning of life, Religiosity and Death Anxiety in Health Care Staff and Students: A Cross Sectional Study from India.

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Citation

Latha KS, Sahana M, Mariella D, Subbannayya K, Asha K. Factors Related to Life satisfaction, Meaning of life, Religiosity and Death Anxiety in Health Care Staff and Students: A cross Sectional Study from India. *Online J Health Allied Scs.* 2013;12(2):7. Available at URL: <http://www.ojhas.org/issue46/2013-2-7.html>

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<http://openmed.nic.in/view/subjects/ojhas.html>

Submitted: Apr 20, 2013; Accepted: Jul 1, 2013; Published: Aug 25, 2013

Abstract: Death is beyond one's personal control, generates great concern and anxiety, among human beings. Studies exploring the association between religious attitudes and death attitudes in adolescents and young adults in postmodern society are scarce. This study examines the relationship between five dimensions of attitude toward death (fear of death, death avoidance, neutral acceptance, approach acceptance, and escape acceptance), death anxiety, life satisfaction and meaning, religiosity and selected personal factors among health care staff and students in three teaching hospitals. A total of 230 adolescents and adults both sexes who were willing participated. Diener et al Satisfaction with Life, Steger et al Meaning of Life Questionnaire; Templer's Death Anxiety Scale, Wong's Death Attitude Profile-R and a religious attitude scale were administered. Findings showed students' search for meaning was higher than faculty. An unusual finding of higher Approach acceptance death attitude in students emerged. Correlation analysis revealed that presence of meaning was related to greater life satisfaction in both groups. It was further related to higher religiosity in both groups and higher neutral acceptance of death and lesser death anxiety in students alone. In both groups search for meaning was positively associated with death anxiety. Faculty's search for meaning was positively associated with negative death attitudes and surprisingly one positive death attitude. Death anxiety was more with faculty's advancing age, and was also more when both groups held negative death attitudes. Religiosity was positively associated with death anxiety in students. Further, religiosity was not only positively associated with positive death attitudes of approach acceptance (both groups) and neutral acceptance (faculty) but also with negative attitude of death avoidance

(faculty). Death anxiety was more despite both groups embracing approach acceptance death attitude indicating ambivalent death views.

Key Words: Death Attitudes; Death Anxiety; Religiosity; Life satisfaction; Meaning in life.

Introduction:

Death is beyond one's personal control and generally generates great concern and anxiety, among human beings. It is the single universal event that affects all of us in ways more than we care to know [1-3]. Yet, it is very essential to be cognizant of the fact that people vary in the ways they view death. Some are threatened by death, while others see it as a natural end; still some others avoid thinking about death. Accordingly, people may or may not experience death anxiety.

Meaning one ascribes to life can also determine the amount of death anxiety experienced and death attitudes held. Conversely, attitudes towards death can define personal meaning and determine how we live [4-6].

All Religions offer a framework to cope with death related concerns. Traditionally religion is believed to offer ways to comprehend unpredictability and finality of death and help to reduce anxieties stemming from prospect of death. However, how religion may have differing influences on death attitudes depends on the varied religious attitudes people may have. For example studies by Cohen et al (2005) [7] showed that intrinsic religiosity (i.e., experiencing religion as a master motive in one's life) was negatively related to death anxiety while extrinsic religiosity (i.e., using religion to gain some end such as emotional support) was positively related to death anxiety.

Life satisfaction is defined as a positive cognitive evaluation of one's life, and an important indicator of subjective well-being [8]. Having a meaningful and purposeful framework of life can enhance satisfaction with life, and a satisfied life can give a feeling of adequate closure preventing one from developing undue anxiety and negative attitudes towards death.

There is a paucity of Indian studies exploring differences in death attitudes related correlates between different age groups. In addition, studies examining interrelations of death related correlates in different age samples are scarce.

Therefore, the present study is aimed at examining differences in five dimensions of attitudes toward death (fear of death, death avoidance, neutral acceptance, approach acceptance, and escape acceptance), death anxiety, life satisfaction, meaning and religiosity between health care faculty and students in four teaching hospitals.

The investigation further purports to examine the interrelations between death attitudes, death anxiety, meaning, religiosity and life satisfaction among health care faculty and students.

Methods

Participants:

Two hundred and thirty subjects (130 students and 100 faculties) of both sexes participated. The students were from different health care disciplines: under graduate medical students, post graduates in various medical and allied science specializations, nursing students and doctoral candidates. They hailed from four teaching hospitals: Kasturba Medical College (Manipal & Mangalore); KVG. Medical College, Sullia & Dr.A.V.Baliga Hospital, Udupi. The faculty also belonged to same institutions. Consenting participants were invited in small groups of 10-15 and briefed about the nature of study and questionnaires were administered.

Tools & Instruments

- Satisfaction with Life (Diener et al 1985)**[8]: A five item scale measuring individual's evaluation of satisfaction with life in general. Higher score suggests satisfaction with life. Research has established acceptable psychometric properties for the SWLS [9]
- The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006)**[10] : A 10-item scale with two subscales tapping presence and search of meaning in life on a 7-point Likert scale. The Presence of Meaning subscale measures how full respondents feel their lives are of meaning. The Search for Meaning subscale measures how engaged and motivated respondents are in efforts to find meaning or deepen their understanding of meaning in their lives.
- Templer Death Anxiety Scale (Templer 1970)**:[11] A self-administered 15-item scale rated as true or false. High scores indicate high death anxiety while low scores indicate low death anxiety.
- Death Attitude Profile-R (Wong et al 1994)** :[12] A multidimensional measure of attitudes towards death consisting 32 items scored on a 7-point Likert scale and used to determine the following attitudes towards death:
 - Approach Acceptance attitude**- Reflects the belief in an afterlife and a desire to go there.
 - Fear of Death**- An individual's awareness of the realities of death, thus revealing the willingness to be aware of their mortality as opposed to being in denial of death.
 - Death Avoidance** - Avoidance of thinking or talking about death to reduce death anxiety.
 - Neutral Acceptance**- Death is neither feared nor welcomed.

- Escape Acceptance** - A view of accepting death as an alternative to life filled with pain and misery.

- Personal Meaning Profile: (Wong, 1998)**:[13] A 57-item 7 point Likert scale yields scores reflecting strength of an individual's general sense of meaning and purpose in life and has subscales in seven specific life domains .This study used the 9 item Religion subscale.

Results

There were 230 participants, wherein 130 were students and 100 were faculty. Among students, majority were between 20-25 years whereas, among faculty majority belonged to the age range of 25 -45 years. The mean age of students was 22.9 (SD-2.17 and the mean age of faculty were 37.4 (SD-11.81). Majority of the participants in both the groups were predominantly females (60% in faculty and 57% in students). Among the students except 5 out of 130, all were single. Whereas, among the faculty who were older than the students were in general, 66% were married and 33% were single. Majority of the students (39%) and faculty (84%) were Hindus and among students there were nearly 30% who were Muslims medical undergraduates and 17% were Buddhists. There were 14% of Christians and 2% of Muslims among the faculty.

Majority of the students (64%) and faculty (59%) hailed from urban areas. 27% of students and 32 % of faculty came from suburbs. Both students (91%) and faculty (81%) predominantly belonged to nuclear families. In the previous 6 months, 17.6% among students and 11% among faculty had experienced a life event. Death of a significant other was the most common life event. Among students 44.6% and among faculty 25% had ongoing psychosocial problems. Health of significant others, financial and relationship problems in that order were prominent among students, while among the faculty financial and health of others were significant concerns. The presence of physical illness was 13.1%among students and 8% among faculty. Substance use was reported by 13% of students and 8% of the faculty. Alcohol was the most common substance used in both the groups.

Table 1: Distribution of Mean scores & S.D. of Life Satisfaction, Meaning in Life, Death Anxiety, Death attitudes & Religiosity across Groups

Variable	Student (N-130) Mean (SD)	Faculty(N-100)Mean (SD)	F value DF (228)	p value
Life satisfaction	25.55(5.33)	26.35(5.09)	.690	.251
Meaning in life (Presence)	26.53(5.41)	27.06(5.81)	.135	.472
Meaning in life (Search)	24.29(7.05)	21.92(7.55)	.336	.016*
Death Anxiety	6.59(1.99)	6.09(2.27)	.018	.081
DAP* Approach Acceptance	2.47(.623)	2.16(.786)	3.75	.002**
DAP-Fear of Death	2.22(.619)	2.08(.654)	3.75	.097
DAP-Death Avoidance	2.37(.688)	2.34(.752)	.164	.758
DAP-Neutral Acceptance	3.25(.557)	3.24(.597)	.033	.914
DAP-Escape Acceptance	1.96(.674)	1.99(.734)	.558	.772
Religiosity	42.66(13.03)	42..39(12.73)	.850	.874

*Death Attitude Profile; p< **.01 *.05

Independent sample t-tests showed that among students, search for meaning in life was significantly higher (Mean = 24.29, SD=7.05, t=.336, p<.05) than faculty [Table 1] showing that as young adults students need to explore meaning will be more. Among the death attitudes, only approach acceptance was significantly higher among the

students (mean = 2.47, SD=.623, t =3.75, p<.01) than the faculty reflecting students' higher belief in after life and desire to experience afterlife. Students and faculty did not differ in their religiosity. Though the mean for variables such as life satisfaction, presence of meaning in life was slightly higher in the faculty than the student group, the differences did not reach significance level.

Table 2: Correlation between selected variables in Students Spearman's coefficient

	MLQ (P)	MLQ(S)	DA S	DAP(AA)	DAP(FD)	DAP(DA)	DAP(NA)	DAP(EA)	Religiosity
LS ¹	.448**	-.102	-.065	.071	-.136	.046	.168	-.017	.191*
MLQ(P) ²		-.129	.178*	-.019	-.099	.134	-.249*	-.122	.244*
MLQ(S) ²			.218*	.026	.081	-.001	-.052	.031	.046
DAS ³				.187*	.202*	-.094	-.163	-.010	.279*
DAP(AA) ⁴						.223	.088	.076	.392*
DAP(FD) ⁵						.321	-.186	-.061	.103
DAP(DA) ⁶							-.021	-.034	.035
DAP(NA) ⁷								.089	.118
DAP(EA) ⁸									.001

¹LS-Life satisfaction; ²MLQ (P) & (S)-Meaning in life Presence & Search; ³DAS-Death Anxiety Scale ⁴Death Attitude Profile Approach Acceptance; ⁵Fear of Death; ⁶Death Avoidance; ⁷Neutral Acceptance; ⁸Escape Acceptance * p<.05 **p<.01

In students, correlation analysis (as seen in Table 2) revealed that in students, life satisfaction positively correlated with religiosity (r=.191; p<.05) and presence of meaning(r=.448; p<.01). There was also a significant positive association between presence of meaning in life and religiosity (r=.244; p<.01). Among all the death attitudes, only neutral acceptance of death (r=.249; p<.01) showed a significant positive association with presence of meaning. A negative correlation emerged between presence of meaning in life and death anxiety (r=-.178; p<.05). Search for meaning in life was positively associated only with death anxiety (r=.218; p<.05) Death anxiety was observed to have positive correlations with two death attitudes namely, approach acceptance (r=.187; p<.05) and fear of death (r=.202; p<.05). Association between death anxiety and religiosity was also positive (r=.279; p<.01). Finally, among all death attitudes a positive correlation emerged between approach acceptance and religiosity (r=.392; p<.01).

Among faculty, correlation analysis revealed that age was significantly positively correlated with death anxiety (r=.347; p<.01) [Table 3]. Presence of meaning in life positive correlated with satisfaction in life (r=.483; p<.01) and religiosity (r=.366; p<.01). Search for meaning in life positively correlated with death anxiety (r=.251; p<.05) and death attitudes of approach acceptance (r=.263; p<.01); death avoidance (r=.218; p<.05) and escape acceptance (r=.305; p<.01). Death anxiety positively correlated with death attitudes of death avoidance (r=.293; p<.01) and escape

acceptance (r=.240; p<.05) and interestingly positively related with approach acceptance (r=.236; p<.05). Death attitudes of approach acceptance (r=.560; p<.01), death avoidance (r=.203; p<.05) and neutral acceptance (r=.232; p<.05) had positive correlations with religiosity.

Table 3 Correlation between selected variables in Faculty Spearman's coefficient

	LS	MLQ(P)	MLQ(S)	DA S	DAP(AA)	DAP(FD)	DAP(DA)	DAP(NA)	DAP(EA)	Religiosity
AGE	.141	.114	.068	.347**	.089	-.066	-.009	.053	.141	-.047
LS ¹		1.000	.483**	-.020	.005	-.042	.037	-.150	.096	
MLQ(P) ²			1.000	.120	-.088	-.020	.163	-.178	.366*	
MLQ(S) ²				.251*	.263**	.079	.218*	.055	.305**	
DAS ³					.236*	.106	.293**	.103	.240*	
DAP(AA) ⁴						.220*	.389**	.304**	.503**	
DAP(FD) ⁵							.452	-.128	.248*	
DAP(DA) ⁶								-.007	.318**	
DAP(NA) ⁷									.111	
DAP(EA) ⁸									.232*	

1 LS-Life satisfaction; 2 MLQ (P) & (S)-Meaning in life Presence & Search; 3 DAS-Death Anxiety Scale 4 Death Attitude Profile Approach Acceptance; 5 Fear of Death; 6 Death Avoidance; 7 Neutral Acceptance; 8 Escape Acceptance

Discussion

Death is an inevitable reality that needs to be eventually confronted by all. However, the way death affects people vary by factors such as age, meaning orientation, religious framework, satisfaction in life and attitudes towards death. Studies involving comparison of varied factors related to death in young and comparatively older subjects along with examination of interrelations of varied factors related to death anxiety in such samples is scarce in India . Hence, this study examined the relationship between five dimensions of attitudes toward death (fear of death, death avoidance, neutral acceptance, approach acceptance, and escape acceptance), death anxiety, life satisfaction and meaning, religiosity and selected personal factors among health care faculty and students belonging to four teaching hospitals.

The student population in our study consisted young adults while the faculty were slightly older. Female predominance was seen in both groups. Majority of the students were single while majority of the faculty were married. Students had experienced more recent life events than faculty, death being the most common. Students experienced more psychosocial problems than faculty. Health of significant others was a major concern in students while finance was the major problem in faculty. Students experienced more physical problems and substance use than faculty.

Among all the factors studied, student's search for meaning in life was higher than faculty which is not surprising.

Exploring nature is an important feature of developing adults as identified by developmental theorists (e.g., Erikson, 1968)[14]. Students being younger still need to explore and consolidate meaning in life as compared to faculty who are likely to have found meaning in life being comparatively older. Similar findings have been reported by Steger et al., (2009)[15] who in their internet sample of 8756 people found individuals at earlier life stages having higher levels of searching for meaning whereas, those at later life stages had greater presence of meaning in their lives.

Of all the death attitudes, approach acceptance was more in students than the faculty reflecting higher belief in after life and desire to experience afterlife. However, this does not align with existing findings where older adults have more approach acceptance attitude towards death than young adults [16]. Traditionally, it is believed that younger generally view death as a remote possibility and find it difficult to confirm to views of immortality. Probably, the students in our group were more mature and philosophical with a farsighted outlook on life and death that made them view death as more acceptable on the grounds of believing in an afterlife.

Analysis of relationships between all study factors in both student and faculty group showed some similar and some dissimilar findings. Satisfaction with life was positively related to presence of meaning in both groups and with religiosity in only student group. The presence of meaning relates to the extent to which individuals consider their lives as meaningful, and purposeful. Presence of meaning in life made students and faculty experience satisfaction in life. Earlier studies in college students and adult samples have also found self-reported life meaning to be correlated positively with well-being [17] and specifically with life satisfaction [18,10]. In student group alone, life satisfaction's positive relation to religiosity suggested that religion helped students to find greater satisfaction in life. Similar findings of positive association of satisfaction of life with religiosity in an Egyptian college sample have been observed [19]. There have been several other studies which found life satisfaction to be higher in religious people. Studies by Hadaway (1978) [20] and Hunsberger (1985)[21] suggest that religiosity and life satisfaction are positively related. Pollner (1989)[22] found that participation in a divine relationship had strongest relationship with three of four measures of well-being, exceeding in strength than other predictors of race, income, age, marital status, and church attendance. Koenig and Larson (2001) [23] in a meta-analysis on religiousness reported that 80% of the studies exploring religiousness and life satisfaction found a positive relationship between the two [23]. The examination of meaning orientations revealed that presence of meaning positively associated with religiosity for both students and faculty, while it negatively associated with death anxiety and positively associated with death attitude of neutral acceptance in student group alone.

Positive relationship between presence of meaning in life and religiosity has been previously reported by some studies as well. Pargament (1997) [24] reported strong connections between meaning and spirituality. Peterson et al. (2007)[25] in their study of relationship between character strengths, well-being, and meaning found that religiousness was one of the top four character strengths most significantly related to meaning orientation and presence of meaning. Religion probably fosters a framework of life filled with meaning. A sense of higher guiding power can possibly put the puzzles of life in place providing a secure base, hence making life more meaningful to live. Further, religion irrespective of age enhances meaning in life. Students who experienced presence of meaning in life were seen to have an attitude of neutral acceptance of death. Further, a higher presence of meaning was seen to be associated with lesser death anxiety. Therefore, viewing life as meaningful, students could have a

realistic view of death without being overwhelmed. Some studies supporting our [26-28] also reported that individuals perceiving more meaning in life are also more accepting of death. Meaning filled life cannot only make individuals accept death, it can also reduce death anxiety as observed in our student population. This finding is corroborated by previous research [29, 26] where individuals achieving personal meaning in life were more accepting of death and displayed less death anxiety.

Search for meaning in life positively correlated with death anxiety both in students and faculty and further positively correlated with positive death attitude of approach acceptance and negative death attitude of death avoidance and escape acceptance in faculty group alone. In students, the finding of positive association between search for meaning and death anxiety points to the fact that the younger respondent's probable lack of experience to life situations and hardships increases feelings of uncertainties and thereby death anxiety. Faculty's search for meaning causing higher death anxiety is readily understandable given the fact that they belong to an age group which generally would have stable frame work of life and purpose. Instead, with time running out, still being in pursuit of meaning can definitely increase anxiety about confronting death with a sense of incompleteness.

Search for meaning has also been earlier found to be associated with higher levels of anxiety and rumination [30] and negative affect [31-33]. Quinn and Reznikoff (1985) [34] in an early research also found that individuals who lacked direction and a sense of purpose in their lives experienced higher levels of death anxiety. Conversely, Lewis and Butler (1974) and Durlak (1972)[29,26] found that individuals who had personal meaning in life were more accepting of death and had less death anxiety.

The positive association of search for meaning with negative death attitudes in faculty is quite logical. Escape acceptance being a view of accepting death as an alternative to life filled with pain and misery can be related to being in search of meaning in the way that not yet having established a meaningful framework of life can make one feel purposeless, miserable, therefore accepting death more readily than leading a meaningless painful life. The positive relationship between search for meaning and death avoidance is in accordance with previous findings which indicated that presence of meaning in life was negatively associated with death avoidance [35]. It is very much possible for wanting to avoid thinking about death if one still needs to find meaning in life. The unusual association between search for meaning and approach acceptance which has been reported so far by only study of Powell (2010)[36] requires an explanation. One possible reason could be that people in search for meaning need not necessarily find their life devoid of meaning. They may be continuously exploring avenues to enhance meaning in life. Seen in this context, having a co-existing belief in happy after life falls in place.

Among faculty age was seen to have significant positive association with death anxiety. Faculty's age ranged from later stage of young adulthood to middle age. Stepping out of youth and treading into middle years brings into awareness the reality of old age and the inevitable wear and tear and health complications. Therefore, individuals become certain of their mortality, limited time and grow anxious about death. Very similar to our findings, in one of the earliest studies, Katz (1979)[37] found middle age faculty members were more afraid of death than their pre-mid- life or post mid-life colleagues. Subsequently Gesser et al. (1987-1988)[16] found a curvilinear trend, wherein elderly exhibited less fear of death/dying than the middle-aged but not the young. A string of later researches also reveal that older and younger adults report lower levels of death anxiety than middle age adults [38-41]. On the contrary, concerning age, there are also

some studies that have found that death anxiety decreases from mid-life to old age [42,43]

Surprisingly in both students and faculty, death anxiety was seen to be positively related to death attitude of approach acceptance. Further, death anxiety was positively related to death attitude of fear of death in students alone and death attitudes of death avoidance and escape acceptance in faculty. Death anxiety being correlated with approach acceptance is quite contrary to the concept of approach acceptance which stands for belief in a happy afterlife whereby, the individuals welcome the prospect of death since a life hereafter has been secured for them. Hence, approach acceptance should logically reduce death anxiety and fear of death. Research findings generally support this construct and reveal that individuals who strongly believe in an afterlife report less fear of death [44-45]. However there is one earlier finding which is similar to ours by Ray and Najman (1974)[46]. They were the first ones to develop a new scale to measure death acceptance, and found that it had a small but significant positive correlation with two death anxiety scales.

Acknowledgment of co-existence of death anxiety and death acceptance is important because it reveals a basic ambivalent and conflicting attitude towards death. How much ever accepting we want to be of the prospect of death, there is always a possibility for some amount of anxiety to be lurking in the mind as death of self or loved one is an inevitable reality that has to be confronted one day or the other. Yet, a conscious effort to develop an attitude of death acceptance can keep a check on death anxiety preventing it from interfering with our life.

Death anxiety can have several dimensions such as fear of dying of self and fear of death of others (Bond, 1994) [47] Among students, death attitude of fear of death was seen to be positively related to death anxiety which is understandable given the fact that awareness of the reality of having to confront death can lead to higher death anxiety. Death avoidance that was found to be positively related to death anxiety in faculty is an attitude where a person avoids thinking or talking about death in order to reduce death anxiety. Though avoidance of thinking about death can be a strategy to reduce death anxiety, this could be a transient effect and in the long run avoidance can increase death anxiety. Research findings have also confirmed that avoidance to talk about death increases death anxiety [48] and psychological distress and depression specifically in older and middle-aged adults[12]. Also, escape acceptance being a pseudo positive outlook towards death, is likely to increase death anxiety as revealed in the faculty group of our study. Escape acceptance is an attitude where death is welcomed as an escape from uncomfortable and unpleasant circumstances posed by death. Wong et al. (1994)[12] view that an individual who scores high on escape acceptance "can no longer effectively cope with the pain and problems of existence". Such a preference for death forced out of having no other better alternatives naturally can increase death anxiety.

Death anxiety was lastly found to positively correlate with religiosity in students. Strength of one's religious beliefs is a factor that may influence an individual's level of death anxiety. Evidence exists of positive as well as negative relationships between religion and death anxiety. For instance, Feifel's (1959) [49] early research showed that religious people reported more death anxiety. In a later study, however, Feifel and Branscomb (1973) [50] found that death anxiety was more in religious people. In a meta-analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness, Donahue (1985) [51] reported several studies where in some reported positive correlations, some reported negative correlations, and some reported no significant correlations between religiosity and death anxiety. In a relatively later study [52] found no

correlation between religiosity and death anxiety. Studies designed taking into consideration specific aspects of religious intentions found that people who possess intrinsic religious motivation have significantly lower levels of various types of death anxiety than people with extrinsic religious motivation [53-57].

The students in our study probably had extrinsic religious motivation which would have enhanced their death anxiety. However, this assumption has to be confirmed only after further careful exploration. Finally, the examination of relationship between religiosity and death attitudes showed religiosity to be positively related to approach acceptance in both students and faculty and to neutral acceptance and death avoidance in faculty alone. Having a transcendental framework of life and feeling that life will continue after death helped both students and faculty accept death. This is similar to the finding of Dezutter et al. (2009) [58] who found that individuals reporting higher levels of religiosity were more likely to endorse an Approach acceptance attitude toward death, suggesting that religiosity may be related to belief in an afterlife. Approach acceptance is rooted in religious/spiritual beliefs in a desirable afterlife. For those holding such beliefs, afterlife is more than symbolic immortality, because it typically associates with theistic religious faith or belief in a transcendental reality. Harding et al. (2005)[59] reported that scales that measure Belief in God's existence and Belief in the Afterlife were both negatively correlated with death anxiety but positively correlated with death acceptance. Kubler-Ross (1997) [60] has also emphasized the importance of religiously based death acceptance.

Neutral acceptance which was found to be positively associated with religiosity in faculty is also a positive attitude which portrays a view of death as an integral part of life which is neither welcomed nor resisted, the kind of attitude encouraged by many religious philosophies. Supporting evidence for the way religion and positive death attitudes are related comes from Christopher et al. (2006)[61] who found that religiosity was positively related to positive death attitudes (e.g., death as a natural end of life) and negatively to negative death attitudes (e.g., death as a failure).

Though the common notion is that religion fosters death acceptance, faculty's attitude of death avoidance was seen to be positively related to religion. Faculty may have held a literal religious attitude of interpreting religious contents in a rigid, closed-minded, and dogmatic fashion with no room for ambiguity which could pose difficulties to cope with the uncertainty of death and dying. This finding corroborates with research done by Dezutter et al. (2009)[58] where literal religious attitudes were positively associated with fear of death and death avoidance. Hence religion rather than being treated as a unidimensional construct needs to be viewed in terms of various orientations it can have in relation to death attitudes.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to extend previous work by adopting a multidimensional attitude towards death and examined interrelations among death attitudes, religion, death anxiety, meaning and satisfaction in life in two groups of faculty and students. In line with developmental theories and earlier findings, students' search for meaning was higher than faculty. Approach acceptance death attitude being higher in students than faculty was an unusual finding as thoughts of death and after life in young age are rare. Having meaning in life ensured life satisfaction in both the groups and was associated with greater religiosity and lesser death anxiety in students alone. Not having firmly established meaning and still being in search of it increased death anxiety in both student and faculty. Search of meaning was only associated with negative death attitudes but also with positive death

attitude in faculty. Further death anxiety was seen to be more when negative death attitudes were held by students and faculty. Religiosity seemed to co-exist with death anxiety in students.

The relationship between religiosity and death attitudes has been researched widely. Neimeyer et al (2004) [42] summarized that intuitively, strong religious beliefs, whether expressed or privately held, should be associated with a decreased fear of death and greater acceptance of death. However, research that has examined the interaction between religious belief and attitudes toward death has produced controversial results that generally do not support this assumption. Our results too were more or less in this direction where in religiosity was not only seen to be associated with positive death attitudes of approach acceptance and neutral acceptance but also with negative death attitude of avoidance.

An atypical yet important finding was that death anxiety appeared to be more even when both students and faculty embraced an approach accepting attitude towards death pointing to the fact that an ambivalent attitude towards death is very much a reality to be acknowledged.

The limitations to be borne in mind is the limited generalizability of this result to a wider population, age difference between the faculty and students not being substantial, biases that is inherent in the self-report nature of assessments, types of religiosity not being taken into account and confounding effects of personality and cultural variables which were not considered.

Despite, the above limitations, the study highlight the role of death anxiety not only in older people but also in the young. Contrary to the popular developmental concepts about death attitudes, young people in our study portrayed a more acceptable view of death than the slightly older people. One of the reasons could be that exposure to death and illness during the medical training could have contributed to less fear of death. Meaning in life ensured greater life satisfaction while being in search of meaning increased death anxiety in our population. Co-existence of search for meaning with both positive and negative death attitudes in faculty indicates that search of meaning can have a positive value as well in relation to death. Ambivalent feelings about death can be present in people as demonstrated by co-existence of approach acceptance and death anxiety. Religiosity being associated with both positive and negative attitude towards death puts forth the need to explore the specific types of religious orientation in relation to death attitudes.

Funding: None

Conflict of Interests: None

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