_____

# DEATH ANXIETY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

**Nuhman Shibli C. A.**
**HSST (Mathematics), DUHSS, Panakkad, Kerala.**

**ABSTRACT :**
        The present study was aimed to find out death anxiety of secondary school students. Survey method was employed. A sample of 250 students was selected from Malappuram & Calicut districts. Data was analyzed by t-test and ANOVA. Results found that there is no significant difference in death anxiety of secondary school students with respect to gender and there is significant difference in death anxiety of secondary school students with regard to religion.

**KEYWORDS :** Mental health , psychological , generational dependence and self actualization.

## INTRODUCTION

        Mental health is a level of psychological well being or an absence of mental illness. It is a psychological state of someone who is function at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioral adjustment. According to WHO, mental health includes "subjective well being perceived self efficacy, autonomy competence inter generational dependence and self actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential among others".

        Successful adjustment is also called being "well adjusted" and is critical to metal health. Colloquially, being well adjusted is defined as a person who is reasonable and has good judgment. Their behavior is not difficult or strange.

        Death is a highly personal issue with its meaning varying from individual to individual. Everyone must, at some point, see death as a part of life. Therefore accepting one's death, one's mortality, is something everyone must have to face during his or her lifetime. Perhaps the most widely held   attitude towards death is fear.

        People live their lives day today, they suffer different degrees of anxiety about death. Psychologists have attempted to understand what factors might affect the amount of anxiety people feel. The various factors psychologists have studied in attempting to measure death anxiety include age, environment, religious faith and ego integrity, or a personal sense of fulfillment and/or self-worth.

        Erikson's psychological theory, which states that people progress through a series of crises as they advance in age suggests that in the later stage of life "ego integrity", is attained. That is, a person finds meaning to and acceptance of his life. Erikson (1982) proposed that when a person reaches late adulthood he engages in a life review. If a person finds meaning or purpose in his life, he has integrity. Contrary to this, if a person sees his life as a series of missed opportunities he does not attain ego integrity (Belskey, 1999). Older people who find ego integrity should have lower death anxiety.

        Death integrity refers to the fear and apprehension of one's own death. It is the neurotic fear of loss of the self which, in intense state, parallels feeling of helplessness and depression. Man's awareness of the own death produces anxiety. Man's awareness of death gives him the responsibility for finding meaning in life. Death is biological, personal, socio-cultural and existential phenomenon. The biological death is useful to

_____

_____

distinguish between the processes of again and the ending called death. Yet when the actual time comes, and the individual faces death alone the psychological reactions appear to be markedly similar. Keble (1969) had found that in the majority of personal, almost regardless of age, the personal reactions imminent death pass through five phases-denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (although not every individual achieves the final phase). Dying and death, like other major aspects of human life, are also very important and cultural and social phenomena.

Even less than a century ago, death was a common and familiar event in everyday life. There was no widespread technology to control infection, and medicines could not do much for most of the diseases. Among the poorer classes the young died at an appalling rate and the old died in their time, and they all died at home The average person had been in the immediate presence of dead bodies at least half a dozen times before reaching adulthood. Against this background, death was in former years, much more a part of life than it is today. It was not matter to be shunned by means of euphemisms such as 'passed on' but was death with directly and was even elaborated at the wake. It was not unseal in small European towns of a few centuries ago, for someone who was dying to pass their deathbed hours in the public square, greeting friends, saying goodbye, and glorying for at least brief time in apposition of respect. Under such circumstances, death was an occasion for sadness but not for shame. No one would have dreamed hiding away the dying as we do in the wards of hospital or old age homes.

The death can be fully understood only if it is viewed as one of the central meanings of human existence. An idea of the centrality of one's own death can be gathered if individuals could be made to contemplate seriously the possibility of their own death (McCarthy, 1980). As death is the final stage of life cycle, it can be approached naturally by dying individuals and their families. Death and dying can be seen part of the life process or they can be viewed as a dramatic, painful tortured experience both for the patients and the families.

## NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Frank (1965) proposed that people need to find meaning in their own death if they are to feel that their lives are meaningful conversely the greater purpose one's life has the less one fears death. Lieberman & Coplan (1970) suggest that there may be a total system decline in individuals near death, less introspective, less aggressive, and more docile in their self image.

Even though most commonly death occurs in later years, it may happen at any stage in life. Accidents and suicides are the major causes of death among younger persons, and continue to be so in later years, although their relatives' significance declines. Often death is associated with some special psychological stress it may be acute mourning, or an anniversary, or some particular loss of status or self esteem. Death is sometimes defined as the absence of certain clinically detectable vital signs. A son is dead: If his heart stops breathing and he quits breathing for an extended period of time, his blood pressure drops as low as to be unreadable, his pupils dilate, his body temperature begins to go down, and so forth. This clinical definition has been used over the centuries, both by physicians and layman. More recently death has sometimes been defined as the lack of brain was activity. Still others say that death can only be defined as a bodily state, which represents an irreversible loss of vital functions and from which the individual cannot possibly be reviewed. According to the concept of terminal drop, death can be predicted from certain dramatic changes in cognitive function in the period preceding demise. That is, significant change both in personal adjustment and performance may serve as indicators of impending death (Reigal & Reigal, 1972).

Certain attitude towards death is typical. Even when approaching death people ask, "Why me?" and wish to find a meaning for their suffering. This question cannot be answered in generalized terms because the meanings of death vary from one individual to another (Kubler, 1975).

Considering all these the investigator desires to study the death anxiety of secondary students.

_____

_____

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To compare the mean scores in death anxiety of secondary school students in terms of gender and religion.

**HYPOTHESES**

1. There is no significant difference in death anxiety of secondary school students with regard to gender.
2. There is no significant difference in death anxiety of secondary school students with regard to religion.

**METHOD & SAMPLE**

Normative survey method was adopted. The sample consists of 250 secondary school students in Malappuram & Calicut districts, Kerala.

**Tool**

- Death Anxiety Scale by Dr. Vijaya Laxmi Chouhan & Dr. Gayatri Tiwari (2003).

**Data Analysis**

**Table 1: Death Anxiety of Secondary School Students based on Gender**

| Gender | N | Mean | SD | Std. Error | t-value | Result |
|--------|------|-------|-------|------------|---------|-----------------|
| Male | 40 | 12.65 | 2.966 | .469 | 0.309 | Not Significant |
| Female | 210 | 12.48 | 3.214 | .222 | | |

From Table-1, the mean scores of death anxiety of male and female students are 12.65 and 12.48 respectively. The obtained t-value 0.309 is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence the hypothesis-1 is accepted.

**Table 2: Death Anxiety of Secondary School Students based on Religion**

| | Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 84.988 | 2 | 42.494 | 4.342 | .014 |
| Within groups | 2417.496 | 247 | 9.787 | | |
| Total | 2502.484 | 249 | | | |

Table-2 shows that the obtained F-value (4.342) is significant at 0.05 level. Hence, the hypothesis-2 is rejected.

Further to know which group has more influence on Death Anxiety, Tukey HSD test was applied and the results are given below in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Tukey HSD Test of Death Anxiety of Secondary School Students in terms of Community**

| (I) Religion | (J) Religion | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------|------|
| Hindu | Muslim | -.354 | .444 | .705 |
| | Christian | -1.934* | .667 | .011 |
| Muslim | Hindu | .354 | .444 | .705 |
| | Christian | -1.580* | .620 | .030 |
| Christian | Hindu | 1.934* | .667 | .011 |
| | Muslim | 1.580* | .620 | .030 |

*Significant at 0.05 level.*

From Table-2.1, the death anxiety mean difference between Hindu and Christian students is significant at 0.05 level. It reflects that Christian students are possessing significantly high death anxiety than Hindu students.

_____

_____

Table-2.1 also revealed that the death anxiety mean difference Muslim and Christian students is significant at 0.05 level. It reflects that Christian students are possessing significantly high death anxiety than Muslim students.

## FINDINGS

- There is no significant difference in death anxiety between male and female students.
- There is significant difference in the mean scores of death anxiety between Christian and Muslim students as well as Christian and Hindu students.
- Hindu and Muslim students are not significantly differing in death anxiety.

## SUGGESTIONS

Students are the heart of the society. They can change the society. For the development of the society and country, students have a predominant role. We know that students are the product of School. So school must give a suitable and well environment for students to reduce death anxiety.

## REFERENCES

- Aalexander, I. E. (1958). Affective responses to the concept of death in a population of children and early adolescents. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 167-177.
- Boyar, J.I. (1964). The construction and partial validation of a scale for the measurement of the fear of death. Dissertation Abstracts, 25, 2041.
- Chaggaris, M., & Lester, D. (1989). Fear of death and religious belief. Psychological Reports, 64(1), 274.
- Collett, L.J., & Lester, D. (1969). The fear of death and the fear of dying. Journal of Psychology, 72, 179-181.
- Combs, D.C. (1981). The effects of selected death education curriculum models on death anxiety and death acceptance .Death Education, 5, 75-81.
- Kastenbaum, R. (1977). We covered death today. Death Education, 1, 85-92.
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1968). On death and dying, Macmillan: New York.
- Miles, M.S. (1980). The effect of a course on death and grief on nurse's attitudes toward dying patients and death. Death Education, 4, 245-260.
- Starvevic, V. (1989). Pathological fear of death, panic attacks, and hypochondriasis. The American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 49(4), 347-361.
- Templer, D.I. (1970). The construction and validation of a death anxiety scale. Journal of General Psychology, 82 165-177.

_____