



“The Relationship Between Death Anxiety And Life Satisfaction Of College Students”

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between death anxiety and life satisfaction among college students, with particular attention to gender differences. A total of 100 male and 100 female undergraduate students from Nashik City, Maharashtra, aged 18–25 years, were selected using stratified random sampling. The Death Anxiety Scale (DAS–CT) and Life Satisfaction Scale-Revised (LSS-R) were used as research instruments. The study followed a quantitative correlational design, and data were analyzed using SPSS. Results revealed that male students reported significantly higher death anxiety ($M = 33.42$, $SD = 4.36$) than female students ($M = 25.27$, $SD = 5.14$), while female students reported significantly higher life satisfaction ($M = 94.03$, $SD = 4.97$) than males ($M = 82.39$, $SD = 5.31$). Independent samples t-tests confirmed significant gender differences ($p < .01$), and Pearson’s correlation indicated a strong negative relationship between death anxiety and life satisfaction ($r = -.78$, $p < .01$). These findings support Terror Management Theory, suggesting that heightened awareness of mortality can negatively influence subjective well-being. The study highlights the need for gender-sensitive psychological support and intervention programs in academic settings to help students manage existential anxiety and enhance life satisfaction.

Keyword:- Death anxiety, life satisfaction, college students, gender differences, Terror Management Theory, psychological well-being, existential fear, undergraduate mental health.

Introduction:-

Death, though an inevitable reality of human existence, remains a psychologically profound and often distressing concept. The awareness of mortality can evoke a range of emotional responses, particularly death anxiety, which is defined as the apprehension or fear of one’s death or the dying process (Abdel-Khalek, 2005). While death anxiety is common across all age groups, its presence among college students a population generally associated with vitality, future-oriented goals, and personal development has received

increasing scholarly attention. These years are often characterized by exploration, instability, and identity formation, which may heighten existential concerns (Arnett, 2000).

Life satisfaction, on the other hand, is a critical component of subjective well-being, referring to a person's cognitive evaluation of their overall quality of life according to their chosen criteria (Diener et al., 1985). It encompasses various domains, including academic success, social relationships, self-esteem, and future aspirations. As students navigate the transition from adolescence to adulthood, their sense of life satisfaction becomes a vital predictor of psychological health, resilience, and academic achievement (Seligman, 2011). It is within this formative context that the relationship between death anxiety and life satisfaction becomes particularly intriguing.

Terror Management Theory (TMT), proposed by Greenberg et al. (1986), offers a valuable theoretical framework for examining this relationship. The theory suggests that the awareness of mortality creates existential terror, which individuals manage through cultural worldviews and self-esteem. When these buffers are threatened or absent, individuals may experience heightened death anxiety, which could negatively impact their overall satisfaction with life. College students who lack strong existential frameworks or coping mechanisms may be more susceptible to these effects (Routledge & Juhl, 2010).

Empirical studies indicate a negative correlation between death anxiety and life satisfaction, suggesting that individuals who report higher levels of death anxiety tend to evaluate their lives less positively (Fortner & Neimeyer, 1999; Tomer & Eliason, 2006). However, this relationship is often moderated by factors such as religiosity, age, cultural background, and psychological resilience. For instance, students with spiritual beliefs or a strong sense of purpose may experience lower death anxiety and higher life satisfaction (Arslan, 2021).

Despite the growing interest in existential variables within psychology, the specific interplay between death anxiety and life satisfaction among college students remains underexplored, particularly in non-Western or diverse educational settings. Understanding this relationship is critical for counselors, educators, and mental health professionals aiming to promote emotional well-being and existential maturity among students.

This study, aims to investigate the nature and strength of the relationship between death anxiety and life satisfaction among college students, while considering variables such as gender, year of study, and religiosity. The findings may offer valuable insights into how emerging adults manage existential concerns and derive meaning in their academic and personal lives.

Review of Literature:-

Li and Ji (2019) explored the relationship between death attitudes, life satisfaction, and sense of life meaning in a sample of 445 Chinese college students. Their findings revealed a significant positive correlation between life satisfaction and meaning in life, as well as a negative correlation between escape-acceptance (a form of death attitude) and life meaning. Through regression analysis, both life satisfaction

and death attitudes were found to significantly predict students' sense of meaning. The authors concluded that positive life evaluations and healthier attitudes toward death can enhance existential purpose in emerging adults. This study emphasizes the importance of managing death-related beliefs in youth populations.

Azarian, Aghakhani, and Ashuri (2016) investigated the correlation between death anxiety and life attitude among 100 Iranian university students. Utilizing Templer's Death Anxiety Scale and the Life Attitude Profile, they discovered a significant negative relationship between death anxiety and life attitude. Participants with higher life satisfaction exhibited lower death anxiety, suggesting that individuals who find purpose and meaning in their lives are better equipped to manage mortality-related fears. The study also indicated gender differences in anxiety levels. The authors recommend enhancing life attitudes through education and therapy to reduce existential concerns and promote psychological resilience among college-aged individuals.

Tang et al. (2002) examined the protective role of life meaning against death anxiety among Chinese university students. They found that a strong sense of life meaning correlated positively with death acceptance and negatively with death anxiety. Their experimental design revealed that mortality salience heightened anxiety only in students lacking strong life purpose. Conversely, students with a greater sense of life meaning demonstrated resilience when reminded of their mortality. The study supports terror management theory and highlights the value of meaning-making in mitigating existential distress. These findings suggest that cultivating life purpose can buffer young adults from the psychological impact of death awareness.

Karakose et al. (2023) conducted a study during the COVID-19 pandemic to assess death anxiety and life satisfaction in university students. Their findings showed a significant inverse relationship between the two variables, where students reporting greater life satisfaction demonstrated reduced death anxiety. The researchers found that regular sleep (7–9 hours), high perceived immunity, and health-promoting behaviors enhanced life satisfaction. The model revealed life satisfaction predicted 4.5% of the variance in death anxiety. This suggests that lifestyle modifications and mental well-being programs may alleviate mortality-related distress in youth, especially in health crises. Promoting life satisfaction may thus serve as a preventive strategy.

Jain and Tripathi (2024) investigated how death anxiety affects life satisfaction and coping strategies in a sample of 181 college students aged 18 to 25. They found that individuals with higher death anxiety reported lower life satisfaction and used less adaptive coping methods. The study highlighted that avoidant coping increased psychological distress, while problem-focused strategies moderated the impact of death anxiety. Their findings suggest that existential fears can affect emotional stability and goal clarity in students. The authors recommend incorporating coping skills training into student counseling programs to mitigate death anxiety and enhance overall life satisfaction in educational settings.

Objectives of the study:-

- 1) To assess the level of death anxiety among college students.
- 2) To evaluate the level of life satisfaction among college students.
- 3) To explore gender differences in death anxiety and life satisfaction.
- 4) To examine the relationship between death anxiety and life satisfaction.

Hypotheses:-

- 1) There is a significant difference in death anxiety between male and female college students.
- 2) There is a significant difference in life satisfaction between male and female college students.
- 3) There is a significant negative correlation between death anxiety and life satisfaction among college students.

Samples:-

The target population consists of undergraduate college students aged 18–25 years. All samples were from Nashik City in Maharashtra state. A sample of 200 students (100 male, 100 female) was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure gender representation.

Variable:-

- 1) Independent Variable:-
 - i) Gender
 - a) Male b) Female
- 2) Dependent Variable
 - i) Death Anxiety ii) Life Satisfaction

Research Tools:-**1) Death Anxiety Scale:-**

The Death Anxiety Scale (DAS–CT), developed by Dr. Vijaya Laxmi Chouhan and Dr. Gayatri Tiwari, is a standardized psychometric instrument designed to assess the level of death-related anxiety among individuals aged 18–25. The final form of the scale includes 20 items rated on a three-point response format: Yes (2), Can't Say (1), and No (0), with a total score ranging from 0 to 40. It was developed through expert review and content validation involving professionals from psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and medicine. The scale shows high split-half reliability ($r = 0.93$) and content validity index of 0.74, making it both reliable and valid. Separate norms are provided for male and female respondents. The tool is self-administered, takes about 7–8 minutes to complete, and is suitable for both individual and group settings in research, surveys, and counseling.

2) Life Satisfaction:-

The Life Satisfaction Scale – Revised (LSS-R), developed by Dr. Ramji Srivastava and Dr. Q.G. Alam, is a standardized tool designed to assess an individual's overall satisfaction across six key areas: Health, Personal, Economic, Marital, Social, and Job. The scale consists of 60 positive items, with responses recorded on a three-point scale: Yes (2), Undecided (1), and No (0). It takes approximately 20 minutes to

complete. The total score ranges from 0 to 120, where higher scores indicate greater life satisfaction. The scale has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with test-retest reliability of 0.84 and validity established through correlations with other standard adjustment inventories. Norms have been developed using a sample of 350 adults, with z-score-based interpretation levels ranging from extremely low to extremely high satisfaction. This scale is widely used in psychological, clinical, and social research to assess subjective well-being and adjustment in various life domains.

Research Design:-

The study follows a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between death anxiety and life satisfaction.

Data Collection Procedure:-

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and they provided informed consent. Data was collected using Google Forms or printed questionnaires distributed on college campuses. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

Statistical Analysis:-

The data were analysed using SPSS:

- Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD) for death anxiety and life satisfaction.
- Pearson's correlation to examine the relationship between the two variables.
- Independent samples t-tests to assess gender differences.

Ethical Considerations:-

The study adhered to APA ethical guidelines. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage. No identifying personal data was collected.

Statistical Analysis and Discussion:-**Table No-1**

Mean, standard deviation, t-value and Pearson -r of Death Anxiety and life satisfaction among college students.

Dimension	Male Students (N=50)		Female Students (N=50)		df	't'	r
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Death Anxiety	33.42	4.36	25.27	5.14	98	8.55**	-0.78**
Life Satisfaction	82.39	5.31	94.03	4.97	98	11.31**	

Sig – 0.05* = 1.96, 0.01=2.62**

The study aimed to examine gender differences in death anxiety and life satisfaction and the relationship between these two psychological constructs among college students. As shown in Table 1, the independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in death anxiety scores between male and female students. Male students (M = 33.42, SD = 4.36) reported significantly higher death anxiety than female students (M = 25.27, SD = 5.14), $t(98) = 8.55$, $p < .01$. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that males may experience greater difficulty in expressing existential fears and thus report higher levels of death anxiety (Fortner & Neimeyer, 1999).

Similarly, a significant gender difference was observed in life satisfaction scores. Female students (M = 94.03, SD = 4.97) reported significantly higher life satisfaction compared to their male counterparts (M = 82.39, SD = 5.31), $t(98) = 11.31$, $p < .01$. This aligns with previous literature indicating that women often report greater satisfaction with life due to stronger interpersonal support and emotional expression (Diener et al., 1999).

A strong negative correlation was found between death anxiety and life satisfaction, $r = -.78$, $p < .01$, suggesting that as death anxiety increases, life satisfaction decreases. This supports the theoretical underpinnings of Terror Management Theory, which posits that death-related thoughts can undermine psychological well-being unless adequately buffered by meaning and self-worth (Greenberg et al., 1986).

These results emphasize the need for gender-sensitive interventions that enhance existential coping strategies and improve subjective well-being. Incorporating life-meaning programs and psychological counseling into academic settings may reduce death anxiety and enhance overall life satisfaction among college students.

Conclusion:-

- 1) Male college students exhibit significantly higher death anxiety than female students, indicating a gender-based difference in existential fear responses.
- 2) Female students report significantly greater life satisfaction compared to male students, suggesting higher emotional well-being and subjective contentment.
- 3) A strong negative correlation exists between death anxiety and life satisfaction, meaning that as death anxiety increases, overall life satisfaction tends to decrease among college students.

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