IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION AND LIFE SATISFACTION ON DEATH ANXIETY AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

The present study was co- relational and aimed to analyze the impact of religious orientation and life satisfaction on death anxiety among university students. It further explored the relationship between life orientation skills and religious orientation together with their differences in relation to gender. Scales used in the study to collect data were Life Satisfaction Scale, Death Anxiety Scale and Religious Orientation Scale. Data was gathered by convenient sampling of 150 university students (75 males, 75 females). Their age and educational qualifications were restricted to 20-23 years and masters respectively. The results revealed that both interaction of religious orientation and life satisfaction were significant predictor of death anxiety (F=1.43, p>0.01) among university students. The correlation between religious orientation and life satisfaction was found to be positive and male adolescents were found to have higher religious orientation, life satisfaction and lower levels of death anxiety as compared to females.

Keywords

Death Anxiety, Life Satisfaction, Religious Orientation

1. Introduction

The meaning of life is explained in terms of importance of death thus clearing the distinction between the two. Death anxiety, which is one of the main themes in psychological health, has gained central place, as death is professed as an atypical and stressful event and has been linked to all worries. Death anxiety is viewed healthy under the existentialist approach (Rice, Frone & Mc Frolin, 1992).

Religion has played a central role in the progress of civilizations, thus becoming an quintessence of existence. Allport (1967) introduced two dimensions of religiosity in the terms "extrinsic" and "intrinsic". For extrinsically oriented individuals, religion acts as a basis to gain some purpose at the end. However, individuals with intrinsic religious orientation are focused on compatibility of their own religious beliefs and directions.

Religious beliefs and orientation are used to improve one's mental and physical health. They play a significant role in enhancing resilience while facing psychological problems (Sacks, Stevenson & Wolfers, 2010). Heubener (2004) depicted that religion has considerable effect on individual level of adjustment. Researchers have also identified factors such as life satisfaction and family life apart from religious orientation. (Allport and Ross, 1967)

Life gratification or satisfaction is the degree of contentment one has regarding temperament, fulfilling relationships, goal accomplishment, and adaptability to life situations. The 1970s reviews demonstrate a direct connection between life fulfillment areas (with the exception of wellbeing) and religious orientation (Herzog and Rodgers, 1981)

Death anxiety is a sole characteristic of human beings and it refers to our anxiety about end of this life and what lies beyond it. It is a latent anxiety which can only seek comfort with our religious beliefs and spiritual experiences. Generally, it is assumed that strong religious orientation results in better understanding of life and less fear of death.

The present research signifies a consistent relationship among religious orientation, life fulfillment and death anxiety. The general purpose of this study is to determine the importance of death anxiety and religion in mental health. Cohen (2005) reviewed the relationship between religiosity and death anxiety and found significant relationship between the two. There have been a few studies on the relationship between life satisfaction and death anxiety so far (Farley, 2013).

Neuropsychological research on psychological working of death anxiety shows that the more individuals are satisfied with life the less anxiety they experience (Ardila, 2007; Schaie, 1994) and this relationship becomes more clear with relation to religious orientation of individuals (Dolan, Peas Good & White, 2008; Sacks, Stevenson & Wolfers, 2010). Thus, present study might increase our knowledge of the variables in our culture and serve to integrate the impact of religious orientation and life satisfaction in relation to death anxiety in Pakistani youth.

2. Objectives

1. To evaluate psychometric properties of death anxiety scale, life satisfaction scale and religious orientation scale.

2. To study the relationship between religious orientation, life satisfaction and death anxiety among adolescents.

3. To explore the impact of religious orientation and life satisfaction on death anxiety among adolescents.

4. To study gender differences in religious orientation, life satisfaction and death anxiety among adolescents.

3. Hypothesis

1. There is a negative correlation between religious orientation and death anxiety among adolescents.

2. There exists a negative correlation between life satisfaction and death anxiety among adolescents.

3. There is positive correlation between religious orientation and life satisfaction among adolescents.

4. Religious orientation and life satisfaction are significant predictors of death anxiety among adolescents.

5. There is difference between male and female adolescents on religious orientation, life satisfaction and death anxiety.

4. Instruments

4.1 Religious Orientation Scale (AUROS)

The Age Universal Religious Orientation Scale was used in the study. It is a 20-item scale and its published reliability was found to be 0.73 approximately (Gorsuch & Venable, 1983).

4.2 Life Satisfaction Scale (SWLS)

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed by Diener et al. (1985). It consists of 5 items on a 7-point Likert scale. (Diener, 1985).

4.3 Death Anxiety Scale (DAQ)

The scale developed by Thorson and Powell (1992) was used. The scale has 25 items and is assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of death anxiety.

5. Procedure

Three scales of religious orientation, life satisfaction and death anxiety were given to 150 students of four universities of Islamabad. The ages of students were restricted to 20-23 years with education level of BS and M.Sc in any subject. The sample was selected by using convenient sampling technique. The students were gathered in two groups including 75 males and 75 females. Their demographic details were collected with informed consent and data collected was analyzed by using SPSS.

6. Results

The data of current study was analyzed to study the impact of religious orientation and life satisfaction on death anxiety among university students. The results are as following:

Table 1: *Alpha Reliability of Religious Orientation Scale, Life Satisfaction Scale and Death Anxiety Scale (N=150)*

Scales	No. of items	Alpha Reliability
AUROS	20	0.78
SLWS	5	0.65
DAQ	25	0.68

Note: AUROS= Religious Orientation Quest Scale, SLWS= Life Satisfaction Scale, DAQ= Death Anxiety Scale

The results of Table 1, show that all instruments i.e. religious orientation scale, life satisfaction scale and death anxiety scale have moderate alpha coefficient reliabilities and can be effectively used for further study.

Table 2: *Pearson Correlation of Religious Orientation Scale Life Satisfaction Scale and Death Anxiety Scale (N=150)*

Scales	1	2	3
AUROS	-	O.67	-0.58
SLWS DAQ			-0.73 -

Note: AUROS= Religious Orientation Quest Scale, SLWS= Life Satisfaction Scale, DAQ= Death Anxiety Scale

Table 2, indicates a negative correlation between death anxiety and life satisfaction (-0.73), negative correlation between religious orientation and death anxiety (-0.58) and positive correlation (0.67) between religious orientation and life satisfaction. Thus, supporting first three hypothesis of the current research.

Table 3: *Linear Regression of Religious Orientation Scale, Life Satisfaction Scale and Death Anxiety Scale (N=150)*

Death Anxiety Model 1		
Variables	B	95% CI
Constant	13.84	[9.86 , 17.82]
Religious Orientation Scale	0.04	[-0.01 , 0.09]
Life Satisfaction Scale	-0.07	[-0.22 , 0.07]
R^2	0.49	
F	1.43	

Table 3, depicts that religious orientation and life satisfaction cause significant variance (49%) in death anxiety among university students. The above stated prediction is significant at at $p < 0.01$ with F (1.438).

Table 4: *Means, Standard Deviations and t-values of Religious Orientation Scale, Life Satisfaction Scale and Death Anxiety Scale with respect to Gender (N=150)*

	Gender							
	Male		Female					
	N=75		N=75					
Scale	M	SD	M	SD	T	Df	P	Cohen's D
AUROS	55.96	15.36	50.14	17.70	2.14	148	0.01	0.23
SLWS	21.84	5.50	21.66	6.21	0.18	148	0.02	0.21
DAQ	12.54	5.07	16.01	5.10	-4.17	148	0.01	0.91

Table 4, indicates that male university students have higher religious orientation (M=55.96, SD=15.36), life satisfaction (M=21.840, SD=5.50) and low rates of death anxiety (M=12.54, SD=5.07) when contrasted with female adolescents.

7. Discussion

The present study hypothesized that religious orientation and life satisfaction significantly correlate to predict death anxiety among adolescents. The study further reveals negative correlation between life satisfaction and death anxiety and also between religious orientation and death anxiety. Seeking answers about death and existence has been part of human race since time immemorial. Humans generally explain these questions in terms of religion.

Even before the emergence of any civilization, humans have had religious beliefs such as belief in the mystical souls and the life hereafter. Satisfaction with life has far reaching impact on formation of human personality. Life satisfaction is subject to the individual's evaluation of life. Gradual withdrawal from life relations and tendency for contemplation are more common as individuals progress in life (Huebner, 2004). Religious beliefs generally give way to more questions about life and hereafter. Coming to terms with the existence of a supreme power reduces anxiety to a large extent and entails mental peace.

It has been observed that death anxiety has lasting effect on our daily life. The reason for this is that the more rooted one is in religion, the more one contemplates complexities of life and death (Ardila, 2007). Similarly, life satisfaction predicts greater death anxiety irrespective of what religion one holds and the thought about the end of life tends to bring feelings of anxiety and stress (Schaie, 1994).

The other hypothesis regarding gender differences across measure of religious orientation was that males were expected to score high on religious orientation scale and life satisfaction than females. According to the results, male adolescents scored higher than females across these measure. It is also noteworthy that there was little difference between the mean scores and value of t was also not found significant. These findings suggest that females tend to be more fearful of death than males (Koenig, McCullough &Larson 2001). Young males are less willing to reflect seriously on the reality of death. They believe that they have a lot to achieve in life and that death is not for them; something that will not happen to them for a long time (Rice & McFarlin, 1992)

These findings are consistent with others in the sense that may not be limited to foreign cultural groups. A number of explanations can be employed to account for the consistent difference in death anxiety between the two genders. First of all women tend to be more vulnerable to fear and threats of punishment than men. Men in our society tend to be more independent and less fearful of threatening stimuli. They are socialized to act bravely when they face any threatening stimuli. Women also score more than men on most self-report measures such as anxiety and suffering. Women have more separation anxiety than men (Schaie,1994)

It is reasonable to conclude that young people tend to view their lives positively and are hopeful for a bright future. Student life for most people is free from worries and pressures of practical life and is usually the happiest time of their lives.

8. Limitations

1. The foremost limitation of the study is the sample size and the fact that more varied age groups could give more significant results regarding death anxiety.
2. The cross-sectional scheme of our study limits our results as well, and the longitudinal project is essential for a better understanding of mentioned variables.
3. The results of the study could be viewed on a broader scale if sample were to be chosen from different socioeconomic class and occupation groups.

9. Implications and Conclusion

The results of the study showed that stronger the religious beliefs, higher the life satisfaction would lead ultimately to lesser death anxiety. This study can be helpful in understanding the broad scope of existentialism and importance of self-awareness in life ahead. Finally, the results of this study provide adequate evidence to pursue an investigation of the relationship between death anxiety, psychological separation, and identity formation in young adults. It would be exciting and valuable to determine the role that psychological separation plays in the formation of identity and the role that identity formation plays in the occurrence of death anxiety and the way in which all three variables interact. Further studies regarding the effects of different aspects of religion, spirituality and quality of life on experiences during different age parameters can be an interesting area of study.

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