

Examination of death concerns of physical education and sports school students

Examen de preocupaciones de muerte de estudiantes de escuelas de educación física y deportes

USTAOĞLU-HOŞVER, Pelin†* & SARIKOL, Eyyüp''

Düzce University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, Düzce, Turkey.

İğdir University, İğdir-Turkey.

ID 1st Author: *Pelin, Ustaoğlu-Hoşver* / ORC ID: 0000-0001-6681-7628

ID 1st Co-author: *Eyyüp, Sarıkol* / ORC ID: 0000-0002-8076-9180

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Abstract

Although it has been the subject of many studies in recent years, death and death anxiety emerges as one of the least clear areas. Death has been in the lives of human beings from the moment human beings are born. In this context, it is thought that determining the death anxiety levels of the students of the faculty of sports sciences and examining their relations with different variables will contribute to the field. This study aims to determine the death anxiety levels of the students of the faculty of sports sciences and to discuss them in light of the findings. The study sample consists of 293 (97 female, 196 male) volunteer participants studying at physical education and sport college. While scale was preferred as a data collection tool, a descriptive survey model was used to determine "Death Anxiety Levels". The scale used in the research consists of two parts. In the first part of the scale, the "Personal Information Form" was used to determine the demographic information of the students. In the second part, the "Death Anxiety Scale" was used to determine the death anxiety levels of the participants. As a result of the analysis of the data obtained, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the gender, age, income status, marital status, chronic disease status and smoking status of the physical education and sports school students, and the death anxiety scale total and all sub-dimensions mean scores. As a result, It can be said that death anxiety emerges with the existence of human beings and is a multidimensional concept. The similarities and differences of the findings that occurred as a result of the research made show that death anxiety affects many variables. In this context, it will be essential to carry out studies in which the athletes participate to contribute to the field.

Death anxiety, School of physical education and sports, Student

Resumen

Aunque ha sido objeto de muchos estudios en los últimos años, la muerte y la ansiedad ante la muerte emergen como una de las áreas menos claras. La muerte ha estado en la vida de los seres humanos desde el momento en que nacen los seres humanos. En este contexto, se piensa que determinar los niveles de ansiedad ante la muerte de los estudiantes de la facultad de ciencias del deporte y examinar sus relaciones con distintas variables contribuirá al campo. Este estudio tiene como objetivo determinar los niveles de ansiedad ante la muerte de los estudiantes de la facultad de ciencias del deporte y discutirlos a la luz de los hallazgos. La muestra del estudio consta de 293 participantes voluntarios (97 mujeres, 196 hombres) que estudian en la universidad de educación física y deporte. Si bien se prefirió la escala como herramienta de recopilación de datos, se utilizó un modelo de encuesta descriptivo para determinar los "Niveles de ansiedad ante la muerte". La escala utilizada en la investigación consta de dos partes. En la primera parte de la escala se utilizó el "Formulario de Información Personal" para determinar la información demográfica de los estudiantes. En la segunda parte, se utilizó la "Escala de Ansiedad ante la Muerte" para determinar los niveles de ansiedad ante la muerte de los participantes. Como resultado del análisis de los datos obtenidos, se determinó que no existe diferencia estadísticamente significativa entre el sexo, la edad, la situación económica, el estado civil, el estado de enfermedades crónicas y el tabaquismo de los alumnos de las escuelas de educación física y deportes, y el escala de ansiedad ante la muerte puntuaciones medias totales y de todas las subdimensiones. Como resultado, se puede decir que la ansiedad ante la muerte surge con la existencia del ser humano y es un concepto multidimensional. Las similitudes y diferencias de los hallazgos que se dieron como resultado de la investigación realizada muestran que la ansiedad ante la muerte afecta muchas variables. En este contexto, será fundamental realizar estudios en los que participen los atletas para contribuir al campo.

Ansiedad ante la muerte, Facultad de educación física y deportes, Estudiante

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* Correspondence author: (Corresponding author: USTAOĞLU-HOŞVER, Pelin, E-mail: pelinustaoglu@duzce.edu.tr)

† Researcher contributing first author.

Introduction

Although it has been the subject of many researches in recent years, death and death anxiety appear as one of the least clarified areas. Death has been in the lives of human beings from the moment human beings are born. Death and life are two inseparable parts of a whole and they are two opposite concepts that make sense together (Bolt, 1978).

The loss of vitality of the organism and the end of life due to the failure of the organs to perform their functions is called death, and the only living thing that is aware of its death is the human being. Humans are the only creatures who are worried about death because they are aware that they will die. Reasons such as not being able to see loved ones again, ending of experiences, plans and projects, suffering while dying, beliefs about the afterlife, extinction, inability to achieve goals, decay and disappearance of the body can make death a worrying situation (Zhang *et al.*, 2019).

Death anxiety is a universal experience independent of language, religion and culture (Abdel-Khalek & Tomas-Sabado, 2005). Situations such as living in stressful environments and unpredictable conditions, having a life-threatening illness, or experiencing an event that brings death close can also lead to death anxiety (Lehto & Stein, 2009).

Thinking about death, while revealing death anxiety in human beings, is a factor that connects them to life and makes their existence meaningful. acknowledgment of the existence of death; rather than pushing people into pessimistic and fearful feelings, it directs them to a life where they can live their lives to the fullest and realize the things they value (Rotter and Rotter, 1988).

According to existential psychotherapy; The fact that people know and accept the existence of death is that they will use the opportunities at their disposal to make better use of their days by enriching their lives in order to spend the rest of their lives in a meaningful way. In line with the view of existential psychotherapy; Although accepting the existence of death is not considered a positive phenomenon, it can be thought that it affects people's lives positively.

As a result of a study in which Turkish and Jordanian university students participated, it was determined that the death anxiety of the students was above normal. In addition to this result, it was observed that encountering death or an event related to death increased death anxiety and death anxiety levels of female students were higher than male students. The high death anxiety levels of female students are associated with their biological structures and cultural elements (Ayten, 2009).

Wagner and Lorion (1984) in his study, revealed that there is a strong negative relationship between life purpose and death anxiety. Therefore, having a high purpose and finding life meaningful can reduce anxiety about death. Similarly, planning activities such as setting goals for the future, participating in physical activity, and doing sports were also associated with lower death anxiety (Dickstein & Blatt, 1966).

When the relevant literature is examined, it has been seen that there are many studies on the death anxiety of elderly people (V. Fortner *et al.*, 1999; Missler *et al.*, 2012; Wu *et al.*, 2002; Zhang *et al.*, 2019; Wagner & Lorion, 1984). On the other hand, it has been understood that the number of studies in which young people participate is limited and there is a need for studies that can be done on different variables.

University students are among the groups with the highest level of anxiety due to reasons such as academic life and future anxiety (Di Pierdomenico *et al.*, 2017). In this context, it is thought that determining the death anxiety levels of the students of the faculty of sports sciences and examining their relations with different variables will contribute to the field.

In this study, it is aimed to determine the death anxiety levels of the students of the faculty of sports sciences and to discuss them in the light of the findings.

Methods

The sample of the study consists of 293 (97 female, 196 male) volunteer participants studying at physical education and sport college. While scale was preferred as data collection tool, descriptive survey model was used to determine "Death Anxiety Levels". The scale used in the research consists of two parts. In the first part of the scale, the "Personal Information Form" was used to determine the demographic information of the students, and in the second part, the "Death Anxiety Scale" developed by Sarıkaya and Baloğlu, (2016)

was used to determine the death anxiety levels of the participants.

The death anxiety scale is a five-point Likert type scale, "Always: 5; Never: 1" statements, and the highest score that can be obtained from the scale was calculated as 60-80, the lowest score being 0-29. 0-29 points; low level of death anxiety, 30-59 points; moderate death anxiety between 60-80 points; represents a high level of death anxiety.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program. Demographic information and death anxiety levels of the research group were summarized using percentage, frequency, arithmetic mean and standard deviation techniques as descriptive statistics. After it was determined that the data showed normal distribution, Independent Samples t and One-Way ANOVA tests were applied for in-group comparisons. Significance was accepted as $p < 0.05$.

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	97	33.1
	Male	196	66.9
Age	22-26 Age	49	16.7
	27-31 Age	159	54.3
	32-36 Age	85	29.0
Marital status	Married	26	8.9
	Single	267	91.1
Income status	2500 TL and under	226	77.1
	2501-4000 TL	21	7.2
	4501-6000 TL	19	6.5
	6001 TL and above	27	9.2
Chronic Disease Status	Yes	17	5.8
	No	276	94.2
Smoking Status	Yes	158	53.9
	No	135	46.1
Doing Sports Status	1-4 Year	229	78.2
	5-9 Year	64	21.8

Table 1 Characteristics of the research group regarding demographic information

Results

When Table 1 is evaluated, 66.9% of the research group is male, 33.1% is female, 54.3% is 27-31 years old, 29% is 32-36 years old, 16.7% is 22 years old. It was determined that they were between the ages of 26, 91.1% were single, 83.3% were university graduates, 16.7% were high school graduates, and 77.1% had an income level below 2500 TL.

It was observed that 94.2% of the participants did not have a chronic disease, 53.9% smoked, and 78.2% did sports between 1-4 years.

		Gender		t	p
		\bar{X}	ss		
Uncertainty of death	Female	24.98	11.01	-0.701	0.48
	Male	25.95	11.10		
Thinking and witnessing death	Female	16.74	7.50	-0.040	0.96
	Male	16.78	7.91		
Suffering	Female	8.01	3.56	-0.884	0.37
	Male	8.38	3.37		
Death Anxiety Total	Female	49.74	20.48	-0.534	0.59
	Male	51.12	20.96		
p<0,05					

Table 2 T-Test analysis of the research group by gender variable

When Table 2 is evaluated, it was seen that there was no statistically significant difference between the gender variable and the total death anxiety scale and mean scores of all sub-dimensions of the participants in the study group ($p > 0.05$).

		Chronic Disease Status		t	p
		\bar{X}	ss		
Uncertainty of death	Yes	27.58	11.52	0.749	0.45
	No	25.51	11.05		
Thinking and witnessing death	Yes	16.11	7.92	-0.355	0.72
	No	16.80	7.77		
Suffering	Yes	7.64	4.42	-0.760	0.44
	No	8.30	3.37		
Death Anxiety Total	Yes	51.35	22.25	0.140	0.88
	No	50.62	20.73		
p<0.05					

Table 3 T-Test analysis of the research group according to the variable of chronic disease status

When Table 3 was examined, it was determined that there was no statistical difference between the chronic disease status variable and the total death anxiety scale and mean scores of all sub-dimensions of the research group ($p > 0.05$).

		Smoking Status		t	p
		\bar{X}	ss		
Uncertainty of death	Yes	25.93	10.96	0.749	0.45
	No	25.28	11.22		
Thinking and witnessing death	Yes	16.82	7.99	-0.355	0.72
	No	16.70	7.52		
Suffering	Yes	8.37	3.28	-0.760	0.44
	No	8.12	3.62		
Death Anxiety Total	Yes	51.13	20.70	0.140	0.88
	No	50.11	20.93		
p<0.05					

Table 4 T-Test analysis of the research group according to the variable of smoking status

When Table 4 was evaluated, it was seen that there was no statistically significant difference between the smoking status variable of the participants and the total death anxiety scale and mean scores of all sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

		Doing Sports Status		t	p
		\bar{X}	ss		
Uncertainty of death	1-4 Year	24.76	10.47	-2.571	0.01*
	5-9 Year	28.75	12.57		
Thinking and witnessing death	1-4 Year	16.17	7.38	-2.512	0.01*
	5-9 Year	18.90	8.75		
Suffering	1-4 Year	7.99	3.32	-2.836	0.00*
	5-9 Year	9.32	3.66		
Death Anxiety Total	1-4 Year	48.89	19.60	-2.783	0.00*
	5-9 Year	56.98	23.63		
p<0.05					

Table 5 t-Test analysis according to the variable of sporting status of the research group

When Table 5 was evaluated, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the study group's sporting status variable and the total death anxiety scale and mean scores of all sub-dimensions ($p<0.05$).

		Age		F	Sig
		\bar{X}	ss		
Uncertainty of death	22-26 Age	24.95	10.48	0.137	0.87
	27-31 Age	25.64	11.65		
	32-36 Age	26.00	10.35		
Thinking and witnessing death	22-26 Age	16.10	6.67	0.218	0.80
	27-31 Age	16.87	8.31		
	32-36 Age	16.95	7.35		
Suffering	22-26 Age	7.88	3.22	0.863	0.42
	27-31 Age	8.16	3.54		
	32-36 Age	8.64	3.36		
Death Anxiety Total	22-26 Age	48.95	18.56	0.250	0.77
	27-31 Age	50.69	22.13		
	32-36 Age	51.60			
p<0.05					

Table 6 analysis of variance by age variable of the research group

When Table 6 was evaluated, it was determined that there was no statistical difference between the age variable of the research group and the total mean scores of the death anxiety scale and all sub-dimensions of the scale ($p>0.05$).

		Marital Status		t	p
		\bar{X}	ss		
Uncertainty of death	Married	25.19	10.14	0.473	0.83
	Single	25.67	11.17		
Thinking and witnessing death	Married	16.88	6.65	0.080	0.93
	Single	16.75	7.88		
Suffering	Married	9.11	2.97	1.326	0.18
	Single	8.17	3.47		
Death anxiety total	Married	51.92	17.20	0.135	0.89
	Single	50.61	21.12		
p<0.05					

Table 7 t-Test analysis of the research group by marital status variable

When Table 7 is examined, it was seen that there was no statistically significant difference between the marital status variable and the death anxiety scale total and mean scores of all sub-dimensions of the participants in the study group ($p>0.05$).

		Income Status		F	Sig
		\bar{X}	ss		
Uncertainty of death	2500 TL and under	26.27	11.13	2.306	0.07
	2501-4000 TL	26.23	10.44		
	4001-6000	19.73	8.96		
	6001 TL and above	23.96	11.41		
Thinking and witnessing death	2500 TL and under	17.15	8.02	2.372	0.07
	2501-4000 TL	17.71	7.27		
	4001-6000	12.52	5.17		
	6001 TL and above	15.74	6.73		
Suffering	2500 TL and under	8.33	3.50	1.394	0.24
	2501-4000 TL	8.61	2.81		
	4001-6000	6.73	2.88		
	6001 TL and above	8.48	3.60		
Death Anxiety Total	2500 TL and under	51.76	21.33	2.428	0.06
	2501-4000 TL	52.57	17.46		
	4001-6000	39.00	14.97		
	6001 TL and above	48.18	20.03		
p<0.05					

Table 8 Analysis of variance by income variable of the research group

When Table 8 was evaluated, it was determined that there was no statistical difference between the income status variable of the research group and the total mean scores of the death anxiety scale and all sub-dimensions of the scale ($p>0.05$).

Discussion

In this study, it was aimed to examine the death anxiety of physical education and sports high school students. In this context, as a result of the current research findings, it was determined that 66.9% of the research group was male, 33.1% was female, 54.3% was 27-31 years old, 29% was 32-36 years old, 16.7% It was determined that 91.1% of them were between the ages of 22-26, 91.1% were single, 83.3% were university graduates, 16.7% were high school graduates, and 77.1% had an income level below 2500 TL.

It is seen that 94.2% of the participants do not have a chronic disease, 53.9% smoke and 78.2% do sports between 1-4 years. While it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the participants' gender, age, marital status, income level, chronic disease status, smoking status variables and the total death anxiety scale and mean scores of all sub-dimensions, there was no statistically significant difference between the sporting status variable and the death anxiety scale total and it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of all sub-dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

When we look at the studies in the literature on the subject, in a study by Ayten (2009) in which Turkish and Jordanian university students participated, it is seen that the death anxiety levels of the students are above normal. In addition to this result, it was observed that encountering death or an event related to death increased death anxiety and death anxiety levels of female students were higher than male students. The high death anxiety levels of female students were associated with their biological structures and cultural elements.

In the study of Sönmez Benli and Yıldırım, in which they examined the life satisfaction and death anxiety of nurses in 2017, it is seen that the mean score of death anxiety and fear of female nurses is higher than that of males. While the results of Ayten (2009) research show parallelism with each other; In the study conducted by Mc Lennan *et al.* (1993) in which they investigated the death anxiety levels of female and male students, it was determined that there was no significant difference between gender. Considering the findings of the current study, it was seen that there was no statistically significant difference between the gender variable and the death anxiety scale total and mean scores of all sub-dimensions of the students in the research group ($p > 0.05$). In this context, while it is seen that the studies in the literature show parallelism with each other, it is seen that there are studies that do not show parallelism. The fact that there are different results can be explained by the fact that science is relative, the findings never have absolute values and can be renewed every day, every hour.

In the study conducted by Zhang *et al.* (2019), no statistically significant difference was found between age and death anxiety. It is seen that similar results were obtained in the research conducted by Bond in 1994; In the study, in which 18-25 age group and 55 and older individuals participated, no significant difference was found in terms of death anxiety scores of the participants. It is seen that the findings of the current research and the findings of the mentioned studies show parallelism. In this context, every child has a fear of death from the moment he is physically separated from his mother at birth, and it can be said that he has death anxiety regardless of age, but death anxiety is suppressed and ignored by each individual in its own way (Rank, 1999).

In the study conducted by Tomer (1992), it was determined that as the income levels of the participants increased, the death anxiety rates decreased. In this context, it can be thought that the problems arising from the income levels of the individuals will negatively affect the general anxiety level of the individuals. Considering that the incoming anxiety increases death anxiety, it can be said that economic problems play an important role in death anxiety (McLennan *et al.*, 1993). While the findings obtained in Zhang *et al.* (2019) research do not show parallelism with the findings of the current research, the findings obtained in Sönmez Benli 's (2017) research show parallelism with the findings of the current research, and no significant difference was found between the income levels of the students and their income status. In this context, it is thought that the results of the social environment, place of residence and opportunities may cause differences or similarities in the results of the researches.

In the study of Doğan and Karaca (2021), it was determined that death anxiety did not differ according to marital status. This research is in parallel with the findings of the current research. The human being is a social being and being in contact and interacting with other people may oblige people to need support from their social environment in coping with morally challenging life events such as death. (Ertufan, 2008).

In the study of Ertufan (2008), it is seen that death anxiety decreases with the increase of chronic diseases and health problems of physicians. When the literature is examined, there are studies showing that individuals with chronic diseases increase death anxiety (Kumar *et al.*, 1985).

In the light of this information, it is seen that the researches have reached different results. It is thought that this situation may be related to people's perception of their chronic disease in a different way or their attitudes towards the disease.

In line with the findings of the present study, it was observed that there was no statistically significant difference between the variable of smoking status of the students and the total death anxiety scale and mean scores of all sub-dimensions ($p>0.05$). (Doll and Peto, 1976; Balbay *et al.*, 2003). In the face of negative situations such as university life, individuals' efforts to create a new environment for themselves by leaving their families, and to become a candidate for a profession, students may show situations such as smoking or turning to various substance use (Lanier *et al.*, 2001). It can be said that university students do not have death anxiety because they ignore the harms of smoking because they think that smoking gives them pleasure and relieves stress (Kring and Gordon, 1998).

Conclusion

Although there are different studies associating death anxiety with the sport variable, the lack of studies supporting the findings of the current study is thought to contribute to the weak but originality of the findings related to the year of doing sport. In line with the current research findings, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the variable of doing sports and the death anxiety scale total and mean scores of all sub-dimensions ($p<0.05$). The death anxiety level of students whose duration of doing sports was between five and nine years was higher than that of students whose duration of doing sports was between one and four years. In this context; It can be said that the participation of students in sports has become more conscious over the years, causing general anxiety, and the death anxiety that occurs with the formation of general anxiety causes students to do sports for health and longevity.

As a result; It can be said that death anxiety emerges with the existence of human beings and is a multidimensional concept. The similarities and differences of the findings that emerged as a result of the researches made show that death anxiety affects many variables.

In this context, it will be important to carry out studies in which the athletes participate as participants in order to contribute to the field.

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