

**PSYCHOSOCIAL CONSTRAINTS TO DEATH AND DYING EDUCATION AMONG
STUDENTS OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, NWAFOR
ORIZU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, NSUGBE**

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Abstract

The study tried to find out psychosocial constraints of death and dying education among students of Health and Physical Education Department, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. The descriptive survey research design was used and the population of the study was made up of all the students of the department totaled two hundred and sixty-seven (267). There was no sampling since all the students were used. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The non-parametric statistics of Chi-square (χ^2) was used to analyze the data. The result revealed that students' attitude to death and religion of students are constraints to death and dying education, while the culture of students was not a constraint to death and dying education. Based on the findings the researchers made some recommendations.

Dying is that phase of human existence which precedes death. It may be short lived or protracted. Death on the other hand is the conclusion of the dying process when lifelessness is pronounced. Death is as old as concept of birth, which ushers in new and additional member to the family than do death and dying that connotes gloom and loss.

According to Okafor (1992), death is multidimensional in meaning and so has no single definition most suitable and acceptable. He therefore defined death as the actual loss of life and the culmination of the individuals' last growth period prior to death. Leviton (1991) classified physical death as Horrendous death I (HD-I) and Horrendous death II (HD-II), the former being when mass death is directed intentionally at human population as in recent genocides among the Hutus And Tutshi in Rwanda, and the latter meaning when death is man made, but the deadly motivation to kill another is missing. Its examples were suicide, accidents, substance abuse, hunger and starvation and the deadly contamination of the physical environment.

Death and dying education is a term applied to a wide variety of planned educational experiences that improve knowledge and understanding of the meaning of death, the process of dying, grief and bereavement (Kastenbaum, 1991). Udoh (2002) stated that a justification for the inclusion of death and dying education unit in Health Education course in any country has not always been easy because of the negative emotions conjured by the word "death" in the mind of people.

Emotion steered towards death and dying issues are not surprising since Imogie (1988) stated that, individuals naturally react differently to situations. Philosophically, individuals naturally death are tagged as being death fear or death acceptance, other may base their fear of death on past experience.

Fears and uncertainties which appear to mystify death abound. In most Nigeria cultures, people find it morbid to discuss and think of their own death. It is always treated with much reverence

that people have come to accept it open discussion as abominable (Udoh, 2000). The ordinary day to day conversation about death is regarded as a taboo. Okafor (1992) asserted that people place it in the closet now, hoping it will not become a reality they will have to face. He believed that death fears are not instinctive, they exist because Nigerian cultures may have created and perpetuated fearful meanings and ascribed them to death. The relationship between religion and attitude towards the experience of death is conflicting. Some studies reported a negative influence of religion, other report a positive influence, while further studies have found no religious difference in attitude and behaviour, (Wass, 1987). Okafor (1992) believed that the fear of death is not total, because people may have developed their own philosophical and religious belief which might have defined their reactions.

In most homes, parents shield their young ones from events of death and dying. It is considered a thief, wicked, inconsiderate spirit that snatches away loved ones, children from parents and parents from children (Udoh, 2000). Utin (1997) noted that the reactions of many parents towards death education is still very antagonizing. Some parents do not believe that children should be taught about death. These attitudes portrayed by parents are shaped not only by religious beliefs but by the physical world. (Fulton, 1996).

The best way to make sense out of death and dying is to live heroically that is, to meet death face on. It is generally believed that once people have come to grips with the finality of death, they are basically more prepared to show interest in the teaching of death. Similarly, through formal or informal death and dying education, the terror of death will be reduced to a manageable proportion. In respect of the above, Neimeyer (1998) noted that a number of academic disciplines (Psychology, Sociology, Religious Study, Health Education, Nursing Education, Anthropology and Medicine) have assumed responsibilities in varying degrees for its study.

Statement of Problem

Death which is a termination of life as we know it today, is virtually tabooed to the point of Ostracism in our society, yet the most appropriate and ultimate human adaptation should be the acceptance of the reality of death. In spite of the fact that dying and death are common occurrences in all human societies, it is always treated with so much reverence that people have come to accept its open discussion as abominable, especially in Nigeria. Consequent upon this societal apathy to the issue of death and dying is complete absence or partial presence of the topic in educational curriculum in Nigerian schools. Very few professionals have accepted to specialize in the area of death and dying.

Therefore, this paper tried to find out the Psychosocial constraints of death and dying Education among students of Health and Physical Education Department in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe.

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis were formulated and tested for the study of 0.05 level of significance:

1. Student's attitude to death would not significantly be a constraint to death and dying education.
2. Culture of students of Health and Physical Education department would not significantly be a constraint to death and dying education.

3. Religion of students of Health and Physical Education department would not significantly be a constraint to death and dying education.

Method

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population for the study consisted of all the students of Health and Physical Education Department, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, (N. C. E and B.Ed Undergraduate students). All the students of the Department made up of a total of two hundred and Sixty-Seven (267) constituted the study B.ED-42, N.C.E YrI-95, YrII-67, YrIII-63. Since all the students were used, no sampling technique was employed.

The structured questionnaire weighted on a four point rating viz: strongly Agreed – SA, Agreed-A: Disagreed-D and strongly disagreed-SD was used to collect data for the study. The instrument had a test-retest reliability of 0.85. The non-parametric statistics of chi-square (χ^2) was used to test hypothesis.

Result and Discussion

Hypothesis 1: Students attitude to death would not significantly be a constraint to death and dying education.

Table 1

χ^2 Analysis of respondents opinion on students attitude to death as a constraint to death and dying education.

| | | | | | | |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|--------------|
| Response | SA | A | D | SD | Total | χ^2 cal |
| Frequency | 85 | 95 | 55 | 32 | 267 | 37.08 |
| Percentage | 32% | 35.6% | 20.6% | 12% | 100% | |
| | 67.6% | 32.6% | | | | |

χ^2 calculated = 37.08 fd = 3, $p < 0.05$, table value = 7.82

From table 1, it was observed that the calculated Chi-square (χ^2) of 37.08 is greater than the table value of 7.82, df =3 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the researchers rejected the hypothesis that students attitude to death would not significantly be a constraint to death and dying education. This is line with Imogie (1988) who stated that individual naturally react differently to situation. Philosophically, attitude towards death are tagged as being death fear or death acceptance, others may base their fear of death on past experience.

Hypothesis 2: Culture of the students of Health and Physical Education department would not significantly be a constraint to death and dying Education.

Table 2
X² Analysis of Respondents Opinion on Culture as a Constraint to Death and Dying Education.

| | | | | | | |
|------------|-------|-------|--------|-----|-------|---------------------|
| Response | SA | A | D | SD | Total | X ² cal. |
| Frequency | 60 | 75 | 65 | 67 | 267 | 1.73 |
| Percentage | 22.5% | 28.1% | 24.34% | 25% | | |
| | | 50.6% | 49.44% | | | |

X² calculated = 1.73 df=3, p>0.05, table value = 7.82

Table 2 showed that the calculated Chi square of 1.73 is less than the table value of 7.82 df = 3 at 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis which stated that culture of students of Health and Physical Education Department would not be a significant constraint to death and dying education is accepted. This is contrary to the finding of Udoh (2000) that death has been so personified in most cultures that it is considered a thief, wicked inconsiderate spirit that snatches away loved ones, children from their parents or parents from their children, thus living them orphan. Rarely is death considered friendly in most communities except in equally rare cases when it is hailed as a deliverer from suffering. Even at this, the fear of the unknown still persist.

Hypothesis 3: Religion of the students of Health and Physical education department would not significantly be a constraint to death and dying Education.

Table 3:
X² Analysis of Respondents Opinion on Religion as a Constraint to Death and Dying Education

| | | | | | | |
|------------|-------|----|-------|------|-------|--------------------|
| Response | SA | A | D | SD | Total | X ² cal |
| Frequency | 50 | 72 | 85 | 60 | 267 | 10.27 |
| Percentage | 18.7 | 27 | 31.8% | 22.5 | 100% | |
| | 45.7% | | 54.3% | | | |

X² calculated = 10.27% df=3, p<0.05, table value=7.82

Since the calculated X² calculated = 10.27 is greater than the X² table value of 7.52 df =, at 0.05 level of significance the researcher therefore rejected the hypothesis and concluded that religion of students of Health and Physical Education Department is significantly be a constraint to death and dying Education. This corroborate the findings of Okafor (1992) that the fear of death is not total because people may develop their own philosophical, religious beliefs which might have defined their reactions Udoh (2000) asserted that most people acknowledged the reality of death for other persons. Most people infrequently accept the possibility of their own demise inspite of the injunction of the Bible and Koran to expect death anytime unannounced. The expectations of premature death is unthinkable to many even though in most traditional societies, the causes are ascribed to unnatural causes perpetrated by wicked and or envois relations.

Conclusion

Base on the findings the researchers concluded that student's attitude to death and Religion of students were constraints to death and dying Education while culture of the students is not a constraint to death and dying education. The researchers made the following recommendations:

1. Curriculum planners should endeavour to include death and dying education as a course to be offered in institutions.
2. Experts should create awareness and make people imbibe the teaching of death and dying education.

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