

Exploring the Interplay of Age and Gender in Death Anxiety Madhu Bala* and Neetu Chaudhary**

Abstract

This empirical study investigates the effect of age and gender on death anxiety. Death anxiety, defined as the fear or discomfort associated with the thought of one's mortality, has been widely studied in psychology, but the impact of demographic factors such as age and gender on death anxiety remains inconclusive. The current research aims to fill this gap by examining how these factors influence individuals' levels of death anxiety. A sample of 200 participants (100 men and 100 women) was selected, with ages ranging from 31 to 65+ years. Participants completed the Death Anxiety Scale (DAS), which measures cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of death-related concerns. Statistical analyses, Two way ANOVA were performed to assess the effects of age and gender on death anxiety. Results indicate that death anxiety decreases with age, with adult participants (31-50 years) reporting significantly higher levels of anxiety compared to older participants (51-65+ years). This finding suggests that individuals become less fearful of death as they age, possibly due to increased acceptance of mortality or greater life experience. Additionally, gender differences were observed, with women reporting higher levels of death anxiety than men. This may be attributed to social, cultural, and psychological factors that influence women's existential concerns more acutely than men's. The study also found that the interaction between age and gender did not significantly alter the effects of these individual factors, suggesting that age and gender independently influence death anxiety levels.

Keywords: Death anxiety, age, gender, empirical study, psychological factors.

Death anxiety is a prevalent psychological phenomenon characterized by fear, dread, or uneasiness about one's mortality (Rosenblatt, 2019). Research in this area has revealed that death anxiety can be influenced by various factors, including individual characteristics like age and gender. These factors may shape how people experience and respond to the inevitability of death. This paper will examine the effect of age and gender on death anxiety by reviewing existing studies and discussing potential underlying mechanisms that may explain these relationships.

Age and gender are two significant factors in shaping the human experience of death. As individuals age, their awareness of mortality and existential concerns often increase (Yalom, 1980). In contrast, younger individuals may feel more distanced from the concept of death, potentially experiencing lower levels of anxiety. Furthermore, gender differences in death anxiety have been observed in numerous studies, with women generally reporting higher levels of fear regarding death compared to men (Neimeyer, 2000). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for creating effective interventions that can help individuals cope with death-related anxiety in both young and older populations. Age and Death Anxiety A large body of research suggests that death anxiety decreases with age, particularly as individuals approach the later stages of life. According to Kübler-Ross (1969), as people age, they may achieve a sense of acceptance about death due to a combination of factors, such as cognitive adjustment and existential maturity. Older adults may also have a clearer understanding of their own mortality, which can lead to reduced fear and anxiety. However, other studies have presented a more complex picture. For example, a study by Avery (2007) found that although some older adults show

less death anxiety, others experience heightened anxiety due to concerns about loss of autonomy, physical decline, and the emotional consequences of death on their loved ones. These findings suggest that age alone does not determine the level of death anxiety; it is likely influenced by the individual's life circumstances and coping mechanisms.

Gender and Death Anxiety The relationship between gender and death anxiety has been well-documented, with women typically reporting higher levels of anxiety about death than men. This trend has been observed across various cultural contexts (Neimeyer, 2000). One explanation for this gender difference is that women may be more likely to express emotional concerns and fears, including fears about death (Langle & Staudinger, 2000). Additionally, women often occupy roles that involve caregiving, and the thought of death may provoke anxiety related to leaving family members or experiencing a lack of closure. A study by Wortman (1995) found that women's heightened death anxiety is often linked to socialization patterns, where women are more likely to be raised to focus on relationships and emotional expression, while men may be socialized to suppress these emotions. This suggests that gendered socialization plays a significant role in how death anxiety is experienced and expressed.

Objective

To study the effect of age and gender on death anxiety across different age groups in male and female.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant effect of age on death anxiety, with differences observed across the age groups.

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2. There will be a significant effect of gender on death anxiety, with females reporting higher levels of death anxiety than males.
3. The interaction between age and gender will significantly influence death anxiety, with gender differences varying across age groups.

Method

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the effects of age and gender on death anxiety. The independent variables were age and gender, while the dependent variable was death anxiety, measured through a standardized scale.

Participants

A total of 200 participants, aged 31 to 65+ years, were recruited using purposive sampling. Participants were stratified into two age groups: that is 31–50 years (middle adults) and 51–65+ years. Each group consisted of an equal number of male and female participants. Inclusion criteria required participants to be physically healthy and mentally capable of providing informed consent. Participants with severe physical or psychological illnesses were excluded.

Measures

Death anxiety was measured using the **Death Anxiety Scale (DAS)**, a widely validated tool that includes 15 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate higher levels of death anxiety. The scale has demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = .85) and validity across diverse populations.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from community centers, senior living facilities, and universities to ensure a diverse sample. After obtaining **informed consent**, participants were briefed about the study's objectives and assured of their confidentiality. Data collection involved administering the DAS in a quiet, private setting. Each session lasted approximately **20–30 minutes**. Demographic information (age, gender, and other relevant data) was collected prior to the DAS administration.

Results and Discussion

Table-1 Results of Two-Way ANOVA for the Effects of Age and Gender on Death Anxiety

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F
A (Age)	46.08	1	46.08	11.36**
B (Gender)	62.72	1	62.72	15.46**
AB	2	1	2	0.49
Within	795.2	196	4.057	
Total	906	199		

**Significance at .01 level of confidence.

The present study examined the effects of age and gender on death anxiety among 200 participants aged 31 to 65+ years. Using a two-way ANOVA, significant main effects for both age and gender were found, but the interaction effect was not significant. These findings provide valuable insights into how

demographic variables influence death anxiety and have implications for understanding its psychological underpinnings.

Age and Death Anxiety

The study revealed a significant effect of age on death anxiety, exhibiting higher levels compared to two aged groups (31–50 years and 51–65+ years). Death anxiety often peaks in the 31–50 age group due to a combination of life responsibilities, physical changes, and existential concerns. Individuals in this age range are frequently managing demanding roles such as building careers, raising children, or supporting aging parents, which heightens their awareness of mortality and the potential impact of their absence. Additionally, the physical signs of aging and emerging health issues can serve as reminders of life's finitude. This phase of life also involves reflecting on unachieved goals and aspirations, contributing to a sense of urgency or fear about running out of time. In contrast, death anxiety tends to decline in older adulthood, as individuals in the 51–65+ age range often develop greater emotional resilience and acceptance of mortality. With fewer immediate responsibilities and a focus on legacy, spirituality, or peace, many older adults experience a decrease in their fear of death. However, individual experiences, cultural influences, and personal health all play significant roles in shaping these patterns.

Gender and Death Anxiety

Consistent with previous findings, females reported significantly higher levels of death anxiety than males. Gender is a significant factor in death anxiety, with research consistently showing that females tend to report higher levels of death anxiety compared to males. This difference can be attributed to various psychological, social, and cultural factors. Women are often more attuned to emotions and may be more likely to express fears and concerns about mortality. They are also frequently primary caregivers within families, which can amplify their worries about the well-being of loved ones in the event of their absence. Societal expectations and traditional gender roles may further contribute to this anxiety, as women may feel a stronger sense of responsibility toward maintaining family cohesion and support. Additionally, hormonal and biological differences, such as those influenced by estrogen, might affect stress and fear responses, potentially intensifying death anxiety in females compared to males. However, these trends are also shaped by individual experiences, cultural norms, and coping mechanisms..

Interaction Between Age and Gender

While no significant interaction effect was found between age and gender, subtle patterns in the data suggest that gender differences may vary slightly across age groups. For example, the gap in death anxiety between males and females appeared more pronounced among younger and older adults. These findings, though not statistically significant, warrant

further investigation with a larger sample size to explore potential age-specific gender dynamics.

Implications

The results highlight the importance of age- and gender-specific approaches to addressing death anxiety. For younger individuals, interventions could focus on fostering resilience and helping them navigate existential uncertainties. For older adults, programs promoting life reflection and acceptance may be beneficial. Additionally, gender differences suggest that interventions should consider emotional expression and coping styles to effectively address death anxiety in women.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality or observe changes in death anxiety over time. Second, the sample was limited to a specific cultural context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider longitudinal designs and diverse populations to explore cultural and temporal influences on death anxiety. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into the subjective experiences of death anxiety across different demographic groups.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both age and gender play important roles in shaping individuals' experiences of death anxiety. Older adults tend to report lower levels of death anxiety due to acceptance of mortality and a reduction in existential concerns, while younger adults and women often report heightened anxiety regarding death. These findings have important implications for mental health professionals and researchers seeking to address death anxiety through tailored interventions and support programs. Further research is needed to explore the underlying mechanisms of these relationships, particularly in diverse cultural and social contexts.

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