

Gender Perspective on Neutral Acceptance of Death: A Study of Nepalese Youth

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Abstract

Background & Objective: This study explores gender differences in the neutral acceptance of death among Nepalese youth. Neutral acceptance is defined as the recognition of death as a natural and inevitable part of life without judgment or strong emotions.

Methods: A cross-sectional, explanatory quantitative study was conducted among 196 college students using simple random sampling. Data were collected through the Death Attitude Profile—Revised (DAP-R), specifically focusing on neutral acceptance. The study employed statistical tests such as the Chi-Square test and independent samples t-test to assess gender differences in attitudes toward neutral acceptance.

Results: The findings revealed significant gender differences in neutral acceptance of death. Female participants exhibited a higher mean score ($M = 4.23$) compared to males ($M = 3.93$). Statistical analysis ($p = 0.003$) confirmed that females are more likely to adopt a neutral acceptance of death than males.

Conclusion & Recommendation: The study concludes that Nepalese females tend to exhibit a higher neutral acceptance of death than males, likely due to cultural and social factors that encourage emotional openness and caregiving roles. These findings suggest the need for further

exploration of how gender influences death attitudes and coping mechanisms in Nepalese society.

Novelty: This research fills a gap in understanding gender-specific differences in neutral death acceptance, shaped by societal norms and cultural factors. The study provides insights into how male and female perspectives on death vary, offering valuable information for mental health, policy, and cultural discussions around death and gender roles in Nepalese society.

Keywords: Death attitude, Gender differences, Nepalese youth, Neutral acceptance

1. Introduction

The Eastern philosophy resonates with the perception of death as being non-dimensional, cyclical, and even repeatable, without the mark of the end. In religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, death is a passageway to spiritual existence or rebirth, wherein concepts related to reincarnation and the immortality of the soul are emphasized. It holds the view that death signifies the passage of life, not its end, but rather transition in one ongoing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth-samsara-until the attainment of liberation-moksha-from this circle ([Karki, D'Mello, Neupane, et al., 2024](#)).

Death acceptance can be defined as an attitude whereby individuals view it as part of nature and one of the eventualities of life without taking a vital amount of fear or anxiety about their state of death. This approach to perspective will allow individuals to face the reality of death without being overcome with negative feelings ([Alvarez & Abalos, 2020](#)). Psychological preparedness for finality in life, representing the awareness and positive emotional response towards one's mortality is known as acceptance of death. It regards the reality of death rationally and best uses the time available on this earth. Again, it is closely associated with the Kübler-Ross model, which has established five stages of grief, where acceptance is the final stage ([Kübler-Ross, 1969](#)). Becker draws on ancient philosophical traditions, advocating for a wisdom-based approach to life that acknowledges death as a part of existence. This acceptance can lead to a more profound appreciation of life and a commitment to living ethically and compassionately ([Becker, 2020](#)).

Psychologists and researchers have explored different types or dimensions of death acceptance, which can be categorized into three main forms: neutral acceptance, approach acceptance, and escape acceptance. This article is focused on the neutral acceptance of death. The definition of neutral acceptance contains an aspect of death understood as a natural and given part of life. Neutral acceptance is neither an object of fear nor welcome; rather, death is accepted without feeling judgment. In this regard, it poses a balanced view where dying is neither positively nor negatively judged, nor bad in any manner, and is part of the human experience. According to Neimeyer et al., neutral acceptance presupposes permitting death to become an integral part of life, without excessive fear and complete denial of the fact, providing a more accurate view of mortality ([Neimeyer et al., 2004](#)). Individuals with neutral acceptance acknowledge the reality of death without overwhelming anxiety or denial. It reflects a balanced and rational approach

toward death, wherein it is viewed as a biological process to be faced without emotional extremes ([Wong, 2008](#)).

According to one previous study, such neutral acceptance of death is that the subjects of healthcare professionals had the highest rating among the dimensions, with a mean score of 5.82 ± 0.90 . This therefore implies that a majority of healthcare professionals are neither overly accepting nor rejecting in their perspective on death but view it with a neutral balanced perception of the inevitability of death ([Kovacevic et al., 2024](#)). Similarly, another research has shown that neutral acceptance is significantly correlated with effective coping strategies in the face of death. A study involving college students found that those who exhibited higher levels of neutral acceptance also demonstrated better-coping mechanisms when confronted with death. This correlation suggests that neutral acceptance may facilitate healthier responses to mortality, allowing individuals to engage more openly and constructively with the concept of death ([Song, 2021](#)). A study by Arnett highlights that during adolescence, individuals begin to develop a more nuanced understanding of death, moving from a concrete perception to a more abstract one. This developmental shift plays a crucial role in achieving neutral acceptance ([Arnett, 1999](#)). Research indicates that adolescents often grapple with existential questions about mortality, which can influence their acceptance of death.

Nepal, a country with diverse topography and socioeconomic challenges, has experienced significant shifts in mortality patterns over the past few decades. The nation's death trends have transitioned from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as the leading causes of death. Between 1990 and 2017, life expectancy increased from 58.3 to 70.9 years, showing improvement in both health and living standards. At the same time, however, this progress also saw changing causes of death. In the year 1990, CMNN diseases were the leading causes of death in Nepal, accounting for about 63.6% of all deaths. In 2015, these causes-cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, and cancers-accounted for more than 63% of the mortality burden. The trend is likely to persist, and NCDs are expected to increase even more by 2040. On the other hand, CMNN diseases and injuries now compose a smaller fraction of overall deaths. Transport accidents and self-harm are included ([NHRC et al., 2021](#); [Pandey et al., 2020](#)). But in the Nepalese context, very few studies have been done on the death attitude. Recent studies on attitudes about death in Nepal show how cultural, social, and psychological factors shape perceptions of death among young people. One of these studies has examined gender in death anxiety among Nepalese college students using the DAP-R. Specifically, female participants exhibited significantly higher death anxiety than males, which reflected the cultural influences and socially induced expectations that again made for gendered experiences of death-related anxiety. Generally, it is suggested from the findings that young Nepalese people tend to exhibit discomfort and anxiety in a state of death, and educational and psychological support has been recommended to alleviate anxiety among the young, especially women ([Karki & D'Mello, 2024](#)). In another work, the general attitudes

toward death in Nepalese society were placed under the microscope, where religious beliefs play the central role in the understanding of life and death. This paper highlighted how social and spiritual contexts contribute toward normalizing the rituals of death, though there is a growing shift due to modernization and urbanization. The changes in traditional death rituals among rural communities, such as the Gurung, signify the shifting attitude toward death from being dominated by religious tenets to being less so, thus tending toward more secular views of death as influenced by urban lifestyles ([Hagaman et al., 2016](#)). Another study conducted among the elder people of Nepal shows that a significant majority of elderly individuals residing in elder homes (55.0%) expressed a sentiment of being prepared or accepting of the prospect of a quick death, compared to only 14.9% of those living in their own houses. This indicates a higher level of acceptance of death among elder home residents ([Karki, D'Mello, Poudel, et al., 2024](#)).

The previous studies were conducted among elderly people and youth focusing on death attitudes only so, there is a research gap concerning comprehensive studies on death attitudes toward neutral acceptance of death among youth. The study has given new insight into the gender differences in attitudes toward neutral acceptance of death among the youth.

2. Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to identify and explore the gender differences in attitudes toward neutral acceptance of death among the youth. Specifically, the study has analyzed the association between the male and female participants on each statement of neutral acceptance and has explored the perceptual differences between males and females on neutral acceptance from an independent sample t-test.

3. Research Hypothesis

The study has assumed the following null hypothesis based on the research objective:

H01: there is no significant difference between the male and female respondents on neutral acceptance of death.

4. Research Methods & Materials

The study has adopted the following research methods and materials:

Research Design: it is an explanatory and cross-sectional study based on the quantitative design. It has explored the perceptual differences between the male and female toward the neutral acceptance of death.

Sampling design: the study has adopted the simple random sampling technique to select the respondents. College students are selected for this study. The study collected data from 196 respondents considering the 95% confidence level, 5% prevalence, and .05% margin of error ([Karki & D'Mello, 2024](#)).

Measurement of Death Attitudes: The Death Attitude Profile—Revised (DAP-R) is a widely used instrument that assesses various attitudes toward death, including neutral acceptance. A Polish adaptation of the DAP-R demonstrated strong psychometric properties, confirming its reliability and validity across diverse age groups (Wong et al., 1994). One previous study involved 1,285 participants and identified five dimensions of attitudes toward death: Fear of Death, Death Avoidance, Neutral Acceptance, Escape Acceptance, and Approach Acceptance. Reliability coefficients for these scales ranged from $\alpha = .63$ to $\alpha = .89$, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Brudek et al., 2020). The study also used the DAP-R instrument to assess the attitude toward the neutral acceptance of death among the youth. The reliability coefficient for the scales of neutral acceptance of death used in this study is $\alpha = .721$ which indicates satisfactory internal consistency of data.

Data Analysis: the study is based on the quantitative design so statistical analysis is done to analyze the data. The study used the frequency distribution, mean, Chi-Square test, and independent sample t-test to find the attitudes of male and female participants.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Descriptive Analysis of Neutral Acceptance of Death

The following table presents the distribution of responses to the statements about the attitude toward death, based on gender, along with the mean score and Chi-Square test. It follows that there are appreciable gender differences in attitude toward death and, specifically, how males and females view death as a natural and unstoppable process. The empirical values represented through the mean score and Chi-Square test further detail these gender-specific trends. Five statements represent the neutral acceptance of death which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1:
Descriptive Analysis of Neutral Acceptance of Death

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Chi-Square Tests
Death should be viewed as a natural, undeniable, and unavoidable event	Male	5.5%	4.1%	17.8%	24.7%	47.9%	4.3520	.006
	Female	0.9%	3.4%	4.3%	25.9%	65.5%		
	Total	2.6%	3.7%	9.5%	25.4%	58.7%		
Death is a natural aspect of life	Male	1.4%	5.5%	13.7%	19.2%	60.3%	4.5000	.146
	Female	0.9%	1.7%	6.9%	13.8%	76.7%		
	Total	1.1%	3.2%	9.5%	15.9%	70.4%		
I would neither fear death nor welcome it.	Male	5.5%	12.3%	30.1%	24.7%	27.4%	3.7245	.226
	Female	4.3%	12.9%	16.4%	29.3%	37.1%		
	Total	4.8%	12.7%	21.7%	27.5%	33.3%		
Death is simply a part of the process of life.	Male	4.1%	5.5%	12.3%	30.1%	47.9%	4.3112	.339
	Female	2.6%	2.6%	8.6%	23.3%	62.9%		
	Total	3.2%	3.7%	10.1%	25.9%	57.1%		
Death is neither good nor bad.	Male	8.2%	4.1%	35.6%	24.7%	27.4%	3.6888	.077
	Female	2.6%	12.1%	25.0%	28.4%	31.9%		
	Total	4.8%	9.0%	29.1%	27.0%	30.2%		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Death Viewed as an Occurrence that is Natural, Undeniable, and Unavoidable Statement of exemplar: "Death should be considered to be a natural occurrence which can neither be denied nor avoided." There was a significant difference in the male/female perception. The males 47.9% strongly agreed to this statement and 24.7% agreed giving this group a relatively high mean score of 4.3520. Females showed a stronger agreement, with 65.5% strongly agreeing and 25.9% agreeing, a much higher degree compared with males. Altogether, the total strongly agreed came out to 58.7%, which shows a consensus. Using the Chi-Square test value of 0.006, there appears to be a statistically significant difference in the gender response rate—female respondents seem to believe that death is just natural and can never be avoided more so than males.

We see the same pattern in greater agreement for females with the statement, "Death is a natural part of life." Males strongly agreed, 60.3%, and agreed 19.2% while the females strongly agreed, 76.7%, agreed 13.8% and for all respondents, the mean score was 4.5000. Despite this trend of stronger agreement among females, the Chi-Square value of 0.146 explains that gender differences are insignificant to reach statistical significance regarding this statement. That both genders tend to generally accept the presence of death in life can, therefore be said, although females slightly more strongly agree with this statement than do the males.

The statement "I would neither fear death nor welcome it" proved to reap more mixed attitudes. Among males, 30.1% were neutral, while 27.4% strongly agreed and 24.7% agreed. The female respondents were also all over the place: 37.1% strongly agreed and 29.3% agreed. This statement had an overall mean score of 3.7245, which is more moderate compared to the rest of the statements. The Chi-Square test value of 0.226 shows no significant difference between genders. This would suggest that ambivalence about death is relatively consistent across both groups.

The responses to the statement "Death is simply a part of the process of life" again show a much greater consensus on the part of females. Among them, 47.9% strongly agreed and 30.1% agreed, while for females, 62.9% strongly agreed and 23.3% agreed. The overall mean score is 4.3112, indicating a high level of agreement by both genders. However, from the Chi-Square test, the obtained value is 0.339, showing no significant difference between genders. This means that both males and females generally accept death as part of the life process.

The response to the statement "Death is neither good nor bad" was rather varied. For males, 27.4% strongly agreed and 35.6% remained neutral; hence, their attitudes were rather balanced. The females likewise provided varied responses, as 31.9% strongly agreed, 28.4% agreed, and 25.0% remained neutral. Their mean score of 3.6888 indicated that, on average, both sexes agreed somewhat. The Chi-Square test value of 0.077 shows that there is no significant gender difference in the moral perception of death, which thus infers that both males and females are relatively undecided or neutral in their judgment of death as neither good nor bad.

5.2 Gender differences in neutral acceptance of death

The following table shows the results of a statistical test aimed at testing whether there is a difference between the genders in neutral acceptance of death by descriptive statistics and an independent samples t-test. The data indicates that there is a significant difference in the neutral acceptance of death on the part of males and females. Females indicate a slightly higher mean score, hence a higher neutral acceptance of death compared to males.

Table 2:
Gender differences in neutral acceptance of death

Group Statistics										
		Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean				
Neutral Acceptance		Male	73	3.9288	.71908	.08416				
		Female	116	4.2276	.56562	.05252				
Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Neutral Acceptance	Equal variances assumed	6.624	.011	-3.179	187	.002	-.29882	.09399	-.48424	-.11340
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.012	126.936	.003	-.29882	.09920	-.49513	-.10251

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Descriptive statistics were conducted for neutral acceptance of death by male and female respondents. The mean for males, N = 73, was 3.9288 with a standard deviation of 0.71908, which was lower than that of females, N = 116, at 4.2276 with a standard deviation of 0.56562. Standard errors for the groups are quite low, 0.08416 for males and 0.05252 for females, which show that the sample means are quite good estimators of the population means.

From these results, it would be fair to summarize that the higher mean for females indicates they are likely to adopt a more neutral view towards death compared to males. This supports previous studies on gender and death attitudes; for instance, Neimeyer et al. (2004) establish that women appear to be more open and accepting about death, typically regarding the issue as part of life rather than something to be feared or avoided. Becker also added that women are more accepting of death due to the emotional and caretaking responsibilities bestowed upon their gender, which could make them be more neutral or accepting of death (Becker, 2020). The data were analyzed by an independent samples t-test to compare whether the mean neutral acceptance of death of males differs from that of females. From the Levene's test of equality of variances, the Sig. is 0.011, which means equal variances cannot be assumed. This brings up the consideration of t-test results not assuming equal variances to be much better.

The t-test for equality of means gives a t-value of -3.012 and df of 126.936. The p-value comes out to be 0.003. As the p-value is less than 0.05, the result is significant because it falls out of the possibility range when the mean value difference between males and females could have occurred just by chance. In particular, females had a score 0.29882 points higher on neutral acceptance of death compared to males at a 95% confidence interval between -0.49513 and -0.10251, thus indicating that the difference is statistically significant as well as practically significant with females having a higher neutral acceptance of death. The result has rejected the null hypothesis (**H01**: there is no significant difference between the male and female respondents on neutral acceptance of death) of this study.

5.3 Discussion of Findings

The data highlights some important points about the gender difference in attitude towards death. Females generally agreed more strongly than males with statements framing death as a natural, inevitable process. It is within this framework that the trend is most reflected in the statistically significant difference obtained from the statement "Death should be viewed as a natural, undeniable, and unavoidable event." These findings corroborate other research findings on the same topic. For instance, Neimeyer et al. (2004) found women to express more accepting attitudes toward death, perhaps due to the sanctioning effects of cultural norms for emotional openness and social discourse about life and death. In this respect, the findings of Field and Cassel also showed that women are most accepting and open to death as part of life compared to men (Field & Cassel, 2011). Similarly, the result of the independent sample t-test analysis provides consistency with the previous studies that have considered gender differences in attitudes toward death (Field & Cassel, 2011; Neimeyer et al., 2004). The relationship between identity development and attitudes toward death has been explored in various studies. One investigation utilized Marcia's identity status framework to examine how young adults conceptualize death. It found that individuals with an interpersonal achievement status were more likely to exhibit neutral acceptance. In contrast, those in ideological foreclosure were inclined toward escape or approach acceptance, indicating that one's identity status can influence how one perceives and accepts death (Lavoie & de Vries, 2004).

From a broader perspective, the findings relate to Becker's theory of denial about death, which stipulates that cultural and social stages influence the way people view and accept death. In some cultures, where communal life and expression of emotions are emphasized, women could view death as a process integrated within the general process of human life, which is an expression of a high degree of consent from the current data. The ambivalence of fearing/welcoming and viewing it neither as bad nor good, at moderate levels, indicates that both genders share similar uncertainties about the subjective value of death, which might further support the complex nature of death attitudes (Becker, 2020).

6. Conclusion & Recommendation

The analysis has indicated that there is a significant difference in the neutral acceptance of death, and it is higher among females compared to males. The result is expected because some literature speaks to the fact that due to social, cultural, and psychological factors, women approach death with more neutrality and acceptance. The large t-test difference further underlines the view that this gender difference does not arise from random variation but denotes a real difference in the way males and females regard death. Future research can study other aspects of death attitudes like escape acceptance and approach acceptance of death among the youth.

Conflict of Interest: there is no conflict of interest

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