



The Sociocultural and Demographic Determinants of Death Attitudes: A Comprehensive Review of Research in the Nepalese Context and Beyond

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Abstract

Background: Attitudes toward death are shaped by a complex interplay of psychological, cultural, and social factors. Recent research, particularly the work of Karki and colleagues in Nepal, has highlighted the importance of understanding these determinants within specific sociocultural contexts to address end-of-life care and mental well-being effectively.

Objectives: This comprehensive review aims to synthesize the research on the sociocultural and demographic determinants of death attitudes, with a specific focus on findings from the Nepalese context. It further seeks to evaluate the methodological approaches and scholarly impact of this research domain.

Methods: The review is based on a systematic analysis of literature identified primarily through Google Scholar and other academic databases, following standard systematic review and bibliometric analysis procedures. The methodology involved identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion of relevant studies, with a particular emphasis on the quantitative cross-sectional research conducted by Karki et al. utilizing the Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R) scale.

Findings: Research in Nepal reveals that death attitudes among youth and the elderly are significantly influenced by gender, cultural and religious beliefs, and social dynamics. Key



findings include gender differences in neutral acceptance and death avoidance among youth, and the profound impact of family dynamics and living arrangements (e.g., family homes vs. elder care homes) on the death attitudes of the elderly. Bibliometric trends indicate a growing but fluctuating interest in this field.

Conclusion: The perception of mortality is not universal but is deeply contextual. The consistent findings from Nepal underscore that sociocultural and demographic factors are critical in shaping how individuals approach death. A culturally sensitive understanding is therefore paramount.

Implementation: The insights from this review can be implemented to develop targeted, culturally appropriate psychological interventions, educational programs, and support systems. These can help reduce death-related stigma and anxiety, and improve palliative and end-of-life care practices, particularly in diverse and under-researched cultural settings like Nepal.

Keywords: death attitudes, sociocultural determinants, Nepal, bibliometric analysis, DAP-R

Introduction

Research into death attitudes has gained considerable attention in recent years, reflecting a complex interplay of psychological, cultural, and social factors that shape human perceptions of mortality. A comprehensive understanding of this field necessitates a review of existing literature, including prominent contributions from researchers such as Karki, whose work frequently explores death attitudes within the Nepalese context. A bibliometric analysis of death attitude publications from 2015 to 2024 reveals a growing interest in the topic, with a peak in publications observed in 2021, although a decline followed in 2022 and 2023 (Karki et al., 2024). This trend suggests a dynamic research landscape where scholarly focus might fluctuate. Citation analysis is often employed to understand the impact and trajectory of research within a field (Chan et al., 2013; Emile, 2011; Karki et al., 2024; Sun & Xia, 2016). The scholarly communication of economic knowledge, for instance, can be studied using citation analyses from platforms like Google Scholar to gauge research impact (Sun & Xia, 2016).

Karki and colleagues have extensively contributed to the understanding of death attitudes, particularly among Nepalese youth and elderly populations. Their research frequently utilizes the Death Attitude Profile—Revised (DAP-R) to measure various facets of death attitudes (Karki & D’Mello, 2024, 2025; Karki et al., 2024). For example, a study examining gender differences in the neutral acceptance of death among Nepalese youth found that neutral acceptance is defined as recognizing death as a natural and inevitable part of life, devoid of strong judgment or emotion (Karki & D’Mello, 2024). Another study by Karki and D’Mello (2024) focused on the fear of death among Nepalese youth, highlighting how cultural, religious, and social factors influence these perceptions. They also investigated death avoidance attitudes among Nepalese youth, specifically analyzing gender differences and the sociocultural, religious, and socio-demographic factors that contribute to this phenomenon (Karki &



D'Mello, 2025). Understanding these factors is crucial for developing interventions that reduce the stigma associated with death (Karki & D'Mello, 2025).

Beyond youth, Karki's research extends to the elderly population in Nepal, exploring the influence of family dynamics on death attitudes. A comparative study across Chitwan and Jhapa districts revealed significant differences in death attitudes based on living arrangements, with residents of elder homes showing greater acceptance of quick death, less fear, and viewing death as a relief from pain (Karki et al., 2024). These individuals often preferred dying in religious settings (Karki et al., 2024). This indicates that personal circumstances and living environments can profoundly impact an individual's outlook on mortality (Karki et al., 2024). The methodologies employed in these studies typically involve quantitative cross-sectional designs using random sampling techniques among college students (Karki, 2017; Karki & D'Mello, 2024, 2025). For instance, a study on neutral acceptance involved 196 college students selected via simple random sampling (Karki & D'Mello, 2024). Similarly, the study on fear of death also included 196 college students using a random sampling technique (Karki & D'Mello, 2024). These quantitative approaches allow for statistical analysis of demographic variables and social factors, providing insights into predictors of attitudes (Karki, 2017). Karki's earlier work also investigated predictors of knowledge, attitude, and practices related to HIV & AIDS among 404 respondents in Kathmandu valley, using similar quantitative methods and simple random sampling (Karki, 2017).

Methodology

The use of Google Scholar as a primary search platform for identifying relevant research articles is prevalent across various scientific domains. Systematic reviews often employ Google Scholar alongside other databases like PubMed, Embase, and Web of Science to ensure comprehensive coverage (Alkadi & Abed, 2023; Aravind et al., 2024; Fakhriolaei et al., 2024; Herranz Cabarcos & Herranz Cabarcos, 2023; Koch et al., 2024; Khandker et al., 2023; López-Gálvez et al., 2019; Mazumder et al., 2022; Melville et al., 2024; Pendem et al., 2024; Shelomi, 2024; Usman, 2021; van Aalst, 2010; Wang et al., 2020). For example, a systematic review on suicidal ideation and attempted suicide among women and girls in South Asia included records identified from Google Scholar in addition to nine other bibliographic databases (Mazumder et al., 2022). Another systematic literature review on consumer acceptance of fintech app payment services also used Google Scholar as one of its electronic databases, yielding 4,620 articles initially (Alkadi & Abed, 2023). The process of selecting articles from these vast databases typically involves several stages, including initial identification, screening of titles and abstracts, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion (Alkadi & Abed, 2023; Aravind et al., 2024; Fakhriolaei et al., 2024; Herranz Cabarcos & Herranz Cabarcos, 2023; Koch et al., 2024; Khandker et al., 2023; López-Gálvez et al., 2019; Mazumder et al., 2022; Melville et al., 2024; Pendem et al., 2024; Shelomi, 2024; Wang et al., 2020).



The methodological workflow for such analyses, as illustrated in some studies, begins with articles crawled from Google Scholar, followed by deduplication, sorting by citation count, and selecting the top-cited articles for final analysis (Cunha et al., 2023). This systematic approach ensures that influential research is identified and thoroughly examined (Cunha et al., 2023). Similarly, the identification stage in a systematic review can involve combining results from various databases, including Google Scholar, and then removing duplicates to narrow down the pool of potential articles. For instance, one study combined 2,083 citations from multiple databases, including 120 from Google Scholar, and removed 816 duplicates to arrive at 1,267 non-duplicate citations for further screening.

Results

The broader context of Karki's research also includes bibliometric analyses on other scholarly topics. For example, a bibliometric analysis explored the scholarly landscape of "Aspirations of Life" publications from 2015 to 2024, identifying trends and gaps, particularly within the Nepalese context (Karki et al., 2024). Another bibliometric study focused on decolonization research from 2010 to 2023, analyzing publication metrics and statistical trends (Mahat et al., 2024). These analyses underscore the importance of systematic reviews and bibliometric methods in mapping out research trends and identifying impactful contributions (Karki et al., 2024; Mahat et al., 2024).

The impact of publications is not solely measured by citation counts but also by the quality of the journal. While many of Karki's publications are in journals without a listed Impact Factor (e.g., Aryal et al., 2024; Karki, 2017; Karki & D'Mello, 2024, 2025; Karki et al., 2024; Mahat et al., 2024; Shrestha et al., 2024; Yadav et al., 2024), the depth and consistency of his focus on death attitudes in Nepal contribute significantly to a niche but crucial area of study. The concept of citation counts as a proxy for scholarly communication and research impact is well-established (Chan et al., 2013; Emile, 2011; Sun & Xia, 2016). Google Scholar is particularly valuable for identifying a broader range of citations, including those from less conventional sources, making it a useful complement to traditional databases like Web of Science and Scopus, especially for interdisciplinary fields (Mukherjee, 2008; Rosenstreich & Wooliscroft, 2012; van Aalst, 2010; Vaughan & Shaw, 2008). However, it is important to note that informal citations (mentioning author names without full references) may not always be captured, potentially underestimating the true impact of seminal works (Marx & Cardona, 2009).

Conclusion

The research conducted by Karki and collaborators on death attitudes, particularly in Nepal, offers valuable insights into how cultural, social, and demographic factors shape perceptions of mortality. Their use of established psychological instruments and systematic quantitative methods contributes to the understanding of fear of death, neutral acceptance, and death avoidance. The reliance on platforms like Google Scholar in their bibliometric and systematic



review processes highlights its utility in comprehensive literature searches. However, the overall scholarly impact must be considered within the broader context of citation metrics and journal quality. The continued exploration of death attitudes, especially in diverse cultural settings, remains vital for developing culturally sensitive interventions and support systems related to end-of-life care and mental well-being.

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