Chapter 7

Assessment of Death Anxiety Among Chinese: A Study of Reliability and Validity

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Abstract

This exploratory study aimed to devise a measurement scale to evaluate death anxiety among Chinese. A total of 282 Chinese college students participated in the study. The 23-item Chinese Death Anxiety Inventory (CDAI) was internally consistent and factor analytic procedures yielded two factors. Results showed that participants were more anxious about the process of death and dying than issues related to life after death. Young age and female gender was related to a higher level of death anxiety. The CDAI and its factors were related to self-efficacy and external health locus of control in the expected directions. The hypothesis that internal health control beliefs would attenuate death anxiety was not supported. Limitations and implications of the present study were also discussed.

Key Words: Chinese Death Anxiety, Chinese Death Attitudes, Chinese Health Control.

Death anxiety is a general term that represents a cluster of death attitudes characterized by negative psychological reactions such as concerns about cognitive and emotional impact of death and dying, fear of physical changes due to death and dying, awareness of the finite time of life and its rapid passage, and concerns about the pain and stress of dying (Lonetto & Templer, 1986). It is important to learn about people's concerns and fears regarding death and dying in order to address issues around end-life-care and advanced directives. As there is a dearth of studies on death attitudes among Chinese, this study thus aims to examine how Chinese perceive and react toward death and dying.