



Research Paper

A Model for Treating Death Anxiety Based on God-oriented Multidimensional Spiritual Psychotherapy



Fatemeh Ghanavi^{1*} , Masoud Janbozorgi¹ , Seyed Kazem Rassolzadeh Tabatabayi²

1. Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Research Institute Hawzah and University, Qom, Iran.

2. Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.

Use your device to scan and read the article online

Please cite this article as Ghanavi F, Janbozorgi M, Rassolzadeh Tabatabayi SK. A Model for Treating Death Anxiety Based on God-oriented Multidimensional Spiritual Psychotherapy. *Health Spiritual Med Ethics*. 2024; 11(4):197-210. <http://dx.doi.org/10.32598/hsmej.11.4.592.1>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.32598/hsmej.11.4.592.1>

Article info:

Received: 17 Jun 2024

Accepted: 11 Dec 2024

Publish: 01 Dec 2024

Keywords:

Death, Anxiety, Religion, anxiety, Therapy

ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: The present study was conducted to present and compile a conceptual model of effective structures in the treatment of death anxiety based on religious texts and assess its validity.

Methods: A mixed exploratory research method (quantitative and qualitative) was used. In the qualitative part, collecting texts, the method of semantic fields was used, while qualitative content analysis was applied in the text analysis phase. In the quantitative part of the research, the method of evaluating the opinions of experts was used. Using targeted sampling based on the principle of saturation, 27 related words and 549 religious propositions were collected and analyzed from Islamic sources.

Results: Finally, eight themes, 16 categories, and 63 components were extracted. To ensure the compatibility of the findings with the literary content and their applicability in the field of psychology, their validity was investigated based on the opinion of 12 experts by calculating the content validity index (CVI) and the content validity ratio (CVR), and finally, the conceptual model of effective structures in the treatment of death anxiety was drawn in the form of a general schema.

Conclusion: The findings of this research provide a suitable platform for the design of intervention therapies and educational packages in this regard

* Corresponding Author:

Fatemeh Ghanavi, PhD.

Address: Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Research Institute Hawzah and University, Qom, Iran.

Phone: +98 (912) 8520423

E-mail: f.ghanavi@rihu.ac.ir / fatemehghanavi@gmail.com



Copyright © 2024 The Author(s).
This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY-NC: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode.en>), which permits use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited and is not used for commercial purposes.

Introduction

Death and life are both created by God and serve as a means to test humanity [1]. In Islamic teachings, death is introduced as the birth of the soul, and with each breath, a person continues to live while simultaneously moving toward death (Hikmat 74) [2]. Throughout history, humans have tried to be immortal in various ways, and this human desire for immortality can be seen in the importance and progress of medical science to fight deadly and dangerous diseases, the quest to discover the elixir of youth, embalming corpses, and more. The most effective trick of Satan to deceive Adam is the promise of immortality [1].

Considering the importance of this issue, various fields of human sciences, including psychology, have dealt with the human concern about death. According to Yalom, “life and death” exist at the same time, and death is constantly moving under the skin of life. Death is the main and primary source of anxiety and the main source of mental abnormalities [3] affecting the quality of a person’s life [4]. Belsky (1999) defined death anxiety as the fears, feelings, and thoughts related to the final event of life that exceed the normal state of existence [5].

Death anxiety leads to the formation of different behaviors in different people [6]. Various studies have shown traces of death anxiety in anxiety disorders [5]. Also, death anxiety causes depression, suicidal thoughts, and a decrease in a person’s ability to do homework [4]. For this reason, psychopathology. Therefore, the main goal of the current research is to carefully examine religious texts to extract targeted and structural mechanisms for the treatment of death anxiety and to present and develop a conceptual model to address death anxiety based on Islamic sources. Additionally, the researchers aim to utilize the findings of this research in the next stages to design a treatment package for death anxiety that aligns with God’s spiritual multidimensional treatment [5].

Death anxiety is a common experience among most people, and its relief can increase people’s quality of life [7]. Considering the importance of death anxiety, various treatment methods, including non-spiritual treatments [8, 9] and spiritual treatments [10, 11] have been designed to address this disorder. In recent years, spirituality has emerged as an important component in the theoretical and research literature aimed at increasing coping abilities and improving mental health [12].

Spirituality is attributed to beliefs and actions that exist in the transcendental dimensions (not physical) of life, placing individuals in a close and intimate relationship with God and a range of virtues within themselves [13]. Research has shown that spirituality plays an important role in mental health and is an important part of people’s quality of life. There is a significant relationship between spirituality and the development or reduction of depression, anxiety disorders, and suicidal thoughts [14, 15]. Also, research has shown that spiritual variables, such as spirituality [16], religiosity [17] reduce death anxiety.

God-oriented spiritual multidimensional therapy is a therapy with a spiritual approach that has attracted the attention of researchers in this field in recent years. In this treatment, instead of focusing on two perceptual domains (man and existence), the therapist focuses on four perceptual domains (origin, end, self, and existence), which consider the whole human being. This therapeutic model takes into account the heterogeneity of images (non-real perceptions) in relation to real concepts within the four general perceptual domains, which provides the context for psychological-spiritual damage. The treatment aims to help individuals distance themselves from these images (non-real perceptions) and move closer to the real concepts within their perceptual field. In this research, after analyzing the religious texts and discovering the effective components of death anxiety from these texts, the authors organized and categorized these components within the framework of the God-oriented spiritual multidimensional treatment. As a result, a conceptual model was obtained regarding death anxiety in the framework of God-oriented spiritual multidimensional treatment [18].

The spiritual treatment protocols for death anxiety in the research literature are mostly designed by Iranian researchers [10, 19]. However, most of them face the important issue that religious texts have not been qualitatively examined in any of them so that the mechanisms in these texts for the treatment of death anxiety should be identified, and based on that, a protocol should be designed that comprehensively and completely includes all dimensions of human existence. While research based on Islamic sources regarding death anxiety [7, 20] has been conducted, no study has been found that investigates and extracts effective mechanisms for the treatment of death anxiety from religious-Islamic texts.

Therefore, the main goal of the current research was to carefully examine religious texts to extract targeted and structural mechanisms for the treatment of death anxiety and to present and develop a conceptual model to over-

come death anxiety based on Islamic sources. Also, the researchers aimed to utilize the findings of this research in the next stages to design a treatment package for death anxiety that aligns with God's spiritual multidimensional treatment.

Methods

In this research, a mixed exploratory research method (quantitative and qualitative methods) was used. In the qualitative part, the collection of texts was done using the method of semantic domains, and the analysis of texts was performed using the method of qualitative content analysis within the inductive content analysis framework. In the quantitative part, the method of evaluating the opinions of experts was utilized and in the quantitative part, the method of evaluating the opinions of experts was used [21].

The textual community for the research was the Holy Quran and narrative sources. To facilitate the search process, statements from 29 chapters of the book *Mizan al-Hikmah* (chosen to structure the studies) were collected in connection with the concept of death anxiety through targeted sampling. The review was then continued in the main texts. The studied sample was selected based on the principle of saturation in sample size. Saturation in qualitative research refers to the point where data collection continues until no more data can be found to expand the characteristics of the category [22]. The statistical population in the quantitative section consisted of specialists in psychology and seminary sciences with higher education (Ph.D. in psychology and seminary education at levels three and four). In the first qualitative part, using the strategy of "lexical search" in Islamic sources (*Jamae al-Tafaseer*, *Jame al-Hahadith* and *Mizan al-Hikmah* software) and using ten words ("al-Mut", "vaseeat", "Ajl", "Tul Amal", "Dunya", "Tobeh", "Tvfi", "Tamni al-Mut", "Takhaf Man Al-Amut", and "Amal"), 226 expressions related to death were extracted.

Then, using the principle of synonymy, semantic contrast, and lexical domain from the principles of linguistic semantics, 16 other related words were considered in several rounds between Islamic sources and dictionary books: "Amal", "Akhrat", "Haeat", "Ghabr", "Fana", "Bagha", "Ghabzeh roh", "Baqiyat al-Salahat", "Zekre Al-Mut", "Shogha Leghae Allah", "Halat Al-Mut", "Ghamrat Al-Mut", "Sakrat Al-Mut", "Trada Al-Mut", "Hasrat", and "Hazar Al-Mut".

A total of 323 other expressions were extracted from these words. In total, 549 religious propositions were

collected using 26 related words. Subsequently, these propositions were examined, and duplicate data as well as data that were only marginally related to the research topic were removed. At this stage, 374 propositions were removed and 175 religious propositions were selected as the final selected text for analysis. In this section, Meiring's qualitative content analysis was used. Thus, a systematic process with controlled analysis of the texts was conducted, bringing the researcher closer to forming a conceptual model. Also, because the research literature on the subject was limited, the inductive content analysis method was used. This approach avoided preconceived categories, allowing for the discovery of categories directly from the data [23]. The method of data analysis based on the coding process takes place in three stages: Open, central and selective [24]. In this process, three basic elements "component", "category" and "theme" are determined. Several codes that refer to the common aspects of a phenomenon are called components. A "category" is formed from the combination and juxtaposition of several components. When the main categories are compared and related to each other in various ways during the axial coding stage, a "theme" is formed [25]. Brown and Clark's approach was used to analyze the texts and discover the themes [26].

In the quantitative part of the research, to achieve the "reliability" criterion of the data and its quantification, the evaluation method of experts' opinions, along with the content validity index (CVI) and content validity ratio (CVR), were used to achieve the "reliability" criterion of the data and its quantification. In this research, the validity assessment was done by 12 experts using the purposeful sampling method [21]. The minimum required score for the CVI is 0.79 [21]; otherwise, the concept of validity is not attained, and the item is removed. Thus, the initial findings of the research were presented to 12 experts in the field of psychology and religious sciences and their corrective opinions were applied. Finally, 63 sub-components, 17 categories and eight themes were extracted.

Results

The vocabulary search yielded the following words: "Al-Mut", "Vaseeat", "Ajl", "Tul Amal", "Dunya", "Tobeh", "Tvfi", "Tamni al-Mut", "Takhaf Man Al-Amut", "Amal", "Akhrat", "Haeat", "Ghabr", "Fana", "Bagha", "Ghabzeh roh", "Baqiyat al-Salahat", "Zekre Al-Mut", "Shogha Leghae Allah", "Halat Al-Mut", "Ghamrat Al-Mut", "Sakrat Al-Mut", "Trada Al-Mut", "Hasrat" and "Hazar Al-Mut".

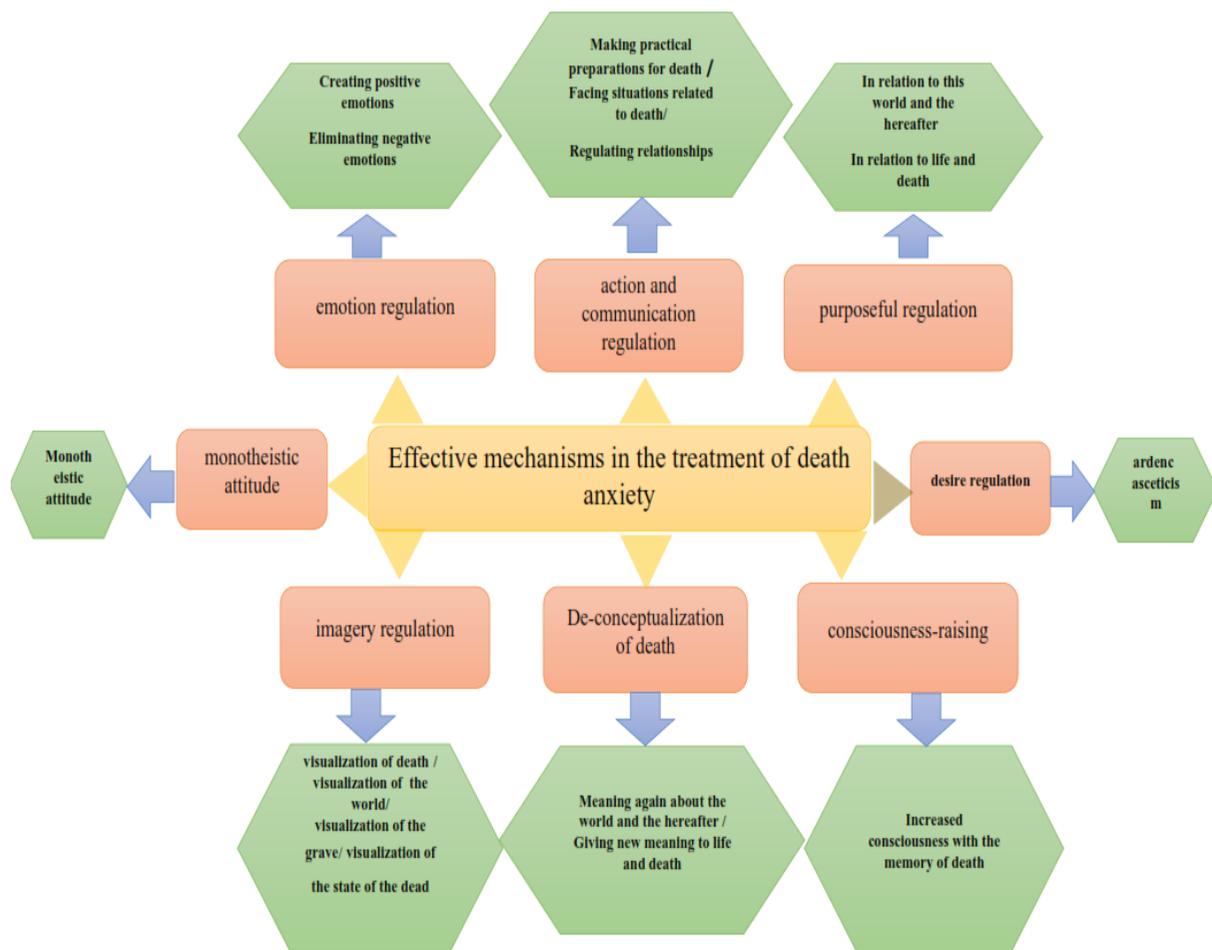


Figure 1. Conceptual model of "treatment of death anxiety" mechanisms based on religious texts

By examining these cases and after the formation of the basic contents, the mechanisms related to the treatment of death anxiety were obtained separately in eight main axes of discovery and their conceptual schema. By examining the opinions of the experts, it was found that 11 components did not meet the required scores in the CVR and CVI, while the remaining items obtained an acceptable score. The results related to documentation, inferential content, and components are shown in [Table 1](#) and the validity of the findings is shown in [Table 2](#).

After specifying the conceptual dimensions and mechanisms of death anxiety treatment and validating the findings, the conceptual model of death anxiety treatment structures was drawn and modeled ([Figure 1](#)).

Discussion

This research aimed at presenting and developing a conceptual model of effective structures in the treatment of death anxiety based on religious texts. The findings

related to the vocabulary search and the analysis of the themes and expressions led to the extraction of effective structures in the treatment of death anxiety from these expressions, and finally, a conceptual model was developed to overcome death anxiety.

The approved constructs in the conceptual model of death anxiety treatment after validation are: "Purposeful regulation", "emotion regulation", "desire regulation", "action and communication regulation", "imagery regulation", "monotheistic attitude", "consciousness-raising" and "de-conceptualization of death". Based on the findings, it seems that if attention is paid to and these eight structures are regulated in the affected individual, death anxiety can be reduced.

According to the findings of the research, "purposeful regulation" is one of the effective structures in the treatment of anxiety in terms of religious texts. This finding is consistent with the findings of studies on the effect of meaning and meaning therapy on death anxiety [42,

Table 1. Components extracted from Islamic texts for the treatment of death anxiety along with their documentation

Theme	Category	Component	Documentation
Purposeful regulation	In relation to life and death	Life is a toy.	Surah Al-'Ankabut/64 [1]
		Meaningful worldly life	Volume 1, Page 131 [27]
		Life as dependent on death	Hikmat 74 [2]
		Death is the beginning of eternal life.	Page 259 [28]
		Human creation for eternity	Surah Ali 'Imran/169-170 [1]
	In relation to this world and the hereafter	The worthlessness and mortality of the world	Surah Ghafir/39 [1]
		The world is the farm of the hereafter.	Surah Al-Qasas/77 [1] Volume 16, Page 76 [29]
		The permanence and reality of the afterlife	Surah Al-'Ankabut/64 [1]
		The world is a means to reach the goal (hereafter).	Page 228 [30]
		Prioritizing the hereafter as the principle	Page 162 [31]
regulation emotion	Creating positive emotions	An admonishing death	Volume 1, Page 27 [32]
		The effect of remembering death on life satisfaction	Page 629 [31]
		Satisfaction with what God has destined for us	Surah As-Saffat/102 [1]
		Confidence in God's promise with the memory of death	Volume 6, Page 133 [33]
	Eliminating negative emotions	The love of religious elders	Volume 6, Page 188 [33]
		Failure to avoid death	Surah Al-Jumu'ah/7 [1]
Action and communication regulation	Making practical preparations for death	Avoiding moral vices	Volume 6, Page 133 [33]
		Paying attention to the ways of sustainability in the world	Surah Al-Kahf/46 [1]
		Doing righteous deeds and obeying God's orders	Volume 1, Page 247 [34]
	Facing situations related to death	Abandoning sin, repenting, and avoiding cruelty and anger	Page 663 [31]
		Using deadlines and being aware of the brevity of time	Volume 2, Page 50 [35], Page 109 [36]
		Reducing worldly attachments	Page 616 [30]
		Giving in the way of God	Volume 4, p.2 [35]
		Striving for a dignified death	Surah Ali 'Imran/157-158 [1]
	Regulating relationships	Imitating religious leaders	Page 52 [2]
		Attending funerals and visiting cemeteries	Volume 78, Page 248 [33]
		Writing a will	Volume 4, Page 183 [37]
		Preparing burial items	Volume 7, Page 65 [35]
		Ensuring parents' satisfaction	Page 65 [27]
Communication with relatives	Page 276, Hikmat 307 [30]		

Theme	Category	Component	Documentation
Desire regulation	Asceticism	Controlling lust	Page 246 [38]
		Shortening desires	Page 499 [27]
		Decreasing interest in the world	Volume 2, Page 320 [35]
	Ardency	Desiring heavenly blessings	Page 414 [31]
		The believer's interest in death and meeting God	Volume 3, Page 134 [35]
		Understanding God's passion for His servants	Volume 1, Page 236 [39]
De-image of death	Giving new meaning to life and death	Understanding the passion of angels and religious elders for a believer	Volume 2, Page 127, Hikmat 2 [35]
		Life and death as the giving and taking back of the soul (death is not annihilation)	Surah Az-Zumar/42 [1]
		Death is a definite and inviolable tradition.	Volume 8, Page 22 [35]
		Death is for everyone.	Surah Ali 'Imran/185 [1]
		Death is a gift for the believer.	Page 217 [31]
		Death is freedom from trouble and hardship.	Page 479 [31]
	Meaning again about the world and the hereafter	Death is purification from pollution.	Page 56 [40]
		The reminder of death regulates one's cognition about life	Volume 6, Page 133, Hikmat 32 [33]
		Death is the bridge and passage between this world and the hereafter.	Sermon 203 [1]
		The mortal world does not coincide with the eternal hereafter.	Page 317 [31]
		Remembering the Day of Judgment and the Day of Reckoning corrects a person's understanding of the world.	Page 131 [27]
		The world is full of troubles and hardships.	Sermon 226 [1]
Monotheistic attitude	Monotheistic attitude	Increasing the quality of life through the memory of death	Page 37 [31]
		Death is in God's hands and under His command (God's ownership and sovereignty).	Surah Ali 'Imran/145 [1]
		God's mercy and kindness	Surah Ali 'Imran/133, Yas-een/26 [1]
Imagery regulation	Visualization of death	The purposefulness of human creation (God's wisdom)	Surah Al-An'am/73 [1]
		Death is the most fragrant scent (flower).	Page 287 [39]
		Death is freedom from contamination captivity and purification.	Page 289 [39]
	Visualization of the world	Dream	Surah Az-Zumar/42 [1]
		Migrate	Page 95 [2]
		The world is a believer's prison and an unbeliever's paradise.	Volume 64, Page 242 [33]
		A house of calamity	Page 285 [2]
Consciousness-raising	Visualization of the grave	A beautiful depiction of the grave	Volume 1, Page 288 [41]
	Visualization of the state of the dead	Finding out about the condition of believers after death and thinking about the condition for the death	Volume 1, Page 178 [41]
	Increased consciousness with the memory of death	The memory of death is the cause of preparation for death.	Volume 2, Page 156 [37]

Table 2. Validation results of the components extracted from religious texts for the treatment of death anxiety

Theme	Category	Component	Communication and Conformity	Necessity and Usefulness
			CVI (>0.79: Acceptable)	CVR (>0.56: Acceptable)
Purposeful regulation	In relation to life and death	Life is a toy.	1	0.83
		Meaningful worldly life	1	0.66
		Life as dependent on death	1	0.66
	In relation to this world and the hereafter	Death is the beginning of eternal life.	1	0.83
		The world is a means to reach the goal (hereafter).	0.91	0.83
		The worthlessness and mortality of the world	0.91	0.83
		The world is the farm of the hereafter.	1	0.5
		The permanence and reality of the afterlife	1	1
		Human creation for eternity	1	0.66
		Prioritizing the hereafter as the principle	0.91	0.83
Emotion regulation	Creating positive emotions	An admonishing death	1	0.83
		The effect of remembering death on life satisfaction	1	0.66
		Satisfaction with what God has destined for us.	0.91	0.66
		Confidence in God's promise with the memory of death	0.91	0.5
	Eliminating negative emotions	The love of religious elders	0.83	0.5
		Failure to avoid death	1	0.66
		Avoiding moral vices	0.83	0.5
Action and Communication regulation	Paying attention to the ways of sustainability in world	Paying attention to the ways of sustainability in world	0.83	0.66
		Doing righteous deeds and obeying God's orders	0.83	0.83
		Abandoning sin, repenting, and avoiding cruelty and anger	1	0.83
	Making practical preparations for death	Using deadlines and being aware of the brevity of time	1	1
		Reducing worldly attachments	0.91	0.83
		Reducing worldly attachments	0.91	0.83
		Giving in the way of God	0.91	0.33
		Striving for a dignified death	0.91	0.66
		Imitating religious leaders	0.83	0.33
		Attending funerals and visiting cemeteries	0.91	0.83
	Facing situations related to death	Preparing burial items	1	0.66
		Writing a will	1	0.83
	Regulating relationships	Ensuring parents' satisfaction	0.83	0.66
Communication with relatives		1	0.5	

Theme	Category	Component	Communication and Conformity	Necessity and Usefulness
			CVI (>0.79: Acceptable)	CVR (>0.56: Acceptable)
Desire regulation	Asceticism	Controlling lust	1	0.66
		Shortening of desires	1	1
		Decreasing interest in the world	0.83	0.66
	Ardency	Desiring heavenly blessings	0.91	0.66
		The believer's interest in death and meeting God	1	0.66
		Understanding God's passion for his servants	1	0.83
		Understanding the passion of angels and religious elders for a believer	0.83	0.33
De-conceptualization of death	Giving new meaning to life and death	Life and death as the giving and taking back of the soul (death is not annihilation)	1	1
		Death is for everyone.	1	0.83
		Death is a definite and inviolable tradition.	0.83	0.66
	Meaning again about the world and the hereafter	Death is a gift for the believer.	0.83	0.66
		Death is freedom from troubles and hardships.	0.83	0.83
		Death is purification from pollution.	1	0.5
		The reminder of death regulates one's cognition about life.	1	1
		Death is the bridge and passage between this world and the hereafter.	1	0.66
		The mortal world does not coincide with the eternal hereafter.	0.83	0.66
		Remembering the Day of Judgment and the Day of Reckoning corrects a person's understanding of the world.	0.91	0.66
	The world is full of troubles and hardships.	0.83	0.83	
	Increasing the quality of life with the memory of death	0.91	0.66	
	Monotheistic attitude	Monotheistic attitude	Death is in God's hands and under His command (God's ownership and sovereignty).	0.83
God's mercy and kindness			0.91	0.83
The purposefulness of human creation (God's wisdom)			1	1
Imagery regulation	visualization of death	Death is the most fragrant scent (flower).	0.83	0.5
		Death is freedom from contamination captivity and purification.	1	0.66
		Dream	1	0.33
	visualization of the world	Migrate	1	1
		The world is a believer's prison and an unbeliever's paradise.	0.83	0.66
		A house of calamity	0.83	0.66
		A beautiful depiction of the grave	0.91	0.83
visualization of the grave visualization of the state of the dead	Finding out about the condition of believers after death and thinking about the condition for the death	1	0.83	
	Increased consciousness with the memory of death			
Consciousness-raising		The memory of death is the cause of preparation for death.	1	1

43], because the existence of meaning and the search for meaning contribute to making human life purposeful. Researchers believe that the meaning of life is fundamentally cognitive in nature and includes people's beliefs about the existence of an ultimate goal in life [11]. It means that increasing the sense of meaning in life will make life more purposeful, thereby reducing the anxiety associated with death.

According to the next finding of the research, the structure of "emotion regulation" can also help reduce death anxiety. This research finding is consistent with another study [44]. To explain the effectiveness of this structure in reducing death anxiety, it can be said that emotion regulation strategies in a positive way, such as acceptance and re-evaluation, can reduce anxiety because the use of these strategies makes a person evaluate events with a different perspective and pay attention to the positive aspects and possible benefits of that event. In anxiety-provoking issues, such as death, accepting the issue and considering how to deal with this stressful event, rather than resorting to catastrophizing, rumination, denial, or avoidance, can help alleviate the anxiety associated with it resorting to catastrophizing, rumination, denial, or avoidance, can help alleviate the anxiety associated with it.

By examining religious texts, "regulation of action and communication", one of the effective structures in reducing death anxiety, was introduced. This finding is in line with the other studies on the effect of religious practices [45] and social support [46] on death anxiety reduction. By performing religious duties, people take a step toward mental refinement by releasing their emotions and emptying themselves of impurities and negative thoughts, resulting in improved mental health. Engaging in religious acts and regulating one's actions can foster a sense of peace and security by establishing a connection to an infinite, powerful source. When people adjust their actions based on gaining God's pleasure reaching heaven and striving to achieve a "good life" (Sura An-Nahl/97) [1], they experience less fear and worry. At the time of death, they consider God to be pleased with them in proportion to their efforts and long for heaven, approaching the divine "Dar al-Salaam", (Surah Yunus/25) [1] with desire and happiness, free from anxiety about death. These people fulfill divine rights and regulate their relationship with others in such a way that they do not infringe upon anyone's rights. By regulating their actions and communication with others, they cultivate hope for God's mercy and forgiveness, as well as the satisfaction and prayers of those around them, which can contribute to the alleviation of death anxiety.

"De-conceptualization of death" is another important construct extracted from religious texts to reduce death anxiety in this study. This structure can be considered equivalent to cleaning the mind from cognitive errors. In line with this research finding, we can refer to studies that have investigated the effect of thought regulation and cognitive therapy on reducing death anxiety [47]. To explain this finding, it can be said that based on the cognitive approach, the events and circumstances surrounding individuals do not inherently cause tension and anxiety; rather, it is their beliefs about these events that lead to tension and anxiety, making their lives more difficult. Irrational belief leads to negative emotions (feelings of anxiety, depression, etc.) [48]. This issue is more severe and complicated in the context of death, as the imperceptible nature of death makes it difficult to know it correctly. Only by relying on and believing in religious teachings can a person gain a clearer understanding of death [49].

The "consciousness-raising" construct introduced in this research as one of the constructs extracted from religious texts to reduce death anxiety, can be considered equivalent to mindfulness and interventions based on it. This finding is consistent with the findings of a study on the effect of mindfulness [50] on reducing death anxiety. To explain this finding, it can be said that living in a conscious and mindful way causes people to be more aware of themselves, their abilities, and their surroundings, and as a result, they have more hope and optimism in life. People with wandering minds lose the ability to perceive reality accurately, focusing instead on their weaknesses and the darker aspects of life, which can result in unpleasant emotions such as depression and anxiety. In contrast, individuals with high awareness are more conscious of their activities, become more familiar with the automatic features of their minds, and develop moment-to-moment awareness. Consequently, people who are high in alertness and mindfulness experience less stress and lower levels of death anxiety [48].

"Desire regulation" is another structure that can reduce death anxiety based on the findings of this research. By searching the authors, no research was found that addressed this issue. Religious texts can be used to explain the effect of this structure on death anxiety. In religious texts, asceticism can be equated with the regulation of desire, and the concept of asceticism is the change of desire, not the elimination of desire. Islamic traditions state that a person's desire should be directed toward the hereafter, while aversion should be directed toward this world. Understanding this important issue depends on the correct and deep knowledge of this world and the

hereafter; until a person understands the nature of these two, he/she cannot practice asceticism toward one while desiring the other. According to traditions, desire for the world is a sign of ignorance and asceticism is a sign of human consciousness [51]. Research has identified one of the causes of death anxiety in religious texts as human attachment to the world and the preference for worldly matters over the hereafter [7]. According to this finding and the explanation of asceticism and desire, if the desire is regulated and a person's focus shifts from this world to the hereafter, their anxiety about death will be reduced.

The "monotheistic attitude" is another structure that the content of religious texts suggests can be effective in creating and reducing death anxiety. The meaning of the monotheistic attitude is the belief that one God created the world and that all affairs are in His hands. The intellectual foundation of Islamic psychology is based on the assumption that humans are naturally inclined to know God. If this knowledge evolves in a natural direction during the course of intellectual evolution, it strengthens the individual's psychological and belief systems. However, if it diverges from this natural path due to limited, materialistic ideas influenced by parents, it can create a basis for religious and psychological harm [18]. In line with this research finding, there are studies that have investigated the image of God [52] and showed that a person's perception of God affects how he/she copes with events.

It seems that people who have a better mental image of God, maintain a positive view of events, exhibit more acceptance of death, and experience less death anxiety. The major religions of the world all provide guidance for preparing for death, and as a result, people who have positive religious beliefs and a better relationship with their Lord find meaning in their lives. They perceive death as a natural process, and this meaning leads them to accept death rather than experience anxiety about it [53].

The last mechanism extracted from religious texts to reduce death anxiety is "imagery regulation" toward death. The researchers of this research believe that if the person's image of death and its accompanying events is corrected and formed based on reality and what is depicted in religious texts, death anxiety will decrease. Imagery regulation can be considered equivalent to guided visualization in psychological therapies. In line with this finding, in another research [54], the effect of guided visualization on reducing patients' anxiety was discussed. To explain this finding, it can be said that people have created false images of death due to their false ideas about God and their false and irrational beliefs about

death, and this problem increases the anxiety of death. However, if this image is adjusted by focusing on what is presented in the verses and traditions mentioned, death anxiety can be reduced [55].

The abovementioned structures can also be explained based on God-oriented spiritual multidimensional psychotherapy. According to this model, humans are purposeful beings, and choosing a meaningful goal is valuable as it can provide meaning to human behavior and effectively address basic human needs. This approach embodies the characteristics of monotheism and integration, which are of great importance [56]. Purposeful regulation creates unity by providing a single direction for different human activities, paying attention to both the regulation of partial actions and the regulation of final goals, which effectively positions resurrection as the culmination of actions. Also, through purposeful regulation, individuals establish a meaningful relationship with both the beginning and end of their actions, leading to a true understanding of the meaning of death in human perception.

Also, by using the second round of this treatment, which deals with adjusting the perceived origin, it is possible to find the person's false images of God that caused death anxiety and correct them, thereby reducing this anxiety. Using the spiritual identity round and perceived existence therapy, the individual's desires, emotions, and actions are regulated, allowing life and the world to regain their true meaning while helping clients realize their spiritual identity. If a person can deconceptualize his/her identity and base his/her actions on authentic experiences, due to the right relationship with possessions, his/her anxiety about death will decrease due to a healthier relationship with possessions, as living actions provide a sense of purpose. Also, using the perceived end treatment round, it is possible to correct the person's image of death and the afterlife, as well as their relationship with this aspect of their destiny. By fostering accurate knowledge about death and the afterlife, a proper understanding is created, leading to a reduction in death anxiety.

Conclusion

There are effective structures in religious texts to overcome death anxiety, which can significantly improve this issue if they are acknowledged and applied. In a review of the literature and treatment packages for the treatment of death anxiety, no protocol was found that addresses all these factors. While some of these aspects have been investigated separately in various studies or have been included in different treatment protocols, the researchers of this study did not find a protocol that encompasses all

of these elements. Therefore, creating a treatment package that takes into account all of the aforementioned factors in the treatment of death anxiety will be effective in improving the symptoms of death anxiety.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this research is that, due to the limitation on the number of words in the journal, it was not possible to comprehensively report the documents. Another limitation of this research is that the search for hadiths was lexical, as well as a review of related chapters in narrative books, while a study of all religious texts could potentially yield more comprehensive results.

In conclusion, it is suggested that all the religious books be studied in future research to ensure that all the components have been considered in this field. It is also suggested that due to the lack of a treatment package that considers and uses all the cases introduced in this conceptual model for the treatment of death anxiety, a treatment package should be designed and implemented accordingly.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

This article did not require any special ethical considerations due to the lack of clinical research and manipulation of human subjects.

Funding

The present article was extracted from the PhD dissertation of Fatemeh Ghanavi, approved by [Research Institute Hawzah and University](#), Qom, Iran.

Authors' contributions

Writing, study concept and design: Fatemeh Ghanavi; Study supervision: Masoud Janbozorgi; Statistical analysis: Seyed Kazem Rassolzadeh Tabatabayi.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

All authors express their gratitude for the invaluable collaboration the unique of the [Hazwa Research Institute, Qom University](#) and the respected Ayatollah Ghara-vi.

References

- [1] Tak Tabar H. [The Holy Qur'an translated by Tahereh Safarzadeh, a communicative translation into Persian (Persian)]. *Transl Stud Quran Hadith*. 2016; 2(3):27-47. [\[Link\]](#)
- [2] Sharif Razi M. *Nahj al-Balagheh* [M. Dashti, Persian trans.]. Qom: Mashhor; 2000. [\[Link\]](#)
- [3] Shaami Nezhad M, Aerak H, Jahed M. [Yalom's strategies in treating death anxiety and their philosophical foundations (Persian)]. *Metaphysics*. 2021; 13(32):1-24. [\[doi:10.22108/mph.2021.130741.1341\]](#)
- [4] Hosseini SM, Naseri-Salahshour V, Farsi Z, Esmaeili M, Sajadi M, Maddah Z, et al. The effect of spirituality-oriented psychological counseling on the fear of death among patients undergoing chronic hemodialysis: A randomized controlled trial. *Eur J Integr Med*. 2022; 49:102103. [\[DOI:10.1016/j.eujim.2022.102103\]](#)
- [5] Pandya AK, Kathuria T. Death anxiety, religiosity and culture: Implications for therapeutic process and future research. *Religions*. 2021; 12(1):61. [\[DOI:10.3390/rel12010061\]](#)
- [6] Grevenstein D, Bluemke M. Who's afraid of death and terrorists? Investigating moderating effects of sense of coherence, mindfulness, neuroticism, and meaning in life on mortality salience. *J Artic Support Null Hypothesis*. 2016; 13(1):25-36. [\[Link\]](#)
- [7] Ghanavi F, Shojaee MS. [A conceptual model of the anxiety of death based on religious texts (Persian)]. *J Stud Islam Psychol*. 2022; 16(31):37-59. [\[doi:10.30471/psy.2022.8467.1984\]](#)
- [8] Burckhardt R, Manicavasagar V, Batterham PJ, Hadzi-Pavlovic D. A randomized controlled trial of strong minds: A school-based mental health program combining acceptance and commitment therapy and positive psychology. *J Sch Psychol*. 2016; 57:41-52. [\[DOI:10.1016/j.jsp.2016.05.008\]](#) [\[PMID\]](#)
- [9] Gurban Alipour M, Moghadamzadeh A, Jafari I. [The effectiveness of schema therapy and logo therapy on death anxiety in patients with Hypochondriasis (Persian)]. *Res Clin Psychol Couns*. 2017; 7(1):52-66. [\[doi:10.22067/ijap.v7i1.51952\]](#)
- [10] Hajatnia B, Tajeri B, Haji Alizadeh K. [The effectiveness of spiritual therapy on the quality of sleep, resilience, and death anxiety of the elderly (Persian)]. *J Prevent Med*. 2021; 8(2):17-26. [\[Link\]](#)
- [11] Jani S, Molaee M, Jangi S, Pouresmali A. [Effectiveness of cognitive therapy based on religious believes on death anxiety, social adjustment and subjective well-being in the Cancer patients (Persian)]. *J Ilam Univ Med Sci*. 2014; 22(5):94-103. [\[Link\]](#)
- [12] Braimer DA. The impact of spirituality in mental health care literature review of 10 scientific articles about the spiritual needs of patients in mental health care [MA thesis]. Norway: University of Agder; 2018. [\[Link\]](#)
- [13] Khaleghipour S, Masjedi M, Ahmadi Z. [Effectiveness of Islamic spiritual therapy on the lifestyle and the percentages of the white blood cells in the aged depressed subjects (Persian)]. *J Res Psychol Health*. 2016, 10(3):16-29. [\[Link\]](#)

- [14] Hourani LL, Williams J, Forman-Hoffman V, Lane ME, Weimer B, Bray RM. Influence of spirituality on depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and suicidality in active duty military personnel. *Depress Res Treat.* 2012; 2012:425463. [DOI:10.1155/2012/425463] [PMID]
- [15] Moritz S, Kelly MT, Xu TJ, Toews J, Rickhi B. A spirituality teaching program for depression: Qualitative findings on cognitive and emotional change. *Complement Ther Med.* 2011; 19(4):201-7. [DOI:10.1016/j.ctim.2011.05.006] [PMID]
- [16] Daaleman TP, Dobbs D. Religiosity, spirituality, and death attitudes in chronically ill older adult. *Res Aging.* 2010; 32(2):224-43. [DOI:10.1177/0164027509351476]
- [17] Ellis L, Wahab EA, Ratnasingan M. Religiosity and fear of death: A three-nation comparison: Corrigendum. *Ment Health Relig Cult.* 2013; 16(2):179-99. [DOI:10.1080/13674676.2011.652606]
- [18] Janbozorgi M. [God-oriented spiritual psychotherapy: A multidimensional approach (protocol validation) (Persian)]. *Clin Psychol Stud.* 2022; 13(49):37-54. [DOI:10.22054/jcps.2023.71975.2886]
- [19] Aloustani S, Mamashli L. [The effect of spiritual group therapy on death anxiety in the elderly (Persian)]. *J Hayat.* 2020; 26(1):46-57. [Link]
- [20] Azimi Dokht SH, Farzaneh M. [Fear of death (Persian)]. *J Philos Theol Res.* 2012; 13(3):103-22. [Link]
- [21] Hafezi M, Raffi Honar H, Fazeli Mehrabadi A, Farhoush M. [Development of a conceptual model of psychopathological self-maximizing syndrome; a construct in religious psychology (Persian)]. *Couns Cult Psychother.* 2022; 13(52):161-99. [DOI:10.22054/qccpc.2022.66749.2912]
- [22] Glaser BG, Strauss AL. *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction; 2006. [Link]
- [23] Thomas DR. A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *Am J Eval.* 2006; 27(2):237-46. [DOI:10.1177/1098214005283748]
- [24] Charmaz K. *The power of constructivist grounded theory for critical inquiry.* *Qual Inq.* 2017; 23(1):34-45. [DOI:10.1177/1077800416657105]
- [25] Speziale HS, Carpenter DR. *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative.* 4th ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins; 2007. [Link]
- [26] Brown KW, Ryan RM, Creswell JD. *Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects.* *Psychol Inq.* 2007; 18(4):211-37. [DOI:10.1080/10478400701598298]
- [27] Warram b. *Abi Firas al-Hilli. Tanbiyeh al-Khwatar and Nozha al-Nawazir.* Qom: Maktab Al Faghie; 1997.
- [28] Rawandi Q. *Al-Dawaat [SMB. Movahed Abtahi Isfahani, Persian trans.].* Qom: Imam Mahdi School Publications; 1987. [Link]
- [29] Tabatabaei MH. *Tafsir al-Mizan [SMB. Mousavi Hamdani, Persian trans.].* Qom: Islamic Publishing House; 1999. [Link]
- [30] Ibn Babawiyya M. *Al-Amali Al-Sadooq [MB. Komrei, Persian trans.].* Tehran: Kitabchi; 1997. [Link]
- [31] Tamimi Amdi AV. [Gharr al-Hakm and Derr al-Kalam (Arabic)]. Qom: Dar al-Kitab al-Islami; 1989. [Link]
- [32] Tousei M. [Al-Amali (Arabic)]. Qom: Darul Al-Thaqarah; 1993. [Link]
- [33] Majlesi MB. [Bihar al-Anwar (Arabic)]. Beirut: Dar Ehiya al-Traath al-Arabi; 1983. [Link]
- [34] Tabarsi A. *Al-Ihtjaj [B. Jafari, Persian trans.].* Tehran: Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiyya; 2002. [Link]
- [35] Kulini M. *Esul Kafi [SJ. Mustafavi, Persian trans.].* Tehran: Ilmia Islamia bookstore; 1990. [Link]
- [36] Shairi, Taj al-Din. *Jame al-Khabar.* Publisher: Al-Bayt Ihyaa Turath; 1993.
- [37] Ibn Babawayh M. [Man La Yahdrah al-Faqih (Arabic)]. Qom: Islamic Publications Office; 1992. [Link]
- [38] Mufid MN. *Al-Amali.* Beirut: Dar al-Mufid; 1993.
- [39] Sadouq MA. *Ma'ani al-Khabar.* Qom: Islamic Publishing House; 1982.
- [40] Sadouq MA. *al-Aitghadaat.* Beirut: Dar al-Mufid; 1993.
- [41] Barqi AM. [Al-Mahasen (Arabic)]. Qom: Darul-e-Kitab al-Islamiyya; 1992. [Link]
- [42] Faraji Emafti M, Hedayatizadeh-Omran A, Noroozi A, Janbabai G, Tatari M, Modanloo M. The effect of group logotherapy on spirituality and death anxiety of patients with cancer: an open-label randomized clinical trial. *Iran J Psychiatry Behav Sci.* 2019; 13(3):e93572. [DOI:10.5812/ijpbs.93572]
- [43] Zhang J, Peng J, Gao P, Huang H, Cao Y, Zheng L, et al. Relationship between meaning in life and death anxiety in the elderly: self-esteem as a mediator. *BMC Geriatr.* 2019; 19(1):308. [DOI:10.1186/s12877-019-1316-7.] [PMID]
- [44] Karimi Afshar E, Shabaniyan G, Saed Taleshi L, Manzari Tavakoli V. [The effectiveness of emotion regulation intervention on resilience and death anxiety of women with breast Cancer (Persian)]. *Health Psychol.* 2018; 7(1):95-105. [Link]
- [45] Jedari M, Agdasi AN, Alivandwafa M. [The effectiveness of intervention based on psychological and spiritual dimensions in improving existential anxiety and spiritual well-being according to the moderating role of levels of religious knowledge (Persian)]. *Iran J Islam Stud Health.* 2020; 4(3):11-28. [Link]
- [46] Jamal-livani H, Jafari M, Alimohammadzadeh K. [The role of social support on elderly death anxiety through self-efficacy mediation (Persian)]. *J Gerontol.* 2020; 5(1):11-8. [Link]
- [47] Moradi A, Ahmadian A, Mohammadi I, Ghavidel Kolowr R. [The effect of training mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on rumination and death anxiety amongst women with breast Cancer (Persian)]. *J Mod Psychol Res.* 2024; 18(72):249-56. [DOI:10.22034/JMPR.2024.17336]
- [48] Samadifard H, Narimani M. [Prediction of death anxiety of elderly based on mindfulness and irrational beliefs (Persian)]. *Iran J Psychiatr Nurs.* 2017; 5(3):15-21. [DOI:10.21859/ijpn-05033]



- [49] Yousefi H, Abdolkarimi Natanzi M. [The consequences of the spiritual health of the Quran on eliminating of death anxiety (Persian)]. *Iran J Cult Health Promot.* 2021; 4(3):281-8. [\[Link\]](#)
- [50] Xiang-Zi J, Jia-Yuan Z. Mindfulness exercises reduce death anxiety and burnout in intensive care nurses. *Death Stud.* 2023; 47(5):600-5. [\[DOI:10.1080/07481187.2022.2113480\]](https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2022.2113480) [\[PMID\]](#)
- [51] Pasandideh A. [Zuhd and healthy mind (Persian)]. *Ulum-I-Hadith.* 2009; 14(2):142-61. [\[Link\]](#)
- [52] Noroziyan K, Peyadekoohsar A. [Prediction of death anxiety based on personality traits and god image in patients with Covid-19 (Persian)]. *J Res Behav Sci.* 2022; 20(2):204-19. [\[DOI:10.52547/rbs.20.2.204\]](https://doi.org/10.52547/rbs.20.2.204)
- [53] Amirloo I, Naderi F. [The effect of logotherapy training on mental image of god, death anxiety, and religiousness among secondary school students in Ahvaz city (Persian)]. *Knowl Res Appl Psychol.* 2017; 18(1):1-11. [\[Link\]](#)
- [54] Ahmadnia Z, kheirkhah J, Modallalkar SS, Ashouri A, Emamisigaroudi A. [Effect of guided imagery on anxiety and vital signs in patients undergoing cardiac Electrophysiological study (Persian)]. *J Crit Care Nurs.* 2020; 13(2):22-9. [\[Link\]](#)
- [55] Tavakolizadeh J, Kianmehr M, Basiri Moghadam M, Pahlavan M. [Effect of guided visualization on anxiety of patients with acute coronary syndrome admitted to the cardiac intensive care unit (Persian)]. *J Intern Med Today.* 2015; 21(3):147-53. [\[DOI:10.18869/acadpub.hms.21.3.147\]](https://doi.org/10.18869/acadpub.hms.21.3.147)
- [56] Janbozorgi M, Gharavi SM. [New theories of psychotherapy and counseling (Persian)]. Qom: Research Institute and University; 2016. [\[Link\]](#)

This Page Intentionally Left Blank