

**SPIRITUALITY: ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF ELDERLY
TOWARDS DEATH**

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Mararagan, Maria Lerrie R.

Olegario, Joan Rachel B.

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ABSTRACT

NAME OF INSTITUTION : De La Salle University-Dasmariñas

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TITLE : Spirituality: Its Influence on the Perceptions of
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PROPONENTS : Mararagan, Maria Lerrie R.
Olegario, Joan Rachel B.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

A. General

The purpose of this study was to know the perception of the elderly towards spirituality and death and the influence of spirituality to their perception towards death.

B. Specific

1. To know the perception of elderly towards spirituality
2. To determine know the perception of elderly towards death
3. To be able to know the influence of spirituality to the perception of elderly toward death

SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This study focused on the influence of spirituality to the elderly's perception on death. Its purpose was to widen people's knowledge about the spirituality of the elderly and how it affects the way they perceived death.

The results of this study were based only on the data gathered in the province of Cavite and were limited only to the basis of the variables specified in the Conceptual Framework.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research. The respondents of this study were ten (10) elderly consisted of five (5) males and five (5) females from age bracket seventy to one-hundred (70 – 100), particularly ranging from seventy-one to ninety-six (71 – 96) years of age. All participants were from Panungyan, Mendez, Cavite. The researchers used an unstructured interview with the aid of an interview schedule that served as a guide for obtaining the influence of spirituality to the participants' perceptions about death. Filipino translations of the interview schedule were used as preferred by the participants. Questions used are open-ended which allowed them to express their views more fully.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

1. The most common perceptions of elderly about spirituality were faith in God is very important. Prayer is necessary for them because it is their way to ask the Lord to give them a longer life. Religion is a way for them to know more about God and themselves.

2. The answers to the perceptions of elderly towards death varied based on their personal profile. These were: The respondents' acceptance or non acceptance of the occurrence of their death is associated with their present situation and past experiences. Majority of the respondents comfortably shared their thoughts on death while only one showed hostility when asked about death. Most of them believed that death occurs in God's time.

3. The influences of spirituality to the perceptions of elderly towards death were the following: All respondents believed that there is heaven and only a few were uncertain about the existence of hell. The respondents' awareness of the existence of heaven and hell is based on their personal bible readings and teachings of their respective churches. Only two participants said that their spirituality did not affect the way they perceive death while the rest said that spirituality affects their perception towards death. Those participants who believed that spirituality affects their perception on death were somehow sure that after death, their soul will go to either heaven or purgatory. Some participants believed that bad people who committed a lot

of sins would be going to hell and only those who live righteously would be going to heaven with the Lord Almighty.

CONCLUSIONS

Death is the last milestone for everyone. This is an inevitable and natural process within the developmental cycle. Some research results have indicated that older people are less afraid of death than the younger people. The said results support the present study. Based on the findings, perception towards death depends on how deep they value their belief in God. The researchers found out that it was not only spirituality that had influenced the perception of elderly towards death. There were several factors to consider like personal experiences and personal beliefs. Like other studies which explained that there had been many variables that could influence how an elderly person would perceive about this issue, the present study's results considered these factors.

The researchers, therefore, conclude that spiritual beliefs and practices provide an interpretation of the dying process, aid in the developmental task of transcendence, and offer comfort to dying individuals and their family members. Indeed, for many individuals, spirituality may play the most important role in the end-of-life by the meaning it provides and the hope it offers beyond medical cure which were: hope for an afterlife, hope for salvation, and hope for nirvana (Sullivan, 2003). Spirituality may even be the most powerful psychological resource we have.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

Elderly. Elderly people should manage to find a way to approach God through prayer. It increases their feelings of personal value by decreasing the feelings of loneliness and abandonment, while involving in some religious affiliations to provide support for spiritual life.

Family and Relatives. Elderly people are longing to the attention of their loved ones. The family should invest some of their time to have conversations with the elderly despite of their busy schedules. Strategies to sympathize with relatives who are going through such internal struggles may help relieve distress. These strategies could include emphasizing the inevitability of death in old age which is a normal part of human existence and the importance of registration procedures and funeral arrangements in retaining bereaved people within the social order.

Future researchers. Future researchers should get respondents from different areas of Cavite to expand the scope of the study to make it more conclusive.

They should spend more time observing and analyzing the behavior of the elderly in order to gather more substantial amount of data; they can improve the self – made interview or host by looking for additional factors that strengthen the scope of the study. They need an innovative instrument to assess spiritual needs in the dying population which may include concepts of death transcendence, spiritual and

religious well-being, hopefulness, as well as assess how well those needs are being met.

Institution. Institution is the home of some abandoned elderly who were left by their families. They should create programs that will help them to increase their faith in God, like having a bible study every Sunday. In this way, it will help them to express their spirituality within the religious context.

Church. The Church should make programs for the elderly that would cater their spiritual needs because people begin to discover who they are as individuals through interactions with other people sharing common situations like the elderly. It is through these interactions that they will discover a common thread forming their lives and giving them all the necessary resources they need to achieve their self-actualized existence and inner peace.

