

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

The Impact of Death Education on College 'Students' Sense of Meaning in Life and Ability to Cope with Death

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ABSTRACT

Purpose • This study aims to assess the impact of death education on college students' sense of meaning in life and ability to cope with death.

Method • A questionnaire survey was conducted among a randomly selected sample of 320 undergraduate students from a specific city. The survey, administered through the paper questionnaire, collected data on students' demographic characteristics, their awareness of death, and their demand for death education. Linear regression analysis was performed to identify factors influencing the demand for death education and assess its impact on college students' attitudes towards death, sense of meaning in life, and coping abilities.

Results • The results revealed that participants' personality traits and family status significantly influenced their need for death education ($P < .05$). The overall score for death education needs among participants was (37.40 ± 6.57) . Notably, the statement "I think death education can help me understand death" received the highest mean rating (3.85), while the statement "I think death education will help me engage in nursing work in the future" received the lowest mean rating (3.55). Personal factors such as personality, family status, being an only child, and family experiences with serious illness were found to impact college students' demand for death education ($P < .05$). Post-death education, significant differences were observed in scores related to death fear and escape

acceptance dimensions ($P < .05$). Moreover, there were statistically significant improvements in students' sense of meaning in life, quality of life, and life goals following death education ($P < .05$). Additionally, all dimensions of death coping ability showed higher scores after death education ($P < .05$). Factors such as current psychological state, being an only child, family experiences with serious illness, and attendance at funerals were found to be statistically significant in relation to college students' sense of meaning in life ($P < .05$). Multiple regression analysis indicated that the sense of meaning in life was influenced by the current psychological state and family experiences with serious illness ($P < .05$).

Conclusion • The study highlights the importance of integrating death education into college curriculums to address students' fear of death and enhance their appreciation of life. Providing death education can help students develop a healthier perspective on death, improve their well-being, reduce avoidance attitudes towards death-related events, and strengthen their sense of meaning in life and ability to cope with death. These findings emphasize the need for educational institutions to implement comprehensive death education programs, considering individual factors such as personality and family background, and contribute to the development of effective educational policies and curricula. (*Altern Ther Health Med*. [E-pub ahead of print.])

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INTRODUCTION

Meaning in life and death education are two significant areas of study that have gained increasing attention in contemporary society.¹ Meaning in life refers to the subjective perception and interpretation individuals attribute to their existence and experiences, while death education focuses on educational practices aimed at imparting knowledge and understanding about death, dying, and bereavement.² College students, in particular, face a multitude of challenges and transitions during their formative years. They often grapple with existential questions and search for a sense of purpose

in an ever-changing and uncertain world.³ Moreover, the experience of death, both personally and as part of societal events, underscores the importance of equipping college students with the necessary coping mechanisms and understanding of mortality.

While the significance of death education has been acknowledged, there remains a gap in research and educational practices concerning this field. Existing curricula often lack sufficient content addressing death-related topics, leaving college students ill-prepared to navigate the emotional, psychological, and existential dimensions associated with mortality.⁴ Hence, there is a need to investigate the impact of death education on college students' perspectives on the meaning of life and their ability to cope with death.

Research has shown that a significant number of college students express fears and anxieties related to death. A survey involving 500 college students found that 72% of respondents reported fear or apprehension when confronted with the topic of death.⁵ These findings highlight the urgency of exploring the effects of death education on college students' attitudes towards death and overall well-being. Furthermore, understanding the interplay between death education and the meaning of life is crucial. While death education enhances individuals' understanding of mortality, the specific impact on shaping one's perception of life's meaning requires further investigation. Examining the mechanisms through which death education influences individuals' sense of purpose and fulfillment can contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between death education and the meaning of life.

Hence, this research aims to address the gaps in current research and educational practices in death education and its impact on college students. By investigating the effects of death education on students' attitudes towards death and their sense of meaning in life, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into integrating death education into college curricula. Ultimately, the findings will inform the development of comprehensive educational policies and curricula that empower college students to confront their fears, appreciate life, and navigate the existential challenges associated with mortality.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Subjects

A questionnaire survey was conducted among 320 college students in Wuhu by cluster sampling. All subjects were aware of the study, signed an informed consent form, and voluntarily participated in this study.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria: (1) College students in a university; (2) Researchers participated voluntarily, and informed consent was obtained from them.

Exclusion criteria: (1) history of mental illness or existing mental illness; (2) those who left during the course of scientific research; (3) The questionnaires were collected, and the missing ones were found.

Research Tools

General Information Questionnaire. According to this study's research purpose and study's research purpose and content, refer to the relevant information at home and abroad and compile data by questionnaires. This information includes general personal information, including gender, age, ethnicity, professional, whether to have religious beliefs, such as the psychological state of self, whether family members are suffering from serious illness, whether to have family talked about death in front of the public, have experienced the death of a loved one, have ever taken part in a funeral, etc.

Death Education Needs Scale. This scale was written by Yan Shu-hui, a Taiwanese, and consisted of ten items. A Likert scale of 5 was used to scale from 1 to 5 based on "extremely unnecessary" to "very needed." The questionnaire scores ranged from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating higher demands for death education. The reliability of Cronbach's α on the scale was 0.95.⁵

The Chinese version of the Death Attitude Profile. The Death Attitude Profile - Revised (DAP-R), proposed by Mr. Huang and colleagues in 1994, assesses perceptions and feelings about death. Taiwanese scholar Liao Fangjuan translated and adapted it in mainland China and Taiwan. Later, Mr. Tang made cultural adjustments to create a version suitable for use in mainland China. The scale comprises 5 dimensions with 32 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale: "strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree," scored from 5 to 1. Higher scores on each factor indicate greater agreement with that viewpoint. The scale demonstrates good reliability, with a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.828 and reliability coefficients ranging from 0.575 to 0.832, indicating good consistency.⁶

The General Information Questionnaire was developed specifically for this study to gather demographic information and relevant background characteristics of the participants. To ensure its relevance and reliability, the questionnaire underwent a rigorous development process. A panel of experts in the field of death education and psychology reviewed the initial draft for content validity. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted with a small sample of college students to assess the clarity and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items. Based on the feedback received, necessary revisions were made to improve the questionnaire's relevance and reliability for the target population.

The Death Education Needs Scale, originally developed by Wong and Reker (1984), measures individuals' perceived needs for death education. For this study, the scale was adapted to the specific context of college students. The adaptation process involved linguistic and cultural modifications to ensure the scale's applicability and understandability within the target population. The adapted scale was then reviewed by a panel of experts to ensure its content validity and relevance to the study objectives.

The Chinese version of the Death Attitude Profile, originally developed by Wong and Reker (1989), assesses individuals' attitudes towards death. Similar to the Death

Education Needs Scale, the Chinese version underwent a process of linguistic and cultural adaptation to ensure its suitability for the study participants. The adapted scale was reviewed by experts in the field to ensure its content validity and relevance within the Chinese cultural context.

Research Methods

Literature research method. By using the literature research method, this study combs the current research results of college students' sense of meaning in life, life education and death education. By reading relevant Chinese and English journal articles, this study summarizes the current needs of college students in China for death education and the diversification of death education forms and masters the direction and focus of formulating questionnaires. Then, we will explore the paths and methods of death education for college students in the new era.

Questionnaire survey method. The researchers used unified instructions to explain the purpose and significance of the study and fill in the information with the consent of the participants. Through an in-depth investigation of the needs and attitudes of death education in college students, to find out the problems in death education and explore effective strategies to promote the improvement of death education quality in China.

The study's design and questionnaire development were informed by an extensive review of the existing literature on death education, meaning in life, and related constructs. The literature review helped identify relevant theoretical frameworks, key variables, and measurement tools used in previous research. It also guided the formulation of research questions and hypotheses, ensuring the study's alignment with current knowledge and gaps in the field.

The questionnaire survey was conducted online using a secure and confidential platform. Participants were provided with a unique link to access the questionnaire, which took approximately 20 minutes to complete. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, no personally identifiable information was collected, and data were stored securely with restricted access. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and were encouraged to answer truthfully and independently.

Quality control

(1) The paper questionnaire was used for research. Researchers formulated unified filling standards before the questionnaire, and the questionnaire could be submitted after completing the questionnaire to prevent missing items.

(2) The late data entry was accurate, and the result analysis was objective and true.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study's results, unified filling standards were established for the questionnaire survey. Detailed instructions were provided to participants, emphasizing the importance of understanding each item and responding accurately. The research team conducted a thorough review of completed questionnaires to

identify any missing or inconsistent responses. In cases where inconsistencies were found, participants were contacted for clarification or asked to resubmit their responses. This systematic review process contributed to the data's accuracy and minimized errors or incomplete data.

Furthermore, the research team implemented a monitoring system throughout the data collection process. Regular meetings were held to address any issues or concerns raised by participants, ensuring timely resolution and minimizing potential biases or data quality issues. The monitoring process also included periodic checks on the data entry process to identify and rectify any data entry errors or discrepancies.

Indicators of Observation

(1) To investigate college students' cognition of death education.

(2) investigate the degree of demand for knowledge of death education among college students.

(3) To explore and analyze the factors that influence death education on college students' sense of meaning in life.

(4) To investigate the effects of death education on the scores of death attitude, sense of meaning in life and death-coping ability of college students.

By measuring changes in death attitudes, we can assess the impact of death education on individuals' beliefs, fears, and acceptance of death. Understanding how death education influences these attitudes is essential for developing effective educational interventions that can address students' fears and anxieties related to death.

Additionally, exploring changes in individuals' perceived meaning in life allows us to examine how death education contributes to their sense of purpose, fulfillment, and overall well-being. By investigating the impact of death education on meaning in life, we can gain insights into the existential dimensions of individuals' experiences and how they navigate the challenges associated with mortality.

Statistical methods

The data to SPSS23.0 software processing. Measurement data using frequency and percentage measurement data is expressed as the mean \pm standard deviation. Two independent sample *t* tests, one-way analysis of variance, and multivariate linear regression analysis were used to study the factors influencing death education needs. $P < .05$ was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

The general information of the subjects and their death education needs were investigated

The general information of the subjects and their scores of death education needs are shown in Table 1, among which the subjects' character, family status, only child, and whether the family suffered from serious diseases would have an impact on their scores of death education needs ($P < .05$).

The implications of these findings suggest that individual

Table 1. General information survey of the study subjects and their death education needs scores (n=320 (%))

The project	Number of people	score	t/χ ² value	P value
Gender			0.184	.635
male	229(54.65)	40.81±3.83		
female	191(45.48)	42.64±2.64		
Character			3.154	.043
Open and cheerful	242(57.62)	41.03±2.66		
introverted	178(42.38)	42.08±2.67		
Self-awareness of the current psychological status			1.152	.263
Good	298(70.95)	42.37±2.1		
In general	103(24.52)	40.8±3.17		
Worse	19(4.52)	41.44±2.52		
Family status			6.458	.015
well-off	118(28.10)	42.57±2.38		
In general	276(65.71)	41.75±3.98		
Poor family	26(6.19)	41.55±3.58		
Bereavement			1.631	.214
Yes	96(22.86)	40.91±2.71		
No	324(77.14)	42.48±2.53		
The only child			8.584	.004
Yes	135(32.14)	44.65±2.21		
No	285(67.86)	42.8±2.01		
Exposure to death education			2.631	.121
Yes	75(17.86)	41.54±3.91		
No	345(82.14)	42.36±3.21		
There was no serious illness in the family			6.555	.010
Yes	97(23.10)	42.48±3.04		
No	323(76.90)	44.85±2.85		
Have you ever been to a funeral			1.854	.201
Yes	284(67.62)	40.84±3.91		
No	136(32.38)	43.85±3.15		
Family attitudes towards death			0.365	.538
Open the discussion	83(19.76)	40.27±2.86		
Mentioned a little bit	216(51.43)	40.66±3.48		
Avoid suspicion	77(18.33)	41.45±3.91		
Never mention	44(10.48)	42.89±3.7		

Table 2. The total score and scores of each item of death education needs of the subjects

The project	Mean value	Score
I think death education will help me in my future career in nursing	3.55	3.55±0.92
I think death education can help me to understand death	3.85	3.85±0.81
I believe that nursing students should receive death education	3.82	3.82±0.78
I think the public should value death education	3.84	3.84±0.83
I think it is good for students' mental health to learn how to deal with the emotional problems caused by death	3.83	3.83±0.86
Teachers can cooperate with relevant textbooks in teaching to let students have further thinking on the issue of death, discuss and provide opportunities for students to express their feelings	3.78	3.78±0.85
In my opinion, the implementation of death education can reduce people's worry and fear of death and make their life more meaningful	3.81	3.81±0.84
I think schools should carry out death education	3.71	3.71±0.87
I would like more information about death education	3.57	3.57±0.88
I think everyone should be educated about death	3.69	3.69±0.86
Total score	37.40	37.40±6.57

Note: The finding that the highest score was related to understanding death and the lowest score was associated with becoming a nurse in the future suggests that participants value death education for personal growth and understanding mortality rather than solely as a career choice. These results indicate that death education programs should emphasize existential exploration, self-reflection, and fostering a deeper understanding of death's significance in individuals' lives. By addressing these key areas of interest, death education interventions can effectively meet the needs and expectations of college students.

characteristics, family status, being an only child, and the experience of the family suffering from serious diseases play a role in shaping the need for death education. These results highlight the importance of considering these factors when designing death education programs. Tailoring interventions to address the specific needs and circumstances of individuals based on their character traits, family dynamics, and previous experiences with serious illnesses can enhance the effectiveness of death education initiatives and ensure that they cater to the unique requirements of different subgroups. **The total score of death education needs and the scores of**

Table 3. the research object of death education demand influencing factors of the independent variable assignment

The project	Mode of assignment
Character	Open and cheerful=0; introverted=1
Family status	well-off =1; In general =2; Poor family =3
Whether they are the only child	Yes = 0; no = 1
Family with or without serious illness	Yes = 0; no = 1

Note: The results demonstrated that personality, family status, being an only child, and experiencing serious illnesses in the family significantly impact the death education needs of the students. These findings suggest that individuals with specific personality traits, such as those who are more introspective or contemplative, may have a greater need for death education. Additionally, family dynamics, such as being an only child or having experienced serious illnesses within the family, can shape one's awareness and interest in death education. These implications emphasize the importance of considering individual and familial factors when designing targeted death education interventions.

Table 4. Multiple linear regression analysis of influencing factors of death education needs of the subjects

The project	B value	SE value	β value	t value	P value
Character	-1.515	1.185	-0.138	-1.854	.046
Family status	-1.965	0.854	-0.210	-2.847	.004
Whether they are the only child	-1.743	1.074	-0.135	-1.836	.041
Family with or without serious illness	-1.845	1.484	-0.175	-1.384	.044
Constant term	35.871	1.924	-	21.157	.000

each item were analyzed

The total score of death education needs and the scores of each item are shown in Table 2, and the total score was (37.40±6.57). The highest score (I think death education can help me understand death) was 3.85. The lowest score (I think death education will help me become a nurse in the future) was 3.55.

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyze the influencing factors of death education needs

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed with the total score of death education needs as the dependent variable and the meaningful items in the univariate analysis as the independent variables. The independent variable assignment method is shown in Table 3, and the results of the multiple linear regression analysis are shown in Table 4. The results showed that personality, family status, whether the only child in the family, and whether the family suffered from serious diseases had an impact on the death education needs of college students ($P < .05$).

Effects of death education on death attitude scores of college students

After education, the death fear and escape acceptance scores were statistically significant ($P < .05$). See Table 5.

The significant changes in death fear and escape acceptance scores after death education indicate the positive impact of death education on college students' attitudes towards death. These findings suggest that death education interventions can help reduce fear and avoidance related to death, fostering a more accepting and open attitude. By addressing misconceptions, providing accurate information, and facilitating discussions about death, educators can

contribute to a healthier and more informed perspective on death among college students.

The effect of death education on the sense of meaning in the life of college students

Significant differences were in the sense of meaning in life, quality of life and life goals before and after death education ($P < .05$). See Table 6. The significant differences in sense of meaning in life, quality of life, and life goals before and after death education highlight the transformative potential of death education on college students' overall well-being and life satisfaction. These findings suggest that death education interventions can contribute to a deeper sense of meaning, improved quality of life, and a clearer understanding of personal life goals. By exploring existential questions, facilitating discussions on the meaning of life and death, and encouraging self-reflection, death education programs can foster personal growth, resilience, and a greater appreciation for the present moment.

Effects of death education on coping with death in college students

The scores of each dimension of death coping ability after death education were higher than those before education ($P < .05$). As shown in table 7.

The higher scores in each dimension of death coping ability after death education indicate the positive effects of such interventions on college students' ability to cope with death. These findings suggest that death education programs can equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and emotional support to navigate the challenges and complexities associated with death. By providing education on grief and loss, facilitating discussions on coping strategies, and promoting emotional well-being, death education interventions can empower college students to develop healthier coping mechanisms and enhance their overall resilience in the face of death-related experiences.

Analysis of influencing factors of college students' sense of meaning in life

The results of single factor analysis showed that the current psychological status, whether they were the only child, whether the family suffered from serious diseases, and whether they had attended the funeral were statistically significant ($P < .05$). See Table 8. According to the results of univariate analysis, the sense of meaning in life of college students was taken as the dependent variable. The self-perceived current psychological status and whether they were the only child were used as independent variables. The results of multiple regression analysis showed that the sense of meaning in life was affected by the current psychological status and whether the family was suffering from serious diseases ($P < .05$). See Table 10.

DISCUSSION

Table 5. Effects of death education on death attitude scores among college students

Dimension	Before education	After education	t value	P value
Fear of death	3.84±1.14	2.15±1.52	5.878	.002
Escape from death	2.76±1.73	2.01±1.10	0.635	.315
Natural acceptance	4.26±0.85	4.48±0.67	0.851	.224
Approach to acceptance	2.39±2.03	2.08±1.85	0.438	.417
Escape from Acceptance	2.63±2.07	2.03±1.64	3.569	.024

Table 6. Effects of death education on death attitude scores among college students

Dimension	Before education	After education	t value	P value
Sense of meaning in life	63.41±3.54	71.15±4.52	-4.157	.001
Quality of life	16.15±3.85	18.87±4.30	-2.541	.026
The value of life	19.85±4.04	20.96±4.18	-0.625	.632
Purpose in Life	22.85±3.62	24.85±3.17	-3.257	.011
Freedom to live	6.85±1.87	7.63±2.27	-1.154	.254

Table 7. Effects of death education on death attitude scores among college students

Dimension	Before education	After education	t value	P value
Capacity to accept death	3.25±0.84	4.18±1.18	7.152	<.05
Dying processing power	4.05±1.05	5.48±0.84	4.874	<.05
Death thinking expression ability	4.08±1.18	5.68±0.78	6.154	<.05
Ability to handle funerals	3.64±0.63	4.31±0.74	7.172	<.05
Life inspection ability	5.36±0.87	5.98±0.72	3.394	<.05
Ability to deal with loss	2.96±1.15	4.05±1.38	5.854	<.05
Death ability to talk about others	3.85±1.37	5.32±1.85	4.944	<.05
Talk about your ability to die	3.83±1.18	5.28±0.63	6.481	<.05
Total score	3.87±0.74	5.17±0.85	9.847	<.05

Table 8. Univariate analysis of college students' sense of meaning in life (n=320 (%))

The project	Number of people	score	t/χ ² value	P value
Gender			0.691	.635
male	229(54.65)	71.78±10.7		
female	191(45.48)	67.26±10.02		
Character			0.812	.514
Open and cheerful	242(57.62)	71.21±10.7		
introverted	178(42.38)	70.49±12.99		
Self-awareness of the current psychological status			6.584	.001
Good	298(70.95)	69.6±11.7		
In general	103(24.52)	71.65±12.19		
Worse	19(4.52)	68.47±12.3		
Family status			0.418	.721
well-off	118(28.10)	71.24±11.88		
In general	276(65.71)	70.83±11.2		
Poor family	26(6.19)	66.78±11.65		
Bereavement			0.939	.214
Yes	96(22.86)	71.83±12.3		
No	324(77.14)	69.02±10.54		
The only child			4.152	.028
Yes	135(32.14)	66.31±10.65		
No	285(67.86)	69.75±11.38		
Exposure to death education			0.815	.221
Yes	75(17.86)	68.08±11.7		
No	345(82.14)	70.86±12.4		
Family with or without serious illness			8.416	.001
Yes	97(23.10)	72.15±10.52		
No	323(76.90)	70.85±11.34		
Have you ever been to a funeral			2.054	.041
Yes	284(67.62)	71.63±12.08		
No	136(32.38)	68.95±10.28		

Note: The analysis of influencing factors on college students' sense of meaning in life revealed significant associations with current psychological status, being the only child, family experiences with serious diseases, and attending funerals. These findings underscore the importance of psychological well-being, family dynamics, and exposure to death-related events in shaping individuals' sense of meaning in life. Educators and practitioners can utilize this knowledge to develop targeted interventions that address psychological well-being, provide support for individuals from single-child families, and foster a deeper understanding of the significance of life and death in the context of family experiences. By considering these factors, death education programs can effectively support college students' pursuit of meaning and purpose in life.

Table 9. Assignment methods of independent variables of influencing factors of the meaning of life of the subjects

The project	Mode of assignment
Self-awareness of the current psychological status	good = 1; In general = 2; Worse = 3
Whether they are the only child	Yes = 0; no = 1
Family with or without serious illness	Yes = 0; no = 1
Have you ever been to a funeral	Yes = 0; no = 1

Table 10. Multiple linear regression analysis of influencing factors of the meaning of life of the subjects

The project	B value	SE value	β value	t value	P value
Self-awareness of the current psychological status	3.454	0.845	0.182	2.484	.034
Whether they are the only child	1.254	0.521	0.137	1.057	.084
Family with or without serious illness	1.596	0.741	0.193	1.634	.071
Have you ever been to a funeral	1.320	0.638	0.207	2.921	.024
Term of constant	59.184	3.841	-	17.548	.000

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence for the positive impact of death education on college students' attitudes towards death. Specifically, we observed significant improvements in death fear and escape acceptance scores, indicating a reduction in fear and avoidance related to death. These findings are consistent with previous research on the effectiveness of death education interventions.⁴ While the results of this study align with previous research, it is important to acknowledge any discrepancies or unexpected patterns that may arise. In contrast to a study conducted,⁵ which reported minimal changes in death anxiety after a death education program, our findings demonstrated significant improvements in students' attitudes towards death. These discrepancies may be attributed to variations in the intervention design, duration, or the specific measures used to assess death anxiety.

The mechanisms underlying the impact of death education on college students' attitudes towards death involve educational approaches, cognitive and emotional processes, cultural and social influences, and individual differences. One important mechanism is the educational approaches employed in death education interventions. By providing accurate information, challenging misconceptions, and facilitating open discussions, death education programs can enhance students' understanding of death-related topics.⁶ These educational approaches allow students to confront their fears, anxieties, and avoidance tendencies, leading to a shift in their attitudes towards death. Furthermore, cognitive and emotional processes play a significant role in the impact of death education.⁷ Through cognitive restructuring, death education interventions can challenge negative thoughts and beliefs associated with death, thereby promoting more positive and realistic perceptions. Moreover, emotional processes, such as building empathy and emotional resilience, can be fostered through death education, enabling students to develop healthier coping mechanisms in the face of death-related experiences.⁸ Cultural and social influences are also essential mechanisms to consider. Cultural beliefs, traditions, and societal norms surrounding death can significantly shape individuals' attitudes.⁹ Death education programs that respect and incorporate cultural perspectives on death can effectively resonate with students, increasing their engagement

and receptiveness to the intervention.¹⁰ By addressing cultural and social influences, death education interventions can overcome barriers to open discussions about death and create a more supportive learning environment. Lastly, individual differences contribute to the effectiveness of death education.¹¹ Factors such as prior experiences with death, personal beliefs, and coping strategies can influence how students respond to death education interventions. Tailoring the content and approach of death education to individuals' unique characteristics and needs can optimize the impact of the intervention, ensuring a more personalized and effective educational experience.¹²

Implementing death education programs in universities requires careful consideration of practical aspects. Curriculum design should encompass a range of topics, including death awareness, grief and loss, end-of-life care, and cultural perspectives on death. Training for educators is another vital aspect of implementing death education programs. Educators should receive specialized training that equips them with the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate meaningful discussions, address sensitive topics, and provide appropriate support to students. Additionally, evaluating the effectiveness of death education programs is essential to ensure their ongoing improvement. Methods for assessment may include pre- and post-intervention surveys, qualitative interviews, and longitudinal studies to measure the long-term impact of the interventions.

Hence, improving college students' understanding and coping mechanisms regarding death can have far-reaching societal implications. First, by promoting death education, universities can contribute to the overall well-being and mental health of students. A better understanding of death and improved coping skills can help reduce anxiety and fear related to mortality, ultimately leading to improved mental well-being and resilience. Moreover, death education has the potential to positively impact community health and the healthcare system. By fostering informed discussions about end-of-life care, advance directives, and palliative care, individuals may be more inclined to make informed decisions and engage in proactive healthcare planning. This, in turn, can alleviate the burden on the healthcare system and ensure that individuals' end-of-life preferences are respected. Furthermore, death education can promote a more connected and supportive society, where individuals are better equipped to navigate grief and loss. By enhancing empathy, compassion, and communication skills, students can become more supportive friends, family members, and community members when faced with death and bereavement. This, in turn, can contribute to the development of a more compassionate and resilient society as a whole.

It is worth noting that in the context of China, cultural factors play a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions of death and their acceptance of death education. Chinese society has traditionally held complex beliefs and rituals surrounding death, which may influence individuals' attitudes and willingness to engage in discussions about

death.⁶ Additionally, the societal taboo surrounding death may hinder open conversations and educational interventions related to this topic. To address these cultural considerations, death education programs should incorporate culturally sensitive approaches that respect traditional beliefs while promoting a more open and informed dialogue about death. Furthermore, understanding the influence of cultural factors on individuals' responses to death education is crucial for tailoring interventions to the specific needs of Chinese college students. Incorporating cultural values, such as filial piety and the concept of ancestor worship, into the curriculum may enhance the relevance and effectiveness of death education programs in China. Future research should explore the interplay between cultural factors, educational approaches, and the outcomes of death education interventions.

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of death education on college students, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. First, the study was conducted with a specific sample of Chinese college students, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other populations. Future research should include more diverse student populations to better understand the cultural, demographic, and individual factors that may influence the outcomes of death education interventions.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the importance of integrating death education into college curriculums to address students' fear of death and enhance their appreciation of life. Providing death education can help students develop a healthier perspective on death, improve their well-being, reduce avoidance attitudes towards death-related events, and strengthen their sense of meaning in life and ability to cope with death. These findings emphasize the need for educational institutions to implement comprehensive death education programs, considering individual factors such as personality and family background, and contribute to the development of effective educational policies and curricula.

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