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Attitude and fear regarding death in older adult people

Actitud y miedo con respecto a la muerte en adultos mayores

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ABSTRACT

Death has often been considered a taboo subject in many societies over time. Over the years, our Western culture in Spain has set aside the issue of death through its avoidance or even denial, removing it little by little from our environment, avoiding it as an evil that threatens us. In the same way, we currently see how the quality of life increases along with a higher life expectancy at around 80. Through this article we intend to reflect about attitudes towards death in older adult people, both at group and individual level. To a qualitative methodological design was selected using an information collecting technique, and a semi-structured and in-depth interview to look into the life story of the older adult. The survey consisted of interviews with 30 individuals from the city of Granada (Spain) aged 65 to 85. The results indicated a positive attitude to death of oneself but not so much to the death of others, expressing the fear or the anxiety towards the finiteness of a loved one. The main conclusion is the need for creating educational spaces aimed at adults, to be able to treat these negative attitudes and reinforce the positive ones through the development of pedagogy and education regarding death.

KEY WORDS

Attitudes, Fear, Death, Older Adult, Education.

RESUMEN

La muerte ha solido ser considerada a lo largo del tiempo como un tema tabú en múltiples sociedades. A lo largo de los años, nuestra cultura occidental en España ha apartado el tema de la muerte a través de su evitación o incluso negación, retirándola poco a poco de nuestro entorno, evitándola como un mal que nos amenaza. Del mismo modo, actualmente vemos cómo la calidad de vida aumenta junto con una mayor esperanza de vida situándose en torno a los 80. A través de este artículo, nos proponemos reflexionar sobre las actitudes hacia la muerte en las personas mayores, tanto a nivel grupal como individual. En este artículo se desarrolló un diseño metodológico cualitativo mediante la utilización de la entrevista semiestructurada y en profundidad como medio de recogida de información. La muestra está formada por 30 personas de la ciudad de Granada (España) de 65 a 85 años. Los resultados indicaron una actitud positiva hacia la muerte de uno mismo, pero no tanto hasta la muerte de otros, expresando el miedo o la ansiedad hacia la finitud de un ser querido. La principal conclusión muestra la necesidad de crear espacios educativos dirigidos a mayores, para poder tratar estas actitudes negativas y reforzar las positivas a través del desarrollo de la pedagogía y la educación con respecto a la muerte.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Actitudes, Miedo, Muerte, Persona Mayor, Educación.

1. INTRODUCTION

Talking about death is particularly difficult, that is to say, the difficulty of expression around it is due to the fact that it is generally avoided in human dialogue; most of the time, it is relegated or even eluded by the majority of the population, thus becoming an absolute taboo.

It is a process that has been worked on vigorously from different perspectives (religious, psychological, biometric, philosophical, biological and medical), i.e. it is a universal experience in which each individual feels, experiences and faces individually and personally, within a common context, characterized by a series of previously lived experiences, together with their religious beliefs, their cultural or philosophical origin on how they have lived their lives (Olivé 1995; Grau and Chacón 2002).

Death is presented as a constant threat because of the distress that the finiteness of our own existence brings. The individual must be conscious of their own finiteness because it is the essence of the human being. It also distinguishes us from the rest of living beings. (Saramago 2005; Mohammadpour, Sadeghmoghadam, Shareinia, Jahani and Amiri 2018). We must understand that finitude is not death but the journey to it, from birth until we finally die (Mèlich 2012).

Death is shown as one of the most radical openings that Education should not elude. Suppose our society does deny or evade death. In that case, it dehumanizes itself and does not favour its own evolution. However, the normalization of it in every educational system is treated in Herrán and Cortina's (2010, 12) words of "an unpaved sidewalk". Educating for and with death makes us understand our own finiteness, respecting one's own life and that of the other as our development focuses on, with and for others. Death itself is far away from the minds of young people, but we must think of one's death and prepare for it spiritually and mentally. Múnera and Villa (2010) expose how man is afraid to die, the idea of death being the strongest element of philosophy and religion, trying to solve the riddle and concerns according to a series of beliefs and facts and elaborating on theories about what happens during and after death.

The current relationship between human beings and death is clear. From their deep relationship without contributing to the personal and social formation that the dying process or the act of death itself entails. Death influences our beginning and end, and it prepares us as to the meaning of death itself. Education can, therefore, provide general appropriate pedagogical support. We cannot obviate that death is part of our lives, taking on particular relevance when we enter into close contact with it, whether it is an experience of our own or others. Death is seen as a taboo subject. Therefore, we must rethink this issue and promote an education for death that eliminates the non-approach of the subject as something natural, i.e. as part of our life cycle. As educators, we must learn to confront this issue and transmit and educate that death is part of the meaning and essence of life.

Through this article, we intend to awaken and reflect about attitudes towards death in older adult people, both at group and individual level, so that those of us who dedicate ourselves to Education can show the importance of introducing a subject of Education for death in older adult so that each and every one of us can face our own or someone else's death through a positive attitude and uneasiness. We believe that we need an educational intervention with older people to eliminate the subject of death as a taboo and refer to it as part of our life and that as such must come without having to suffer when we think of it. We highlight Herrán and Cortina (2006) when they disclose that Education for death is a daily education because it is more than just a simple explanation of what is death and the process of mourning. It means assuming one's life and reflecting on it, assuming that death is necessary and that as such, we are mortal beings, giving meaning to the cultural and social context.

Through the realization of our life stories, we want to see the need to establish a new space for reflection on death where our elders can express their fears, anxieties or even strengths so that we can all develop a space for mutual help and understanding, once again highlighting the vision of death in other cultures. Education cannot be detached from the person; it must attend to the dimensions of the human being, with death being one of them. Working on death with our elders is still a pending transformation, a unique opportunity. Although scarce,

there are already some renewing proposals on the pedagogy of death characterized by their formal development in Education; we still have a long way to go.

2. THE OLDER ADULT BEFORE DEATH

The ageing phenomenon is different for all individuals in the way it manifests itself, so it varies from one person to another; we all age in a totally irregular way. Bedmar and Montero (2009) show that it is a creation and a sociocultural phenomenon, that each society interprets it and lives it differently, since the stages of life are about something arbitrary and changeable depending on the circumstances, while we are all affected in a different way in response to the effects of an ageing population.

That is why we must keep in mind that when we try to define and understand the process of ageing, we refer to a different process in each person. Each person possesses many physical, biological, social, psychological changes to cross over to the fourth age and preparation for death, which is essential in the ageing process. Ageing is a gradual, dynamic, irreversible and progressive process (Ortiz 2006). The relationship between this ageing process as something biological and biographical, and death is something natural almost inherent to culture (Pochin-testa 2010).

López (2015) points out how the ageing process can focus from two perspectives implying different facets of old age, highlighting the individual perspective, which affects the study of natural ageing in response to the analysis of the collective of older people as an integral part of society. We cannot forget that during the ageing process, there are a series of functions related to maturation, along with dysfunctions and biological alterations, but not only have to make particular emphasis on the negative, but we must highlight the existence of positive functions that until this moment of life had not happened (Salmerón 2013). Talking about death is particularly difficult; that is to say, the difficulty of expression around it is due to that it is generally left untouched by the human discourse itself, most of the time, it is relegated or even eluded by the majority of the population thus becoming an absolute taboo.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING AN EDUCATION FOR DEATH WITHIN SOCIAL EDUCATION

A line of innovative research is currently being developed in Spain that attempts to introduce death into formal and non-formal Education. This line of thinking emerged in the United States around the middle of the 1950s with the book H. Feifel "The Meaning of Death". In our country, O. Fullat demanded in 1982 the need to educate for death.

Subsequently, his pupil Mèlich in 1989 founded the inclusion of death in Education through the existentialist conception that justifies Education throughout life. Researchers such as C. Poch, A. de la Herrán or M. Cortina have contributed to the epistemological and didactic development of education for death (Rodríguez Herrero and Goyarrola 2016).

Therefore according to Herrán and Cortina (2006), we must understand the Education for death as a formative path that seeks to introduce essential aspects of man in accordance with his possibilities of personal and social evolution throughout his life. We can see the contributions developed in Spain according to Education for death. Authors' area of knowledge approach educational stage (Rodríguez Herrero, Herrán y Cortina 2015, and Agüera 2017):

- Herrán, González et al. (2000): pedagogy, didactics and psychology complex evolutionary early childhood education.
- Poch (2000): philosophy of humanist education and psychopedagogy not defined.
- Cortina (2003, 2010): didactic philosophy of education adolescence.
- Herrán and Cortina (2006): pedagogy, didactics complex evolutionary education for children, primary and secondary.
- Rodríguez, Herrán e Izuzquiza (2013): pedagogy, psychology, educational inclusion, didactical evolutionary complex, humanist and inclusive higher education.
- Rodríguez, Herrán and Cortina (2015): pedagogy, didactics and inclusion complex evolutionary, humanist, inclusive and child awareness, primary and secondary education.

The process of dying carries its conceptual elements, historical, cultural, values, and beliefs that transform it into an event of its own character (Gómez Esteban 2012; Dadfar and Lester 2020). Death has gone so far from our surrounding that we begin to talk about the importance of an education for death as a transversal subject within our current educational system, as a way of preparation, to know how to adapt and live in the society today.

Herrán and Cortina (2007) explain that learning is not only based on the parameters of the death of the other, but also on the reflection on death, which implies reflecting on the values of one's own. This subject must be worked on from childhood, starting at six years old, because children are born without fear of death, this changes as we become older, a dominating view emerges on the subject of death. Education for death is a daily education, as it goes beyond a simple explanation of what is death and the process of mourning, it means going beyond human egocentricity, assuming the very conscience of our life and reflecting on it assuming that each and every one of us is mortal and that death is necessary, showing that the cultural and social context gives meaning to death (Herrán and Cortina 2006).

The main proposals and investigations of Education for death in Spain focuses on three major categories, grouped in the spiritual, emotional, social, cultural, religious and formative value of death for evolution, in its normalization

in Education and palliative educational intervention (Rodríguez Herrero, Herrán and Cortina 2015). Cortina (2010) emphasizes that little by little innovative proposals are being made within the different educational centres, although this innovation is not accompanied by a great generic interest from the educator or from governmental bodies. So we see that there is still hard work to be done. The inclusion of death in Education is still a pending transformation, a unique opportunity because although there are already some new proposals for the Education of death, there is still a long way to go.

Rodríguez Herrero, Herrán and Cortina (2015) explain how death has been and is a field of study accepted from different perspectives; however, it was not in Education until very recently. These disciplines have focused their attention on death as a loss, social factor or suffering, defending that Education can and should liberate its social and educational normalization as a possible building block for society with more mature values, cults, solidarity and human. Ramos (2010) and Xinyi, Yifan, Shu and Fang (2020) assumes that Education to death is neither a psychological intervention, nor a teaching based on doctrines or beliefs, Education on death is an applied pedagogy, a theory and formation that is built through death is to connect Education with consciousness. It is a question of rethinking and questioning the meaning of what we do, assuming our own or others' death. This is an emerging project that must be included in all classrooms and at all formal and non-formal educational levels to give rise to the comprehensive human formation.

Education must help to contribute to knowledge and awareness of the existence of death, which is why we must work in different pedagogical ways (Education in values, emotional Education and Social Education), but we cannot deny that Education for death is an issue under construction and that it does not have the same recognition and prominence in countries in which Education is in constant transformation and development.

Education inclusion for death within a formal and non-formal educational system as a global, standardized and regular content is a part of the social Education is to live fully. Dealing with death from the educational point of view can contribute to the development of a more aware, open and mature society that generate conditions conducive to promote the comprehensive growth of students, according to Maslow (1998). Death education aims to develop pedagogical training both for teachers and students, from pre-school Education to higher Education, adults and pensioners (Rodríguez Herrero, Herran and Izuzquiza 2013). We cannot trust in that it is life itself that presents us with the facet of the process of dying, but that Education should also take its role being now more ready than ever (Herrán and Cortina 2007; Testoni et al. 2019).

4. ATTITUDES AND FEARS IN THE FACE OF ONE'S OWN DEATH AND ON THE DEATH OF OTHERS

Samarel (1995) synthesized the existing connections between the different theories about attitude, a fact that we will enunciate in the following postulates:

- Attitude is understood as the predisposition existing in the subject acquired through a learning process that impels the subject to behave in a certain way in a specific situation.
- The infrastructure of this predisposition is about a mental state.
- This mental state is integrated into conative elements (behavioral automatisms), affective (assessment of received stimuli) and cognitive (interpretation of stimuli in anticipation of other successive stimuli).
- In the same way, Sánchez and Mesa (1998) state that the definition of attitude can be grouped into three main blocks:
- Definitions of character behavior: it's a verbal response to a particular style in which the person does not describe their private life, but it is an accessible, common public response to external observations.
- Definitions of social character: the reflection of social values of a group acquired individually.
- Cognitive definitions: an intellectual process that precedes learning.

The three previous blocks make reference to the attitudes that we have before death and our thoughts towards it, of what we feel and, therefore, of how we act. Neimeyer (1997) and Zhang, Peng, Gao, Huang, Cao, Zheng and Miao (2019) states that these components do not have to be related to each other since we can feel something positive and act in the opposite way. To illustrate, Siracusa (2010), Hong, Hong, Adamek and Kim (2018), and Menzies and Menzies (2020) presents an example that says the following a teacher may consider Education for death adequate and positive, but not consider it necessary to include it in the school curriculum.

An attitude is a psychological phenomenon that forms and develops throughout life and shows a character of disposition that influences in a certain way the response of a person. For there to be a certain attitude, there must be something for it to react to, it can be positive or negative, and it must manifest with a certain intensity. Every attitude has, from the point of view, its structure: an effective component, a cognitive component and a behavioural component. In this way, attitudes are related to behaviours, emotions, feelings, beliefs, needs... (Grau Abalo et al. 2008; Atadokht, Rahimi and Valinejad 2018; Barnett, Reed and Adams 2020).

The majority of studies carried out towards attitudes have considered that it is a construct that integrates the three previous components through which certain behaviour can be analyzed. It is a structure that cannot be observed directly, but it can be the explanation of a good part of human behaviour, inducing the subject to respond positively or negatively to certain social stimuli, such as the death of oneself or others (Valdés 1994; Liu and Van Schalkwyk 2019; Ding,

Tian, Chen and Wang 2020). Returning to Siracusa (2010), the attitude towards death has these three components, that is, a cognitive, affective and behavioural component, since we can think about death, how we feel about it and what we do when the time comes.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this work is to analyze the attitudes and fears that the older adults have, before the closeness of their own or someone else's death. Specific objectives we establish:

1. Detect the existence of negative attitudes, for example, fear or anxiety toward death, in relation to the fourth age.
2. Determine the degree of self-perception before the approach of death in the older adult.
3. Influence the importance of an education before death transforms negative attitudes within the process of dying.

5.1. Sample

Through a non-probabilistic sampling, but intentionally, the cases were chosen in the city of Granada (Spain) due to the completion of a Predoctoral Scholarship (UPF-University teacher training) in this same city. In the same way, the snowball technique was used, which allows the researcher to interview a group of friends or neighbours from our informants to establish a new relationship with people willing to lend us their story to build this research.

The participants consisted of 30 people (18 men and 12 women) from the Senior University located in the city of Granada (Spain), aged between 65 and 85 years with a level medium-high sociocultural, and that they provided us with enough information to reach the theoretical saturation of the data. All the data was collected with the full consent of the interviewees. The study was carried out during the months from January through June 2018.

5.2. Techniques And Data Collection Instruments

In order to respond to the objectives proposed in the present study, we have resorted to the use of a qualitative methodology, using the semi-structured, non-formal, conversational and biographical interview for the collection of information. The interview was validated by four experts in the area of Education for older adults and research experts. Validation of the interview was requested in relation to the following criteria on a scale of 1 to 5 (1- None, 2- Little, 3- Sufficient, 4- Fairly, 5- Total) according to the Degree of coherence, Degree of

relevance, Degree of relevance and Degree of clarity, proceeding to modify the interview provided based on the observations made. Finally, once these modifications had been made, a pilot test was carried out to detect possible failures.

These interviews were read by the interviewers and answered by each of the persons interviewed. In terms of the structure of the interview, this was divided into three parts:

- The first one collects the sociodemographic data of the person, age, sex, profession, marital status, address, telephone number, number of children, studies carried out...
- The second group collects the biographical data about the course of their life that influenced the subject's memories (family, childhood, school, the usefulness of what was acquired, work, friends, retirement...
- Finally, the issues relating to the present, showing a special interest in the topic of death and preparation for the fourth age.

The interviews were carried out in the residence of the older adult. The average interview time was two hours, organized in several sessions.

5.3. Data Analysis

Once the interviews were carried out, their respective transcriptions were made, first of all literally, followed by the biographical account. The qualitative data obtained from the vision and perception of the older adults have been analyzed using the software Atlas. ti creating a series of categories analyzed and validated again by a group of experts in the field (Table 1).

The process of construction of our category system has followed a deductive-inductive process, which begins with the review of the existing literature carried out during the first phases of the research.

Once the data was encoded, it was filtered through triangulation, obtained through the semi-structured and autobiographical interview, which according to Cisterna (2005) has allowed its validation. Afterwards, we carry out the content analysis, making an exposition and interpretation of the data obtained, presenting the descriptive results of the studied facts.

Table 1 Description of the analysis categories

Category	Code	Definition
Self-perception of death	SPD	Own perception of own or other people's death.
Positive and negative attitudes towards one's own death	PAO-OD NAO-OD	Coping with one's own death.
Positive and negative attitudes towards the death of others	PAOD NAOD	Coping with the death of others.

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

To know the attitudes and fears of the older adults in the face of death, we have differentiated a series of categories, these being:

- Self-perception of death.
- Negative attitudes: fear, anxiety, negativity and distress, personally or death of a family member or friend.
- Positive attitudes: acceptance, peace, positivity and normalcy, personally or death of a family member or friend.

Regarding the self-perception of death, we would like to point out that almost all the interviewees have received the questions about death in a positive way with a smile, emphasizing that they do not know how much longer they will live, maybe a few days. They feel that their time has run out.

However, because of all the experience gained throughout their life, they feel that they will never die. We wanted to emphasize the importance of their health and not to rely on anyone, for that they would prefer imminent death. With the exception of very few, they have admitted that they do not like to talk about death, but yes think about it because they know it is an issue of vital importance to their age in which they have, in the words of our participant number 30:

“Honestly, I don’t like to talk about death. I prefer to think about it and keep it to myself and try to accept that it will come sooner or later because of my age; we all know that it is just around the corner”.

On the other hand, most of the interviewees argue that they have not heard about death or the process of dying in an explicit way, but little by little throughout their lives and experiencing it personally, they have been able to see and experience how their loved ones have been taken from them, among them the memories flood back of mothers, fathers, grandparents... we highlight the words of participant number 5 when he explains that he took part in funerals from a very young age.

- Participant 5: “What are you going to tell me that I do not know already, I was the one who took the sheet and wrapped the corpse up in the coffin

And do you know what I used to do? I would tie a handkerchief around their head and chin to close their mouth”.

However, on the other hand, we see that other interviewees say that they have spoken about death as something that must happen, that is to say, with age they have to, sooner or later death will come to them, and that is why they must be prepared to accept it in the most positive and calmest manner possible.

Around the perception of death among men and women we see that there are no significant differences, each and every one of them regardless of sex do not want to listen to anything about it just having it in mind because they know that sooner or later it will happen.

Attending to the negative and positive attitudes around one’s own death 25 of the 30 participants interviewed assume not to fear or have anxiety towards death through a resounding answer, the process of dying implies a liberation and

they accept it as an integral part of their lives. However, many of them highlight the issue of health as something negative, that is, they do not fear death, but rather their health. We highlight some of the phrases of our interviewees:

- Participant 1: "I'm afraid of falling ill and not being able to get out of bed, but I do not fear death, that's the best there is and with my age, even better still."

- Participant 6: "Not me I am no longer afraid of dying because I know that the day reaches everyone".

- Participant 15: "Neither anxiety nor fear, it is something natural in life. Sooner or later it is something that will reach us all, and the sooner we assume it, the better. "

- Participant 18: "I think we are all prepared for death because we are aware from a young age that one day it has to happen and there is no other choice, sooner or later, it happens."

The 10 remaining interviewees assume to be scared of death, being a taboo subject in their day to day life. All of them insist that they never think about this fact although they know that sooner or later it will come.

- Participant 3: "not me, I do not think about it, how I'm going to die and when I will die, I have not thought about it yet."

- Participant 20: "I do not like to talk to anyone about death, for me, it's like a taboo subject and cemeteries too.

- Participant 30: "I am very afraid of death, when I think about it I get an irremediable anxiety attack that I cannot control".

- Participant 25: "Someday it will come but even thinking about it sends shivers down my spine, because I do not know what there is next".

In response to negative and positive attitudes about the death of a loved one, all the subjects interviewed expressed their terrible fear and total denial in the case of loved ones with an inferior age of their own. Several of the interviewees have shared very painful memories during the interview about illnesses of loved ones or even the death of their spouse or one of their children reiterating what they suffered and the hope of not going through the same thing again.

- Participant 9: "I could not stand it. They would take me with them. It is something very hard watching someone you love die. It is the worst thing that can happen to you in life, especially when the person is young. Life treated them unfairly. "

- Participant 12: "I do not want anyone younger than myself to die especially friends or family members; I would prefer to die before them. Of course, I would not like it to happen. "

- Participant 22: "I am afraid of the death of my loved ones considering I have always had it in mind due to the heart disease that my wife has had for practically her entire life, but I also know that it is something that everybody has to go through and when I am feeling a little down and depressed and not want to do anything, I think of all the beautiful things and the fantastic moments that I have spent with her, my children and friends who are the ones who have filled my life of emotion and well-being in a fuller way ".

- Participant 28: "Well, of course, it scares me to think about it and more so after my wife and daughter died not long ago. The truth is that I have suffered a lot in that aspect... but what can we do, life is unfair. That's why I almost never think about it."

We emphasize unanimity in the responses of our 55 informants on the need to include various reflection meetings among the older adults either within the permanent classroom for open training or outside of it to talk about the issues of one's own death or that of others but above all others, and that all of them claim to be afraid or even to be terrified about the death of their loved ones.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that during the questions have arisen many questions about the funeral they want, our participant 8 expresses the "day that this is to be held she doesn't want any flowers, she just wants them to pray and put lipstick on her lips".

In the same way, an education for the death of others is important and necessary, especially in advanced death processes.

Participant 2: "I answer the same thing, when people have internalized that someone is going to die it is not necessary but if it is not internalized or seen, yes, it is Natural is very necessary to avoid suffering".

Participant 20: "It is very important to alleviate grief and sadness, giving rise to non-life, so you have to work on it so that this does not happen and they continue living". Finally, referring to the importance of pedagogical intervention. On numerous occasions our informants do not know what to answer.

- Participant 10: "What arises in my doubt is how, I cannot think of how, or when and above all how society is just being educated, therefore what is currently being done is everything the opposite of what should really be done".

- Participant 13: "No, it just seems to me a very complicated issue what you raise because we are clear that something has to be done but we don't know how to do it".

They assume that It is a difficult task due to the taboo sociocultural conception of death, but workshops or courses that promote reflection should be proposed.

- Participant 16: "With the elderly you could do workshops, but something that would take you to your daily life without generating any feeling of sadness through reflection".

- Participant 15: "I remember once again when in this class in the Permanent Open Training Classroom the topic of death was discussed, this teacher has a series of workshops to treat ar the subject and I have involved many of my colleagues to sign up for these workshops. I also believe that a series of talks should be organized through civic centers and social groups dealing with this issue, so that they have it present with serenity, without fear. Achieving death as something natural, I think it would be very interesting and very important".

Working through grief through emotional education:

- Participant 17: "Emotional and psychological education could be an entry point in relation to the subject. Meditation helps a lot with thoughts of discomfort regarding death, I have practiced it and I think it is extremely important

and it helps a lot, having time to meditate on a daily basis, in this society of chaos is very important.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Education towards death should focus on training aimed at investigating, advising and demystifying the fear of death, stopping it from becoming a taboo concept within our Western society (Cantero 2013).

From pedagogy, it opens the doors to the evolution of knowledge and Education in order to establish the configuration of various didactic areas (Tourinán 2015) scientifically. From the pedagogy and Education towards death has allowed us to focus on an intervention to be able to create a process of teaching and learning in accordance with the dimensions of the human being and its need for caregiving rise to a comprehensive education so that the person can build their own vital project.

In our study, we emphasize the relationship of response in the self-perception of death, explaining the ignorance of the duration of life. We highlight that some interviewees have explained their bewilderment in talking about death but claim to have it very present in their day to day life because it is a subject very relevant to their age. In this sense, Gala et al. (2002) state that the fact of thinking about the proximity of one's own death or that of others involves a series of attitudes that can be predictive of people's behaviour, generating in most cases fear, anxiety or worry always within a normal range motivating the person to accept death as an integral part of their life.

Referring to the negative and positive attitudes towards death, 25 of the 30 interviewees have stated to have neither fear nor anxiety, assuming that the process of dying is about liberation. We emphasize Blanco Picabia (1992) when highlighting the non-identification of the older adult with the fact of death but with that of his loved ones. A study developed in Mexico in response to the attitudes of the older adult assumes that the majority of participants do not comprehend the death of others but only of their own. The loss of a family member or a friend can trigger an emotional problem strongly affecting their state of mind, leading to depression in many cases (Hernández-Eloisa et al. 2011; Hong, Hong, Adamek and Kim 2018).

These testimonies coincide with those of our interviewees since they expose a terrible fear as well as a total denial of the death of a loved one because it is a very painful experience. In their article called death and dying in the older adult, Blanco Picabia and Antequera Jurado (2005) show that the death of the spouse produces utmost anxiety in the older adult, generating depression and anxiety. The same happens before the death of a child, considered one of the most painful losses. We emphasize the realization of our research on older adult people who live in their usual residency since these authors state that when dealing with older people who are in a retirement home where they are cut off from the outside

world, attitudes of relief towards the death of fellow residents are extremely consistent.

It is extremely important to conclude the unanimity of our 30 interviewees with the need to create areas for reflection, consolation, among the older adult and people specialized on the subject within the University for the Older Adult to overcome their fears. We have been able to verify that within the University for the Older Adult there are no sessions for reflection dedicated to the finitude, nor multiple investigations that approach the subject of death from the perspective of an older adult person, consequently, we can conclude that a knowledge gap exists.

Herran and Cortina (2009) state that preparing with and for death is missing in the didactic intentions. In this way, the purpose of education are for educational professionals to rationalize and reflect on their teaching, learning and unlearning and relearning in self-training where death takes its natural place. Death is seen as something very far away, dramatic, undefined, life passes as if we were not mortal, resulting in an inverted, contrary and negative death. The university program does not usually include this topic in their curriculum, despite a great educational potential that this subject offers for Education in values and guidance throughout life.

Education should help to contribute towards knowledge and awareness regarding the existence of death, which is why we must work from different pedagogical lines (Education in values, emotional Education and Social Education), but we cannot deny that Education concerning death is a line under construction and it does not have the same recognition and prominence in countries in which Education is in constant transformation and development (Herrán, 2013; Testoni et al. 2019).

Finally, we want to highlight the need to put into practice an educational project, discussions, formative programs... eliminating death as a taboo element in our lives and establishing a necessary education for death within our educational institutions for the older adults.

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