

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present research was to explore the ways in which people belonging to the worldviews of modernity and tradition differ in terms of their death attitudes. A series of three studies was carried out. The first study was a preliminary study meant to arrive at the mental schema of death in the minds of contemporary Pakistani youth. A convenient sample of 100 undergraduate students was taken and an open-ended questionnaire was used to procure responses that came to the participants' minds when they thought of death. From among the response pool of 2000 words, the top 20 in terms of frequency were selected. Multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis was used to map the mental schema of death. It was seen that the conceptualization of death in the mind of young men and women in Pakistan is an interweaving of modernity and tradition with perhaps tradition being the stronger influence. The second study was based on text analysis. Relevant pages and passages from Ashraf Ali Thanvi's *Bahishti Zewar* (Heavenly Ornaments), Imam Ghazali's *Kimia e Sa'adat* (The Alchemy of Happiness), Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian* and Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* were taken and analyzed through grounded theory methodology. In the third study, three traditionalist scholars and three modernist scholars were interviewed through semistructured interviewing technique. Grounded theory was used for the analysis of the transcripts. The findings revealed that the major dimensions of traditional and modern death attitudes are widely at odds with each other. Two contrasting theoretical models are developed to illustrate the affect-behavior-cognition triad of death attitudes rooted in modernity and tradition.