

# Attitude and perception towards death of family member

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Death is the end process of life and one of the great certainty in life. Death has many taboos associated with it due to which people do not like to talk about it. The present case study was an attempt to understand the attitude and perception of people towards death and how they cope with it. Many people have suffered a loss and have shared their perception regarding death which helps to develop the core concept of death. The sample consisted of 30 people of different age group and sex which were selected randomly from Jorhat district of Assam. Data was collected through focus group discussion and a semi structured questionnaire was used to guide the discussion. It revealed that even though people refused to accept the death of near or dear one but they knows that death is inevitable so anyhow even though it takes time people try to come out from the grief.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Death, Dying, Attitude, Perception

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Every individual born to this world are mortal. Death is very emotional and sensitive issue and one of the natural processes experience by all individuals in one or the other way. It is a kind of universal unavoidable stressful life event and considered as one of the crisis face by all the families (Murray *et al.*, 2005). Almost every individual encounters the death of a loved one, such as death of a spouse, children, parent, siblings or other family members. Every individual dies and ends their life at certain age due to many reasons such as accident, stroke, natural disaster, infectious diseases etc.

Death or loss of a person in the family causes intense grief leading to prolonged periods of sadness or depression. And mostly family members react with anxiety immediately after a death happens (Barnhill, 2011). The intensity of sadness decreases with the passage of time but grieving is an important process in

order to overcome these feelings and continue to embrace the time people had with the lose person. Coping with the loss of a near and dear one or family member may be one of the hardest challenges that every person face. Every individual reacts differently to death and employs own coping strategies for grief. Many research shows that most people who have social support and healthy habits recover from the lose by their own with the passage of time and it is also revealed that there is no definite time period of overcoming from the grief.

The attitude of people towards death varies according to the age and stages of life but avoidance is always the first reaction of people to death. Many people think death in negative way and are afraid of dying. It is associated with many social taboos and creates discomfort which leads people to rarely discuss about death. Some people think that death is an enemy which

weakens human's strength, cripples and eventually kills them. people want to die peacefully without suffering from much pain. As death is not a pleasant topic of conversation so it is rarely discussed and more over death has unique and different meaning to individuals. Understanding that people differ in how they think about death, the present study has been done with the following objectives:

- To assess the attitude and perception of people towards death of family member
- To assess the coping strategies used by them to come out from the grief.

### ■ RESEARCH METHODS

For the present study 30 sample of different age group and sex were selected. The samples of different age group were selected purposively from the Jorhat district of Assam, to know the attitude and perception of people towards death and the coping strategies used by them. Data was collected through focus group discussion and with the help of the semi-structured questionnaire which was prepared to guide the discussion.

### ■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the focus group discussion, people revealed that it was very difficult to accept the death of a dear or any other family members. The attitude of people regarding death varies with the kind of relationship they have with the person. In the study, people revealed that by any means people must accept the reality either by themselves or due to the atmosphere which surrounds them, such as gathering of relatives, neighbours, mourning, consoling, rituals and care taken by other people etc and try to move on with the passage of time. In case of recent lose of family member, people cannot accept the reality and often feel the lose as a bad dream and hopes that the lose person will came back. Many people often dream about the lose person and likes to talk with them in their dream and wish it to be a reality. In the study people revealed that people do not feel much pain and sad in case if old people die because they have lived their life to the fullest. But in case if young people die then it cause great disruption in the family and it become more difficult to accept and to move on without that person. Whatever the loss it may be but people thinks that they need to overcome from the grief and reorganize the family roles and continue with their daily normal

functions because they have their own life which they have to continue without the lose person as they cannot bring the person back.

Some people also revealed that after the death of the husband, many young women may become more stylish, choosier about their dresses than they were earlier and often go for social functions to come out from loneliness. But there may be some women who feel uncomfortable and hesitates to attend social functions without their spouse and also lost interest in their outer appearance. In case of middle age, most of the people console themselves and make themselves strong in such kind of situations either for their children or to look after their old parents and other household responsibilities. If the death of spouse is sudden and unexpected, some people may still hopes that the lose one will come back one day. At this time many people give more attention to their children and families.

In many studies it was found that after the death of spouse, women become more distress than men, it may be due to financial strain and difficulties which reduces the psychological well being of women. They become more conscious about money and think several times before spending than they used to do earlier.

The male sample revealed that they often spend their time in work and some like to stay aloof while some like to move around with friends and some with their children who are often look after by other family members. Many researchers has found that after the death of spouse there is subsequent decline in health of men as compared to women. It may be due to poor nutrition (Umberson *et al.*, 1992) and may be due to increase in unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, drinking etc (Zisook *et al.*, 1990).

From the study it was also found that now a days, both young male and female often go for second marriage and it may be due to the family pressure or to look after their little children and many a times for mental and financial support. Peters and Liefbroer (1997) found that men are approximately five times more likely to remarry than women after lose of spouse.

Older people often loss interest in their life after the death of a spouse or other near and dear ones. To cope with the loss they generally try to avoid it and keep themselves busy in some other work such as in doing household works, cooking, gardening spends time in attending traditional ceremonies in temples and often with

their grand children. Many people believe that death is a transition to new life and the suffering of people when dying depends on their karma.

From the study it was revealed that if people are mentally prepared for the loss then it does not affect them much but if the loss is sudden then it becomes a very traumatic condition for the family and the intensity of the grief or bereavement is much more higher and remains for prolong period and disrupts the entire family (Bowlby, 1983). Similar work related to the present investigation was also carried out by Cas *et al.* (2013); Kim *et al.* (2016); Lan *et al.* (2017) and Nozari and Dousti (2013).

### Conclusion:

From the study it can be concluded that the acceptance of death requires willingness to move on and let go of the things. The acceptance of death, pain and sadness associated with the loss is intensified beyond measure when one is lost suddenly at an early stage or unprepared for the loss.

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