

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dimensions of Religiosity and Attitudes Toward Death: Determinants of the Meaning in Life Among Adolescents

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Abstract

The aim of this transversal study was to determine the function of the dimensions of religiosity (religious beliefs, ritual religion, and the consequences of religiosity on social behavior) and attitudes toward death (fear of death, avoidance of death, acceptance of death, and acceptance of death as escape) in predicting the variance of the perception of meaning in life among adolescents. The research included the pertinent sample ($N = 218$) of high school students from Valjevo. The average age of participants was ($M_{age} = 16.53$ years [$SD = .38$] years). Three measuring instruments were used: the Meaning in Life Scale (Vulić-Prtorić & Bubalo, 2006), the Religiosity Questionnaire (Ljubotina, 2004), The Attitudes toward Death and Dying Questionnaire (Štambuk, 2004). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the internal consistency of the scale and questionnaires. The initial degree of statistical significance was $p \leq .05$. Correlational analysis indicates that, in adolescents, there is a statistically significant linear connection between the dimensions of religiosity and attitudes toward death. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis suggest that the dimensions of participants' fear of death ($\beta = .28$) and acceptance of death as escape ($\beta = .33$), with 25% of the total variance, are significant partial positive predictors of the criterion meaning in life. That indicates that if participants are less afraid of death and view death as the extension of life, they will have a greater meaning in life. On the other hand, the regression model showed that the independent variables of religiosity did not stochastically independently influence the interpretation of the variability of the perception of the meaning in life among high school seniors. This study offers detailed interpretations of the findings and implications for further research.

Keywords: Adolescence, religious beliefs, ritual religion, fear of death, meaning in life.

1. Introduction

The relations between the dimensions of religiosity and attitudes toward death in explaining the meaning in life have been a research subject of many authors (Gurba, Czyżowska, Topolewska-Siedzik, & Ciecuch, 2022; Holajn et al., 2022; Indriyani, Syaharuddin, & Jumriani, 2021). The perception of the meaning in life is a basic construct in the existential psychology, and is often the subject matter studied in positive psychology (Waddell, Elam & Chassin, 2022). It is stated in the research that the definition of the term meaning in life and its understanding is not uniform:

human happiness and psychological well-being are important (Moisseron-Baudé, Jean-Luc, Sovet, 2022), so is emotional value (Yaoshan & Ching-Ling, 2022), and the motive of the tendency of moving forward (Li, J. B.; Dou, K., & Liang, Y. (2022)). The authors (Morse, Lee, Haddock, & Kimberly, Henry, 2022) believe that the perception of the meaning in life is hereditary and that it correlates to the meaning in life on various levels. During its existence, a person, to higher or a lesser degree, identifies his or her own life's meaning (Heintzelman, & King, 2019). If a person cannot find meaning in life, that could lead to the feeling of purposelessness, neurosis or apathy

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(Demchenko, Maksymchuk, Bilan, Maksymchuk, & Kalynovska, 2021). The research authors (Arslan & Kelly-Ann, 2022; Waddell, Elam & Chassin, 2022) claim that a meaning in life exists within every person. In accordance with their theory of motivation, self-actualization implies a mental state that a person aims to realize during their development which is their highest goal. They also explain that each person has their own goals that they want to achieve in life, and their realization represents an award that makes their life more meaningful and valuable. The goals are personal; there are clearly defined rules and hierarchy, for example, basic physiological needs, safety needs, the need for love, self-respect, and the need for self-actualization. According to Maslow (Routledge, 2022), the higher a person's position on the hierarchy of needs is the more meaningful their life is, while the inability to achieve goals can lead to the feeling of purposelessness and emptiness. In addition, the authors (Priyadharshini, Mohan, Hariharasudan, & Hassan, 2021) view the concept of meaning in life from the existential aspect. According to them, the meaning in life is necessary for health of every person, since life without meaning, goals or ideals causes stress, and consequently contributes ending of life. Thus, they believe that a person needs consistent ideals which they should strive for, as well as the limitations within which one can live reasonably. The authors (Goracko, Zurek, Lachowicz, Kujawa, & Zurek, 2022) analyze the phenomenon the meaning in life from the motivational, cognitive, and moral aspect as being same as the long-term goal one aims to achieve.

Family and interpersonal relationships represent the basic determinants of the meaning in life, it is stated in the study (Peixoto-Freitas, Rodríguez-González, Crabtree, & Martins, 2020). The research (Daep-Datu & Salanga, 2018) cites the religiosity and self-actualization as the relevant sources for perceiving the meaning in life, in addition to the significant factors that determine the meaning in life: 1) satisfying basic needs – food, safety, recreation, creative activities; 2) individual relationships – family and friends; 3) personal achievements – education and professional advancement; and 4) personal growth – social engagement, tradition, culture, and religiosity. Information regarding gender differences in the perception of the meaning in life are generally inconsistent. For example, the study (Kaur & Sharma, 2022) found that females manifest higher degree of meaning in their life than males. It is also generally believed that the level of education

is a relevant indicator of the meaningful experience of life (Ahn & Davis, 2020). There are also certain inconsistencies regarding the obtained relations. The authors (Bernsen, Crandall, Leahy, & Biddle, 2022) claim that older participants with higher level of education express higher degree of the meaning in life. On the other hand, the study (Madrahimova, 2022) claims that rich, more educated people have lower of experiencing the meaning in life.

The research (Erken, Francis, & McKenna, 2021) pointed out that religion is the elementary component which enables people to build basis for perceiving meaning in their own lives, and it has the most important function in finding the resolution for the so called pointless life. The aforementioned authors believe that despite all the effort a person makes to plan their life it is clear that there is a part of the rest of their life that cannot be planned, such as death which is a notion a person is confronted with from beginning to the end of their life. Actually, a person who believes is capable of understanding the meaningless part of life is convinced that death is only a transition into the eternal life. The system of religious beliefs enables such an attitude, it gives people the structure of beliefs that can be used to explain the world as such and help them deal with personal circumstances and difficulties (Helland, 2022).

The study (LeMay, 2022) reached the conclusion that regularly going to church in youth correlates positively to the belief in striving in life. The research (Galea, 2018) conducted on bereaved adolescents revealed that meaning that comes from religion contributes to creating meaning after losing a loved one, meaning that religion enables the perception of the meaning in life while dealing with stress. At the same time, religious beliefs have a significant function in restoring health after losing a loved one (Burns, Griese, King, & Talmi, 2020). The aforementioned authors believe that attitudes of older people toward death and dying are the main predictors of their meaning in life, because a person cannot understand the meaning in life until he/she can confront death and that he/she cannot really live without the awareness of the inevitable end of life. The research author (Lyons, 2022) believes that finding a meaning in life reduces fear of death, which consequently improves life. If a person lives their life meaningfully and if they realized their ego later in life, there is a chance that they will face death without fear (Dursun & Alyağut, 2020). These authors conclude that adolescents with lower perception of meaning and orientation in life

manifest bigger fear of death. That means that person's fear of death is conditioned by their (in)ability to find meaning in life and achieve physical and moral well-being. The study (Li et al., 2022) found the positive correlation between the perception of meaning in life and accepting death, and the negative correlation between the perception of meaning in life and fear of death. Apart from the analyzed determinants of the perception of meaning in life, it is important to mention the consequentiality of the perception of meaning in life. For example, the experience of meaning in life is an intensive determinant of psychological well-being and physical health which is in interaction with the higher level of self-respect and life satisfaction (Bersia et al., 2022). On the other hand, it has been proven that lack of perception of meaning in life corresponds to psychopathology (Bettencourt, Tomé, Pires, Leitão, & Gomes, 2020).

Keeping in mind the research findings so far and the indisputable significance of the subject matter, as well as the fact that identical studies have not been conducted on Serbian adolescent population, the aim of this research was to examine to which degree the partial variables of religiosity (religious beliefs, ritual religion, and the consequences of religiosity on social behavior) and attitudes toward death and dying (fear of death, avoidance of death, acceptance of death, and acceptance of death as escape) explain the variance of meaning in life among adolescents. In accordance with the findings of the previous empirical studies and the aim of this research, two hypotheses were formulated: *H1* – the assumption is that the constructs of higher degree of various dimensions of religiosity, and the higher acceptance of death and dying, are statistically significant positive determinants of experiencing the meaning in life among adolescents; *H2* – it is expected that fear of death and increased avoidance of death are stochastic negative determinants of the perception of the meaning in life within adolescent population.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Participants and Procedure

This transversal research was conducted on a sample of high school seniors ($N = 218$), students of the final year of secondary economic school and technical vocational school in Valjevo. The average age of participants was ($M_{\text{years}} = 18.3$ years, $SD = .43$). The existence of multivariate outliers was not detected ($\chi^2(9) > 25.09$, $p \leq .01$, Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The data was collected in September, 2022.

Before filling in the questionnaires, the participants

were given detailed instructions and the aim of the research was explained to them, without explaining the purpose of each measuring instrument (in order to prevent desirable responding). The students were asked not to think too much about answers and in case of doubt choose an answer they favor more, and that there would be no consequences for quitting at any time. They were also told that the results would be analyzed only on group level. All participants gave written consent for taking part in the research. The research was conducted in groups during regular classes, and it lasted approximately 30 minutes. It was conducted by the research authors and school psychologists. The research was anonymous and voluntary, and was realized with school principals' approval. The research was approved by the science council of the Serbian Academy of Innovation Sciences in Belgrade, and was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles based on the Declaration of Helsinki.

2.2 Instruments

2.2.1 The Meaning in Life Scale

The Meaning in Life Scale (Vulić-Prtorić i Bubalo, 2006) includes 23 items which examine the emotional view on the meaning in life, specifically the traits of existence and the cognitive aspect of the meaning in life (for example, “*Compared to other people from my surroundings, I feel that my life has meaning*”). The participants had to assess on a five point Likert-type scale to which degree the given claims refer to them (from 1 – *not at all me* to 5 – *completely me*). The final score is calculated as the sum of assessments on all items, with reverse scoring for certain items. The score ranges from 23 to 115, where higher score means higher perception of the meaning in life.

The Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .89$) for our sample revealed the satisfactory reliability of the measuring instrument used (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

2.2.2 The Religiosity Questionnaire

The Religiosity Questionnaire (Ljubotina, 2004) contains 26 items separated into three subscales: a) *religious beliefs*, b) *ritual religion/knowledge of ritual*, and c) *consequences of religiosity on social behavior*. The first dimension (*religious beliefs*) includes religious experiences and the significance of faith in the life of a person, regardless of the religious community they belong to (for example, “*I sometimes sense the presence of God or some divine being*”). The second dimension (*ritual religion*) represents the degree to which a person performs

rites and rituals of a religious community they belong to and this is mostly regarded on a behavioral level (for example, “I regularly go to church or temple”). The third dimension (*consequences of religiosity on social behavior*) includes contribution of religion has on a person and their social behavior, so to a degree it includes the variables of religious exclusivity or activity which does not relate to religious rituals (for example, “When choosing a partner, I do not care about his or her religious beliefs”).

Depending on the assessment of personal behavior, participant chose the answer on a four point Likert-type scale (0 = *completely untrue*, 1=*mostly untrue*, 2 = *mostly true*, and 3 = *completely true*). The score on all subscales ranges from 0 to 72. The final score is the sum of the assessments on all the items of all three subscales, with reverse scoring of some items. The higher score means higher degree of religiosity.

The measuring instrument showed satisfactory reliability on our sample with Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .90$) for religious beliefs, ($\alpha = .78$) ritual religion, and for consequences of religiosity on social behavior.

2.2.3 The Attitudes toward Death and Dying Questionnaire

The Attitudes toward Death and Dying Questionnaire (Štambuk, 2004) contains 32 items distributed into 5 subscales: 1) *fear of death* – negative thought and feelings about death, 2) *avoidance of death* – not thinking about death as long as possible, 3) *acceptance of death* – death is considered a road to happy afterlife, 4) *acceptance of death as escape* – death is regarded as an escape from terrible existence, and 5) *neutral acceptance of death* – death and fear are not welcomed. The variable fear of death examines the negative thoughts and emotions about death and dying (for example, “Death is, without doubt, a sad experience”) the variable avoidance of death measures to which degree a person avoids the subject

3. Results

The descriptive parameters of the examined variables, and the reliability of the measuring instruments applied in this research on the whole sample of participants was shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the examined variables

Scales	Min	Max	M	SD	Sk	Ku	Sk SE	Ku SE	K-S	α
<i>Religiosity Questionnaire</i>					-.45	.06	.14	.37	.82	
Religious beliefs	0	29	19.89	6.54	-.28	-.64	.14	.37	.90	.90
Ritual religion	0	17	09.16	5.00	-.90	.26	.14	.37	.25	.88
Consequences of religiosity on social behavior	01	16	10.01	2.82	.56	.70	.14	.37	.74	.78
<i>Attitudes toward Death and Dying Questionnaire</i>					-.03	.49	.14	.37	.08	
Fear of death	1	8	2.96	1.27	.01	-.36	.14	.37	.31	.90

of death (for example, “I suppress every thought about death”), the variable acceptance of death measures to which degree a person sees death as a beginning of a happy afterlife (for example, “I believe that after death I will be in heaven”), the variable acceptance of death as escape examines the way in which a person perceives death as possible escape form the painful way of living (for example, “Death will be the end of all my troubles”), and the variable neutral acceptance of death examines if a person accepts death as reality, meaning that they neither want it nor fear it (for example, “Death is natural and unavoidable”). The participants had to determine the level of agreement with the given items of a seven point scale (from 1 = *I fully disagree* to 7 = *I fully agree*). The final score of individual subscales is presented as the mean value of the assessed claims.

All the subscales had satisfactory level of internal consistency because Cronbach’s alpha coefficients varied from .79 to .95: ($\alpha = .90$) for the subscale fear of death, ($\alpha = .79$), avoidance of death, ($\alpha = .95$), acceptance of death ($\alpha = .80$), acceptance of death as escape ($\alpha = .82$), except for the subscale neutral acceptance of death ($\alpha = .60$) which was not analyzed because of the low alpha coefficient.

2.3 Statistical data analysis

The descriptive parameters of central tendency were calculated for all the variables used in this analysis: arithmetic mean, standard deviation, standard error of the mean, skewness and kurtosis, and the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The acceptable values of these indicators range from -1 to 1 (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001). The Pearson correlation coefficient and hierarchical regression analysis were used to check the research hypotheses. Statistically significant result is based on the probability level ($p \leq .05$ ili $p \leq .01$). Data analysis was conducted using the software IBM SPSS version 21, Chicago, IL, USA.

Avoidance of death	1	7	3.03	1,36	.84	.55	.14	.37	.30	.79
Acceptance of death	1	6	5.37	1.35	.37	.81	.14	.37	.56	.80
Acceptance of death as escape	1	7	3.44	1.18	.44	.34	.14	.37	.28	.82
Meaning in life	49	114	87.05	10.43	.82	.62	.14	.37	.40	.60

*Annotation. *Min* = Minimum result; *Max* = Maximum result; *M* = Arithmetic mean; *SD* = Standard deviation, *SK* = Skewness – horizontal asymmetry of distribution, *Ku* = Kurtosis – vertical asymmetry of distribution, *SkSE* = standard error of skewness; *KuSE* = standard error of kurtosis; *K-S* = Kolmogorov–Smirnov statistic; α = Cronbach’s alpha coefficient

The results of the Religiosity Questionnaire show the maximum mean value on the variable religious beliefs, and minimum mean value on the variable consequences of religiosity on social behavior. Analyzing the attitudes on the subscale attitudes toward death and the perception of the meaning in life, we can see the maximum value on the variable acceptance of death and perception of the meaning in life, while the lowest arithmetic mean can be seen on the variable fear of death. The results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (*K-S*) test of the normality of data distribution and skewness and kurtosis range

within acceptable values, between +1 and -1 (Garson, 2012). That showed that there is no statistically significant variation from the Gaussian probability curve in the score distribution, which is a prerequisite for further parametric analysis.

The Pearson correlation coefficient shows the mutual dependence of the measuring variables meaning in life, religiosity, and attitudes toward death of the participants (Table 2). In total 54 bivariate correlations were calculated, 34 or 62,96% of which are statistically significant.

Table 2. Interactions between the scores on the Meaning in Life Scale, the Religiosity Questionnaire, and the Attitudes toward Death and Dying Questionnaire

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Religious beliefs	–							
2. Ritual religion	.69**	–						
3. Consequences of religiosity on social behavior	.67**	.80**	–					
4. Fear of death	-.30**	-.18*	-.20*	–				
5. Avoidance of death	.33**	-.19*	-.30**	.58**	–			
6. Acceptance of death	.68**	.56**	.56**	.27**	-.25**	–		
7. Acceptance of death as escape	.30**	.33**	.27**	-.05	-.17*	.50**	–	
8. Meaning in life	.32**	.17*	.12	.19*	-.13*	.22**	-.16*	–

*Legend. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

The correlation coefficients of the analyzed variables point to the fact that participants who are more religious, less frightful and who avoid and accept death show the higher degree of meaning in life. So, based on the stochastically significant correlations (of low intensity) within the matrix correlation, one can note that more religious participants accept death to a higher degree and manifest more positive attitudes toward death than the less religious adolescents.

significance the seven predictor dimensions of religiosity (religious beliefs, ritual religion, and consequences of religiosity on social behavior) and attitudes toward death (fear of death, avoidance of death, acceptance of death, acceptance of death as escape) affect the predication of the perception of the criterion variable meaning in life among adolescents, two-block hierarchical regression analysis was conducted and it is shown in Table 3.

With the aim of determining to which degree of

Table 3. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis with meaning in life as criterion

Predictors	B(SE)		ΔR^2	R^2
	1. step	2. step		
<i>1. Step – dimensions of religiosity</i>				
Religious beliefs	.21(.01)**			
Ritual religion	.11(.07)			
Consequences of religiosity on social behavior	-.05(.12)		.08*	.08*
<i>1. Step – Attitudes toward Death and Dying Questionnaire</i>				

Fear of death		-.28(.03)**		
Avoidance of death		-.01(.12)		
Acceptance of death		.10(.04)	.14*	.25**
Acceptance of death as escape		-.33(.05)**		

*Annotation. β = Standardized regression coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of multiple correlation – total contribution of the predictor in explaining criterion variance; ΔR^2 = coefficient of determination – contribution of the additional group of predictors to the explained proportion of the variance. SE = standard error of estimate of the regression parameter β . * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

The first block of predictors of the regression equation included the variables of religiosity (religious beliefs, ritual religion, and consequences of religiosity on social behavior), and the second block included the variables of attitudes toward death and dying (fear of death, avoidance of death, acceptance of death, acceptance of death as escape). The findings of the regression model in the first step show that the variables of religiosity statistically significantly, for 8%, explain the proportion of the variance meaning in life, or the squared deviations of data from the mean. The dimension religious beliefs ($\beta = .21, p \leq .01$) is the only statistically significant partial predictor moving in positive direction, and which explains that the participants with more noticeable religious beliefs have higher probability for the higher degree of the perception of the meaning in life. Including the variables of attitudes toward death and dying into the second step of the regression model, the proportion of the explained variability of the criterion variable increased for additional 14%, so the variables fear of death ($\beta = -.28, p \leq .01$) and acceptance of death as escape ($\beta = -.33, p \leq .01$) turned out to be significant negative partial part in explaining the dependent variable meaning in life. The participants with higher perception of meaning in life fear death and dying less, and perceive to a lesser degree death as escape from painful existence.

On the other hand, in the second step of the analysis, the standard regression coefficients of participants' religious beliefs lost their statistical significance because of the zero correlations, which means that there is suppressor impact and indirect effect of the variables that were not included in this research. In addition, the lack of statistically significant values of beta-ponders for the examined variables is probably influenced by the segment of the criterion variance which matches the variability of other independent variables included in this step, and which they share with the tested dependent variable. So, it should be pointed out that after the control of other variables in the hierarchical regression only certain attitudes toward death and dying, but not religious beliefs, have relevant function in predicting the experience of the

meaning in life. The calculated regression parameters β indicate that individuals who fear death less, also perceive death as escape from painful existence less as such, and therefore manifest higher experience of meaning in life.

Finally, in the entire linear regression model, the coefficient of determination of predictor variables explains just 25% of the total variance, or the sum of the squared deviations of the dependent variable – meaning in life. It should also be noted that this significant proportion of the sum of the squared residual variability, which is the coefficient of the alienation of 75%, has based on the known values of the independent variables remained unexplained since this research did not include in the regression equation the influence of other independent variables on the variability of the meaning in life.

3. Discussion

The aim of this empirical study was to examine the roles of the dimensions of religiosity (religious beliefs, ritual religion, and consequences of religiosity on social behavior) and attitudes toward death and dying in predicting the variability of the perception of the meaning in life within adolescent population.

Applying the model of hierarchical analysis, it was found that the constructs of religiosity and attitudes toward death and dying (as predictors) have partial influence in explaining the criterion variable experiencing the meaning in life. Despite the fact that the linear correlations calculated on our sample point to the statistically significant relations of various independent variables of religiosity and attitudes toward death with the perception of the meaning in life, the findings of the hierarchical multiple regression suggest that only the characteristic attitudes toward death and dying, and not predictor variables of religiosity, are the relevant and independent predictors of the meaning in life. With that in mind, it has been determined that the predictors (fear of death and acceptance of death as escape) are the sole significant partial determinants of the perception of meaning in life. That means that people who fear death less

and have minimal perception of death, and do not view death as escape from painful existence, express higher perception of meaning in life. It should also be noted that including attitudes toward death and dying in the second step of the regression equation generated certain transformations in the size of the standard regression (beta) coefficients of certain predictor variables. After the stochastic control of other variables, the predictor religious beliefs lost its statistical relevance, and after including the separate group of variables of attitudes toward death and dying (fear of death, avoidance of death, acceptance of death, acceptance of death as escape), independent variables fear of death and acceptance of death as escape proved themselves to be significant negative influence on the prediction of the dependent variable meaning in life. These regression findings show that predictor variables attitudes toward death and dying are probably the indirect factors in explaining the correlation between the dimensions of religiosity and the perception of the meaning in life. Finally, the construct of religiosity in the second step of the regression model did not statistically significantly influence the prediction of the perception of the meaning in life, despite the belief that the dimension of religiosity will, along with the attitudes toward death and dying, independently influence the prediction of the meaning in life.

The studies have so far shown that there is a positive direction in the relationship between the experience of the meaning in life and the construct of religiosity, where it is pointed out that one of the main roles of religion is providing the basis for experiencing meaning in life, creating positive attitudes towards death and dying, with for example believing in afterlife, encouraging religious tendencies and religious beliefs (Chang, Chan, & Fong, 2021; To, & Liu, 2021). According to the study (El-Awad, Fathi, Lohaus, Petermann, & Reinelt, 2022), religious beliefs are relevant and effective method for facing death and finding meaning in life, because that is how believers better deal with fear and uncertainty. The definition of the statistically significant influence of the attitudes toward death and dying in predicting the meaning of life matches the study findings (El-Awad, Fathi, Lohaus, Petermann, & Reinelt, 2022) which mention the existential hypothesis that fear of death and acceptance of death are conditioned by (not) finding the meaning in life and (not) achieving unity (El-Awad, Fathi, Vasileva, Petermann, & Reinelt, 2021). Finally, the attitudes toward death and dying much more than religiosity predict the perception of the

meaning in life. The aforementioned information match the hypothesis that a person must face death if they are to achieve meaning in life (Hardy, Nelson, Frandsen, Cazzell, & Goodman, 2022). Insufficiently determined proportion of the variance of the criterion variable of 25% which predictors included in this transversal research explained within the hierarchical linear model can perhaps be explained by the measuring error or the fact that this research did not examine the variability of many other unidentified factors which could influence the prediction of the variance of the dependent variable experiencing the meaning in life during adolescence (for example, the quality of social relations, relationships with friends and family, individual accomplishments, satisfaction with one's own life, academic success, demographic and health variables). So, the small percentage of the explained variability of the criterion variable experiencing meaning in life reveals that other determinants should be examined, including the effect the experiencing meaning in life has on religiosity and social behavior of adolescents. In that way, we would get a more clear insight into the function of the attitudes toward death and dying in predicting the perception of the meaning in life.

The relevance of this cross-sectional study is manifested through the validation of the applied measuring instruments, the predetermined decision to identify the statistical significance of the variance of the perception of the meaning in life of adolescents in the functioning and the quality of life, to examine significant factors which influence the meaning in life in the adolescent population, and compare that to the results of previous research which will probably contribute the theoretical and empirical understanding of the examined phenomena.

However, this transversal research has certain methodological limitations which could have, to an extent, influenced the obtained results and which should be analyzed during the interpretation of the obtained results. First, the sample was not representative of the entire population. It only included the males from the same town, which could have influenced the results. The only method used in the research was the method of self-assessment on all variables, and that could lead to the existence of the methodological variance. Besides self-assessment, future research should include assessments by other people (peers, partners, parents, teachers, etc.). Seeing how this research is correlational, one could have expected inverse results and relations between the examined variables, which

does not allow us to reach the conclusion regarding the cause-effect codependence.

In addition, one should keep in mind the relatively low reliability of the subscale of the neutral acceptance of death ($\alpha = .48$) and the fact that we were unable to use it in stochastic analysis. Future empirical studies should also analyze the functions of other religions because our sample included 94% of Serbian orthodox Christians, so the analysis of other religions was just partial. In addition, this research included adolescents who are in late period of adolescence. That is why we recommend that future research (longitudinal and experimental) include representative accidental and more heterogeneous sample of participants of both sexes and of different ages: early, middle, and post adolescence. It would also be interesting to compare the findings between the participants that belong to religious communities (for which we believe are more religious) and those who do not. In that way, we would probably see greater correlation between the measured variables on the sample of participants who belong to a religious community, and so the dimension religiosity would prove itself to be better or weaker predictor of experiencing meaning in life. Finally, the aforementioned methodological limitations revealed that the obtained results cannot be generalized and applied to the entire adolescent population in Serbia.

4. Conclusion

The high internal consistency was found while testing the Meaning in Life Scale, the Religiosity Questionnaire and, the Attitudes toward Death and Dying Questionnaire on our sample ($N = 218$) which means that these measuring instruments are valid and can be used on Serbian adolescent population. The calculated Pearson correlation coefficients in our transversal study show the higher degree of meaning in life is manifested with participants who are more religious, fear less, and avoid death, and with those who accept death. The findings of the hierarchical regression analysis have, with the obtained value of 25% for the coefficient of determination, revealed the predictive value for meaning in life in variables fear of death and acceptance of death as escape. However the significant segment of the residual variance remained unexplained, so our recommendation for future longitudinal research to examine some other predictor variables such as quality of social relations, relationships with friends and family, individual accomplishments, satisfaction with one's own life, academic success, demographic and health variables, because they can probably have statistically significant

influence in explaining the dependent variable experience of the meaning in life among high school seniors. Finally, the results obtained in this research point to the significance of the discovered direction and the intensity of the perception of adolescents towards the dimensions of religiosity and attitudes toward death and dying in predicting the meaning in life among high school seniors.

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