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Death Attitudes in Clergy Work: Death Attitudes and Their Linkage to Work Orientation and Wellbeing among the Finnish Clergy

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DEATH ATTITUDES IN CLERGY WORK – Death attitudes and their linkage to work orientation and wellbeing among the Finnish clergy

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the focus is on death attitudes among the clergy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and their role in clergy work. The aim is to find out whether these attitudes have any practical relevance in clergy work and to see if the death attitudes are linked to the work orientation and wellbeing among the clergy. The death attitudes are measured by the Death Attitude Profile-Revised DAP-R (N=650). The results show that death attitudes have a multifaceted role in clergy work. Negative death attitudes were linked to an outward motivational orientation in work and lower levels of work wellbeing, and positive, on the other hand, to lower levels of burnout and higher levels of work engagement. These results show the importance of the competence related to death in clergy work and these notions should be acknowledged in the education and further education of the clergy.

Keywords: death anxiety; fear of death, clergy, Death Attitude Profile-Revised; work orientation, work wellbeing
1. Introduction

In this study, the focus is on fear of death and other death attitudes among ordained clergy. It is a group of people who, likewise nurses and doctors, must constantly deal with death issues in their work. The interest of this study lies in the connection between death attitudes and clergy work: how do their fear of death and other death attitudes link to work orientation and work wellbeing among the clergy?

Wellbeing at work among the clergy has been widely studied. Previous research shows that members of the clergy typically find their work fulfilling, meaningful, and satisfying, but at the same time their work contains many potential stress-factors (e.g., Beebe 2007; Mueller, and McDuff 2004; Fletcher 1990; Grosch and Olsen 2000; Grossley 2002; Van der Ven 1998; Lewis, Turton, and Francis 2004; Smith 2007; Lee and Iverson-Gilbert 2003). Factors that clergy tend to find burdensome include, among others, long and unpredictable working hours, the feeling of being constantly on call, emotional labor, an increasing amount of bureaucracy, work overload, role ambiguity, doctrinal conflicts, difficulties in combining private and working life and unsatisfactory financial compensation (e.g. Hill, Darling, and Raimondi 2003; Hang-yue, Foley and Loi 2007; Beebe 2007; Tomic and Evers 2003; Lee and Iverson-Gilbert 2003; Foss 2002; Niemelä 2005; 2007; 2014; Tervo-Niemelä 2016b). The high levels of emotional labor in clergy work are to a great extent linked to having to constantly meet people with their whole life scale, not just in happiness, but in deep sorrow, misery and death. This need to face people with their whole life scale is regarded both as one of the most rewarding and burdening part of the work by the clergy. Especially the need to face people repeatedly with illness, pain, crisis and death are often reported as one of the most burdening areas of the work (Niemelä 2015, 43-44, 52). The clergy have to face death, if not daily, at least mostly in a weekly basis in funerals, when meeting grieving family members and in pastoral care more broadly. The work of the clergy comprises visits among seriously ill people and people near death in hospitals and homes. The competence related to the whole life scale of
parishioners has been acknowledged also in the key competence documents of the clergy: the
competence to encounter people, be genuinely interested in other people and respect others is
regarded as one of the core competence areas in church work. The clergy need to have capacity to
face people in various phases of their life course and to support people in their various life
occasions and in crises. The ability to deal with anxiety related to death and dying among
parishioners is also regarded as one of the core areas of this competence. (The Institute for
Advanced Training 2010, 23-26.)

Work wellbeing is a broad concept which can be viewed from different angles (see e.g. Danna and
Griffin 1999), partly because of it, it is also an ambiguous and controversial research area
(Virolainen 2012, 9). It has been measured using various scales. One of the most widely used is
Maslach’ Burn-out Inventory, which concentrates on measuring work wellbeing from the
perspective of burnout. It has especially been used among caring professionals. Maslach describes
burnout as “a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced
personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some
capacity” (Maslach 1993, 19). When Adams et al. (2017) compared a total of 84 studies using
comparable versions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) for clergy for social workers,
counselors and teachers whose work consist of similar emotional intensity and labor and for police
and emergency personnel since their work consist of similar kind of unpredictability and stress-
related psychological arousal, they found out that the clergy in general exhibit moderate rates of
burnout that are lower than in a large U.S. sample and the study suggest that clergy generally cope
well. The burnout rates among clergy are similar to those of social workers and teachers, and better
than among police and emergency personnel, but worse than those of counsellors. (Adams et el.
2017) Similar results have been found among the Finnish clergy: they were found to experience
generally lower levels of burnout than different occupational groups on the average (Tervo-Niemelä
2018, 62).
The recent research highlights the comprehensive view of work wellbeing, and according to these views it is important not to concentrate only on illbeing at work, but focus more on wellbeing (Virolainen 2012, 9). One of the widely used scales which focuses on wellbeing at work, is Utrecht work engagement scale (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004; Hakanen 2009). Work engagement is regarded as the assumed opposite of burn out (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004, 4). Work engagement is defined as follows: ‘Engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior.’” (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004, 4-5). The previous research shows that the clergy in general tend to have higher scores on work engagement than different occupational groups in general (Tervo-Niemelä 2018, 65).

Studies on work orientation among the clergy typically focus either on the motivational grounds of the clergy work and concepts like calling or their orientation and focus in their work. Previous studies among clergy show that for most of the clergy work is as a calling from God (see e.g. Zikmund, Lummis & Chang 1998, 95-97; Tervo-Niemelä 2016a; 2016b) and this calling strongly serves as a supporting factor in their work and a factor that makes the clergy more committed to their work (Niemelä 2014) while conflicts with responding the call increases the likelihood to leave ministry (Shaunt 2018). Practical clergy work is performed in different areas (The Institute for Advanced Training 2010, 23-26) and clergy members with the broadest work orientation and wide interests in their work are most able to deal with the multifaceted demands of church work. A multiple orientation seems to serve as a strong supporting factor at work, and by being oriented to a broad range of activities, they also enjoy more potential sources of support and more joyful experiences at work while those with generally passive were orientation in their work experienced the least satisfaction and the least support (Tervo-Niemelä 2016b).
In this article work wellbeing and work orientation among clergy are studied in linkage to their fear of death and other death attitudes. The concept of fear of death or death anxiety or death attitudes are far from unitary (Collett and Lester 1969; Thorson and Powell 1994). When fearing death, people may fear many things, among others the dying process and possible pain or helplessness related to it, the fear of dying of self or of dying of others and or the death of others and the loss of loved ones or what comes after death (see Wong et al. 1994; Thorson and Powell 1994; Lester 1994). There are also several commonly used scales that measure death attitudes (e.g. DAS, DAP-R). The present study relies on a multidimensional measure of death attitudes, that is, the Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP–R; Gesser, Wong, & Reker, 1987; Wong et al. 1994). The Death Attitude Profile-Revised, DAP-R was developed to measure a wide spectrum of death-related attitudes including both negative as well as positive attributes of mortality (Wong et al. 1994).

The five dimensions consisting altogether of 32 items, are the Fear of Death, the Death Avoidance, the Approach Acceptance, the Escape Acceptance and the Neutral Acceptance. The Fear of Death subscale measures feelings of fear evoked by confrontations with death. The Death Avoidance subscale measures avoidance of thinking or talking about death. The third subscale, the Approach Acceptance, measures the extent to which one views death as a gateway to a happy afterlife; and a positive outlook on death is rooted in the belief in a happy afterlife. The Escape Acceptance subscale measures the extent to which one views death as an escape from a painful existence and as a welcome alternative to a life full of pain and misery, and the final, fifth subscale, the Neutral Acceptance, measures the extent to which one views death as a reality that is neither feared nor welcomed, and death is seen as an integral part of life (Wong et al. 1994).

Previous study using DAP-R among the clergy revealed that the clergy tend to have high competence to deal with death issues, as is shown in their low level of fear and avoidance and high levels of positive death attitudes. They tend to regard death as a neutral part of life and have high scores on Approach and Escape Acceptance. Younger clergy tend to fear more as well as those who
have doubts in their faith. Furthermore, the results showed that the two negative death attitude subscales (Fear of Death and Death Avoidance) were more strongly correlated among religious professionals than has been found in other studies, and the same applies for the positive death attitude subscales (Approach Acceptance and Escape Acceptance). At the same time Death Avoidance and Neutral Acceptance had a stronger negative correlation. These differences suggest that the positive and negative attitudes towards death are more clearly separated and less mixed among the clergy than other groups. However, this study does not explain what kind of consequences these attitudes have in clergy work. (Tervo-Niemelä 2020.) Previous research shows that death attitudes among nurses – who likewise the clergy need to deal with death and dying in their work – are linked with their work attitudes: e.g. fear of death and death avoidance were negatively correlated with attitudes towards the care of dying patients, which imply that nurses may use the avoidance of care to cope with their own personal fears of death (Braun et al. 2010). Furthermore, age and nursing experience predicted nurses’ attitudes towards death: those with more work experience tended to have more positive attitudes towards death (Lange et al. 2008) as well as those with current contacts with dying patients (Rooda et al. 1999). However, the connection between death attitudes and wellbeing at work and work orientation among the clergy has not been previously researched.

2. Method

This article focuses on death attitudes measured by the Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R) and their linkage to work orientation and work wellbeing among the clergy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF). The research questions are the following:

1. In which ways are the death attitudes connected with work orientation among the clergy?
2. In which ways are the death attitudes connected with work wellbeing among the clergy?
The data was collected by a questionnaire that was sent to members of the Clergy Union of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF). ELCF is a majority church with 70 percent of the population belonging to it (2018). The questionnaire was sent by email to all those members who are in work life in January 2018: the retired clergy were not included in the survey. Altogether 650 ordained members of clergy responded (27 percent of all the ordained members of the clergy union). 52.2 percent of the respondents were female, 47.4 percent were male and 0.5 answered something else. Of all the clergy employed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland in 2018, 47.9 percent were female. This means that women are very slightly overrepresented in the data. Of the respondents, 10.9 percent were under 35 years old, 23.5 percent 35-44, 25.8 percent 45-54 and 39.7 over 55 years. 70 percent were working in local parishes either as a vicar, a chaplain or a parish pastor. Other were working as hospital chaplains, family advisers, in other tasks in parish or parish union, working in a diocese, church council or in a Christian organization or in other tasks.

The questionnaire consisted of questions related to work wellbeing, work orientation and attitudes towards death, and several other areas that are not of interest of this article (including attitude towards several up-to-date questions, e.g. same-sex relationship, female leadership).

To measure death attitudes, *the Death Attitude Profile-Revised, DAP-R* (Wong et al., 1994) consisting of 32 items is used. For each of the 32 items, the respondent is asked to respond to each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7 where 1=“strongly disagree” and 7=“strongly agree”. The expected five dimensions and the items belonging to each of them are the following: Fear of Death (7 items; items 1, 2, 7, 18, 20, 21, 32); Death Avoidance (5 items; items: 3, 10, 12, 19, 26); Approach Acceptance (10 items; items: 4, 8, 13, 15, 16, 22, 25, 27, 28, 31); Escape Acceptance (5 items; items: 5, 9, 11, 23, 29), Neutral Acceptance (5 items; 6, 14, 17, 24, 30). The alpha coefficients for the subscales among the clergy were the following: Fear of Death .85; Death Avoidance .85; Approach Acceptance .86; Escape Acceptance .81; Neutral Acceptance .62. Compared to other studies, the internal consistency of the subscales was mostly very similar: only
the reliability of the Approach acceptance subscale is slightly lower than in other studies. The reliability of the Neutral Acceptance is lowest, like in other studies (Ho et al. 2010; Clements and Rooda 2000; Wong et al. 1994).

The mean values and standard deviations among the clergy are seen on Table 1 (more of death attitudes among the clergy see Tervo-Niemelä 2020). In the table 1, the death attitudes that were originally on scale 1 to 7 are categorized into four groups: those with low values (mean value 1.00-2.50), fairly low (mean value 2.51-4.00), fairly high (mean value 4.01-5.50), and high (mean value 5.51-7.00). The table shows that most members of the clergy have a low level of fear of death, a very level of death avoidance, but high level of approach acceptance and escape acceptance.

### Table 1. Death attitudes among the clergy; scale 1 to 7 where 1 = “strongly disagree” and 7 = “strongly agree”. N = 650

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Low (mean value &lt;2.50) %</th>
<th>Fairly low (mean value 2.51-4.00) %</th>
<th>Fairly high (mean value 4.01-5.50) %</th>
<th>High (mean value &gt;5.50) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Death</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death Avoidance</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach Acceptance</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape Acceptance</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Acceptance</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the deviation of the death attitudes varies strongly depending on which attitude is in question and the deviation is far from even the clergy were grouped into quartiles based on their responses on the DAP-R: the first quartile consisting of those 25 percent of the clergy who score lowest on each of the five subscales, the second and third of those in between and the fourth quartile of those 25 percent who score highest on each of the five subscales. These four quartiles are later used when
comparing the work wellbeing and work orientation among those with different death attitudes (using the analysis of variance, ANOVA or crosstabulation).

**Table 2. The four quartiles of death attitudes among the clergy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Lowest quartile (0-25%)</th>
<th>Second quartile (25-50%)</th>
<th>Third quartile (50-75%)</th>
<th>Fourth quartile (75-100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of death</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>1.00-2.00</td>
<td>2.01-2.71</td>
<td>2.72-3.70</td>
<td>3.71-6.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach Acceptance</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>1.30-4.80</td>
<td>4.81-5.40</td>
<td>5.41-6.09</td>
<td>6.10-7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape Approach</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>1.00-4.20</td>
<td>4.21-5.00</td>
<td>5.01-5.99</td>
<td>6.00-7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death Avoidance</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>1.00-1.00</td>
<td>1.01-1.60</td>
<td>1.61-1.99</td>
<td>2.00-4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Acceptance</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>2.40-5.40</td>
<td>5.41-5.80</td>
<td>5.81-6.39</td>
<td>6.40-7.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Work wellbeing* is measured from two aspects: burnout and work engagement. To measure burnout, *Maslach’ Burn-out Inventory* with 25 items was used (scale 0=never, 1=a few times a year or less, 2=once a month or less; 3=a few times a month, 4=once a week, 5=a few times a week, 6=every day). It consists of three expected dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion; Cynicism; and Personal Accomplishment. The *Exhaustion* scale assesses feelings of exhaustion, in general (higher scores indicate higher degrees of burnout). The *Cynicism* scale assesses the feelings of indifference or a distant attitude towards work; it represents dysfunctional coping with job strains (higher scores indicate higher degrees of burnout). The *Professional Efficacy* scale assesses an individual's feelings of effectiveness at work (lower scores indicate higher degrees of burnout). The expected three factor solution was confirmed by factor analysis, and the reliability of the three dimensions are the following: Exhaustion: Cronbach’s alfa = .91; Cynicism: Cronbach’s alfa = .85; Professional Efficacy: Cronbach’s alfa = .82.

The *work engagement* among the clergy was measured by using the short, 9-item version of *Utrecht work engagement scale* (UWES-9; Schaufeli & Bakker 2004; Hakanen 2009). Work engagement is the assumed opposite of burn out (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004, 4). Work engagement is defined as follows: ‘Engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to
a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior.” Work engagement scale consist of three dimensions: 1) Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working and the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. 2) Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. 3) Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly, and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (items 6, 8, 9) (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004, 4-5). For each item the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they experience such feelings on a scale 0 to 6 (e.g., 0 = never, 6 = daily). The three subscales were confirmed by factor analysis, and reliability of the three dimensions among the clergy are the following: vigor .88; dedication .90 and absorption .81.

To measure work orientation two scales are used. The first one measures the attitude towards work on a scale modified from a scale used by Kahn & Wiener (1967, 209; used e.g. by Salmi 2001, 60; Niemelä 2014). The scale measures various motivational grounds: whether one simply works for income or whether one is motivated by deeper motives such as inner satisfaction or by calling. Based on earlier research among the clergy the scale was modified and better adjusted to the work orientation of the clergy. The scale used consists of the following items: I mostly work for my income; I find it important to proceed in my career and get more responsibilities; I get satisfaction from my work; I find it important to help and serve others in my work; I can fulfil myself in my work; For me work is a calling given by God; For me work is the mission of my life, I am fully dedicated. For each of these the respondent was asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree on a scale of 1 to 5 (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), and also to choose which one of the statements best describes their attitude towards their work. The final scale that the work orientation was measured by the clergy, measures which areas of work the clergy find
important in their work. In the survey the clergy were asked, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not important at all, 5 = very important), to rate how important they regarded 31 different aspects of clergy’s work (e.g., Divine Service, pastoral counseling, helping people), regardless of where they were actually working. This instrument was constructed on the basis of both earlier research and the different areas of the clergy’s work identified in the ELCF’s *Core Competence in Church Work* (The Institute for Advanced Training 2010, 23-26). According to the instrument, the following aspects of church work were regarded as most important: church rites (82% regarded them as very important), encountering people (81%), helping people (75%), helping those in most need (73%), confirmation work (68%), pastoral care (66%), Divine Services (64%), proclaiming the Word of God (63%), and prayer life (56%) (see more Tervo-Niemelä 2018, 45).

In addition, the respondents were asked several background questions, including age, gender, and the specific work task where they were assigned. The statistical analyses were carried out with IBM SPSS Statistic 25. In order to analyze the linkage between death attitudes and work orientation and work wellbeing Pearson correlation co-efficient used and the analyses of variance (ANOVA).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Death Attitudes and Work Orientation

Previous research has revealed that the clergy tend to experience lower levels of fear of death or avoidance of death, and on the other hand, score higher positive death attitudes. The aim of this article is to find out whether these attitudes have any practical relevance in clergy work and to see if the death attitudes are linked to the work orientation and wellbeing among the clergy.

The analysis using Pearson correlation co-efficient reveals that death attitudes are in many ways linked to both work orientation (see Table 2). Both negative death attitudes, Fear of Death and Death Anxiety, are statistically significantly linked to an outward attitude towards work when the
clergy work mostly because of their income. In addition, Death Avoidance has a negative correlation with finding satisfaction from work, finding important to help and serve others in their work or regarding work as mission given by God. Even though the correlation coefficients are low (.10*-12**), the comparison of responses of the clergy in four quartiles show that they have practical relevance. For example, one third (33.5%) of those who are most death-fearing (belong to group IV) agree fully or to some extent that they mostly work for their income, while 18.6-26.0% of those in other three groups (groups I-III). Furthermore, 39.6% of the most death-avoiding fully agree that their work is a calling from God while 51.0%-54.5% of those in the two groups with lowest death avoidance (group I and II).

These negative death attitudes do not have any statistically significant positive correlation with any of the different areas of church work, all statistically significant correlations are negative, meaning that negative death attitudes are not only linked to an outward motivation towards the work (income-orientation), but also to a low orientation towards various work tasks in clergy work. This means that the more the member of the clergy fears death or tries to avoid thinking of death, the less likely she or he sees various of work tasks in clergy work as important.

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficients for death attitudes and work orientation among the clergy. N=621.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MOTIVATIONAL GROUNDS</th>
<th>IMPORTANCE OF…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEAR OF DEATH</strong></td>
<td>I do my work mostly because of income .12**</td>
<td>Missionary Work -.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Importance of Prayer -.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I find satisfaction from my work -.10**</td>
<td>Prayer life -.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do my work mostly because of income .10*</td>
<td>Encountering people -.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is important for me to help and serve others in my work -.10*</td>
<td>Co-operation with civil sector -.12***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My work is a calling from God -.09*</td>
<td>Leadership -.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media and communication -.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Divine Service -.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christian education -.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family work -.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning and development of my own work -.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEATH AVOIDANCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPROACH ACCEPTANCE</strong></td>
<td>My work is a calling from God .40***</td>
<td>Proclaiming the Word of God .35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work is a mission of my life and I am totally devoted to it .22***</td>
<td>Evangelization .33***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is important to me to help and serve other people in my work .22***</td>
<td>Reading and teaching the Bible .32***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do my work mostly because of income -.18***</td>
<td>Missionary work .30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Divine Service .23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Confirmation work .19***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christian education .17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pastoral Care .15***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCAPE ACCEPTANCE</td>
<td>Neutral Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| My work is calling from God .12**
It is important for me to help and serve others in my work .10*
Work is a mission of my life and I am totally devoted to it .09* | I can fulfill myself in my work .11**
It is important for me to help and serve others in my work .09* |
| Pastoral Care .17***
Prayer Life .15***
Proclaiming the Word of God .12**
Missionary Work .12**
Reading and teaching the Bible .12**
Divine Service .10*
Helping others .09*
Evangelization .09*
Church Rituals .08*
Encountering people .08*
Working for Justice -.08* | Working for the rights of the minorities .21***
Working for Justice .19***
Speaking for Equal Rights .19***
Encountering people .19***
Planning and development of my own work .18*
Sustainable development and ecological responsibility .17***
Helping people in most need .15***
Supervision of trainees and mentoring .14***
Media and communication .14***
Co-operation with civil sector .14***
Church Rituals .12***
Family work .12***
Societal Influencing .12***
Leadership .12***
Activating volunteers .09*
Musical activities .08*
Evangelization -.15*** |
| Encountering people .14***
Church rituals .12**
Family work .12**
Helping others .09*
Planning and development of my own work .09*
Working for Justice -.08*
Speaking for Equal rights -.08* |  |

Approach Acceptance and Escape Acceptance on the other hand are linked to Divine Calling orientation. The connection between Approach Acceptance – seeing death as a gateway to a happy afterlife – and regarding one’s work as calling from God is especially strong (.40***). There is also a very visible difference when the responses are compared more in detail: 68% of the quartile with highest value in Approach Acceptance (group IV) sees their work as a calling from God, while only 23.7% of those in the lowest quartile. At the same time the connection between Approach Acceptance and income orientation is negative. Approach Acceptance is very broadly connected to the importance of various areas of church work, especially to those measuring traditional “function” aspects of church work (function – performance differentiation, see Beyer 1994). These include e.g.
proclaiming the Word of God, evangelization, reading and teaching the Bible, missionary work, Divine services and pastoral care (other connections, see Table 3). Escape Acceptance has a positive connection to most of these, but slightly weaker. Neutral Acceptance is linked to getting fulfilment from work and helping orientation in work. When it comes to various aspects of church work Neutral Acceptance is interestingly linked to the importance of various “performance” aspects of church work, especially working for the rights of the minorities and for justice and speaking for equal rights and speaking for sustainable development and ecological responsibility and other areas of societal influence.

3.2 Death Attitudes and Work Wellbeing

When it comes to work wellbeing, the results show that negative death attitudes are linked to higher levels of burn out and lower levels of work engagement. Fear of Death is linked to exhaustion (.14***), cynicism (.16***), and lower levels of professional efficacy (-.17***), vigor (-.13***), dedication (-.10*) and absorption (-.10*). Death avoidance is likewise linked to cynicism (.11*), and lower levels of lower levels of professional efficacy (-.20***), vigor (-.16***), and absorption (-12*). The mean values and the difference in means (ANOVA) of these two dimensions (in quartiles) are presented in Figures 1 and 2, which show that the connection between these negative death attitudes and work wellbeing is most cases clearly linear. The work wellbeing is lowest among those fearing most or avoiding death most; they are those with most exhaustion and cynical attitude to work and with lowest level of professional efficacy, vigor, dedication or absorption in work. The quartile with highest fear of death (group IV) differs statistically significantly (at least on a level .05 using Tukey Post-Hoc test) from those with lowest level of fear of death (group I) in their exhaustion, cynicism, professional efficacy, vigor, dedication and absorption.
When it comes to death avoidance, those with highest avoidance (group IV) differ statistically significantly (at least on level .05 using Tukey Post-Hoc test) from groups I and II in their cynicism and dedication; and from group I in their professional efficacy, vigor and absorption.
The linkage between positive death attitudes and work wellbeing is statistically significant in some areas of work wellbeing. Approach Acceptance has a positive connection to wellbeing at work, it links to slightly professional efficacy (.08*), vigor (.12**) and dedication (.11**) at work, and lower levels of cynicism (-.11*). However, when the analysis of variance is used, there is statistically significant differences only in professional efficacy (F=3.87, sig.=.009), but also here the connection is not clearly linear.

Escape Acceptance links to lower levels of work wellbeing measured by exhaustion (.17***), and cynicism (.09*), meaning that those who fear death or try to avoid thinking or talking about it or those who tend to see death as an escape from earthly sufferings, tend to suffer from burn out symptoms at work,. When the differences in means are compared, there is statistically significant difference only
in Exhaustion \((F=6.14, \text{ sig}<.001)\). Those with highest Escape Acceptance, differ statistically significantly from all other three groups (using Tukey Post Hoc test), meaning that those who see death as welcomed relieve from the burdens of this world, tend to feel more exhausted in their work (mean value 2.08, compared to 1.51-1.65 in other three groups).

Neutral Acceptance of death also links to wellbeing at work: it links to higher levels of professional efficacy \((.15^{***})\), vigor \((.14^{**})\) and dedication \((.13^{**})\) and lower levels of cynicism \((- .11^*)\) at work. However, the linkage between Neutral Acceptance and cynicism as well as vigor is not fully linear as the Figure 3 reveals, but the lowest quartile of Neutral Acceptance clearly suffers most of cynicism at work and feel least vigor. Those with highest level of Neutral Acceptance of death, on the other hand, experience highest levels of professional efficacy, vigor and dedication at work. The group with highest level of Neutral Acceptance differ statistically significantly (using Tukey Post-Hoc test) from those with lowest level of Neutral Acceptance (group I) in their vigor, dedication and professional efficacy.

**Figure 3. Neutral Acceptance of death in quartiles and work wellbeing measured by Maslach’s burnout inventory and Utrecht Work Engagement scale among the Finnish clergy; mean values and the difference in means (ANOVA). \(N=631\).**
6. Conclusion

In this article, the death attitudes and their linkage to work orientation and work wellbeing have been measured and analyzed by using Death Attitude Profile-Revised among religious professionals, the clergy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The results reveal that death attitudes have practical relevance in clergy work. They have a multifaceted linkage to clergy’s work orientation and work wellbeing. Negative death attitudes link to an outward motivational orientation in work and lower levels of work wellbeing. Furthermore, negative death attitudes tend to link to lower levels of importance of various areas of church work. On the other hand, positive death attitudes link to an inner motivational orientation (calling and helping orientation and seeing work as a mission of one’s life) and a broad orientation towards various tasks in church work. Approach and Escape Acceptance link especially to various “function”-aspects of church work, work task where transcendental is in a key role and the orientation is towards the mission and spiritual tasks of religion. On the other hand, Neutral Acceptance links especially to various “performance”-aspects of church work, where the orientation is towards applying religion to social problems. This means that those who tend to see death as a natural part of life tend to highlight the importance of various societal tasks of religion: working for the rights of minorities, justice and equal rights.

The results also showed that death attitudes are linked to work wellbeing. Those with negative death attitudes, fear and avoidance, are likely to experience higher levels of burnout symptoms and lower levels of engagement in work. Positive death attitudes including seeing death as a natural part of life, on the other hand, are linked to lower levels of burnout and higher levels of work engagement.

The results in general show the importance of the competence related to issues of death in clergy work: if a member of the clergy fears death or avoids it, she/he obviously lacks something of the key competence needed in clergy work, and this is likely to lead to burnout or lower engagement in work. The uncertainty related to death issues obviously brings extra emotional labor in work. If the clergyman or clergywoman him/herself feels anxiety in the face of death, the ability to support
parish members in the midst of severe illness or loss of loved ones is most likely weaker and these tasks are more burdening. Partly the anxiety related to death is linked to uncertainties related to faith issues among the clergy themselves. These notions should be acknowledged in the education and further education of the clergy, and the clergy and students should be given more chances to reflect their own uncertainties and fears and given chances for personal growth and growth in faith.
REFERENCES


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