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TO THE QUESTION OF ATTITUDE TO DEATH OF MIDDLE-AGED PEOPLE DURING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

A person's attitude to death is influenced by the critical situations he encounters in his life. The war, which began in Ukraine at the beginning of 2022, made people's feelings about death relevant, because death has become everyday reality in the lives of Ukrainians. The purpose of the study is to determine the peculiarities of middle-aged people attitude to the phenomenon of death during the war in Ukraine. A sample of subjects (N=76) who previously participated in our research in 2019 and 2020 during the coronavirus infection. The age of the subjects varies as follows: Me=44.00; min=35.00; max=55.00. Research methods: the "Attitude to Death" method (I.Yu. Kulagina, L.V. Senkevich), the "Attitude to Death Scale" method by D.V. Hardt, Metaphor of Personal Death technique – the Revised Death Fantasy Scale (RDFS) J. McLennan. It was determined that the attitude towards death in people of the studied middle-aged group during the war is ambivalent with a certain deviation towards the positive. The studied group is characterized by an average level of stress resistance, which is associated with thoughts about death. The choice of metaphors about death is determined by the degree of attitude positivity towards death: a pessimistic attitude towards death is associated with negative thoughts about death, fixation on its external side, avoidance of contact with death. Lack of seeing a positive perspective in death leads to pessimism and negative thoughts. An optimistic attitude towards death is associated with the rare occurrence of negative thoughts about own death, perception of death as a necessary aspect of being, openness to contact with death. Significant differences were found between believers and atheists on the indicator of positive thoughts about their own death: believers showed a high level of acceptance of death. Significant differences in attitudes toward death between men and women were also identified: men have a more positive and "black" humor to thoughts about death.

Key words: *attitude to death, war, middle-aged group, metaphors of death*

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Introduction. Thoughts about death can become relevant for people who find themselves in a critical situation, namely, in a war situation, which the citizens of Ukraine faced in the winter of 2022. Despite the fact that every person understands that at some point his life is coming to an end, still many people are not ready to face death, especially when war unexpectedly takes the lives of military and civilians regardless of their age, marital status, attitude to religion, etc.

Within the framework of psychological studies of attitude to death, the definitions of human experiences related to death are relevant. For representatives of the existential direction of L. Binswanger, D. Bujenthal, R. May, V. Frankl, E. Fromm, I. Yalom and others, the encounter with death is one of the possibilities of personal growth in a person. Thus, I. Yalom (2020) determined that situations in which a person encounters death are most often associated with "awakening experiences" that lead to a better awareness of existence and fill it with meaning, the fear of death (and understanding of this fear) forces a person to correctly allocate his own time and energy. (Yalom, 2020, p. 48). But thoughts about death do not always have a positive meaning and contribute to personal growth, the concept of death is also associated with the fear of death - anxiety about thoughts about own death (ceasing own existence) or death of loved ones (Kulagina, 2013; Morris Trainor et al., 2019, Freud, 1963).

We believe that war leads to increased anxiety about own death and fear of death. It becomes important to study the attitude to death of the middle-aged cohort, which is the most vulnerable to the above-mentioned phenomena. For this age group, as research by Levinson and Gooden (1985) proves, a midlife crisis of personality is characteristic, which is accompanied by a number of intrapersonal conflicts, in particular an existential conflict, which leads to thoughts about life and death. In turn, this conflict makes the problem of attitude to death relevant for middle-aged people, and its unfolding during the war - important to study.

Analysis of recent publications.

The topic of attitude to death was discussed in the works of many researchers. Modern works were analyzed according to two criteria: the first - attitude to death in different groups of subjects, the second - attitude to death and fear of death during war. R. Neimeyer and others (2004) examined death anxiety in different age and occupational groups, in relation to physical and mental health, religiosity and terror. Forther and Neimeyer (2010) analyzed the relationship between death anxiety and age, showing that a higher level of death anxiety with increasing age is associated with the presence of psychological and physical problems and low ego integrity.

I. Fischer and E. Secinti (2022) investigated the relationship between religious orientation and attitudes

toward death: intrinsic religiosity was associated with positive attitudes toward death in contrast to extrinsic religiosity. Morris Trainor and others. (2019) showed that experiencing death of a loved one in the future increases private religious behavior, and thoughts about death lead to an increase in a person's religiosity.

K. Myronchak (2012) pointed out that the attitude towards death, in which fear of death is present, leads to negative and positive consequences: either destructive personal changes, or opportunities provided by the fear of death in the form of a resource.

In a study by G. Sinoff (2017), it was shown that middle-aged people have the highest level of anxiety about death compared to young and elderly people: death anxiety reaches its peak precisely in adulthood and decreases with increasing age, elderly people fear of the process dying, not dying.

The topic of attitude to death during war was first announced in Z. Freud's essay "Reflections on War and Death". According to Freud, one of the main factors contributing to the mental suffering of people during war is a change in their attitude towards death. Although people realize that death is the end result of their lives, in reality, they cannot imagine their own death during war, and they are deeply shocked when it happens to other people. War robs people of the ability to ignore death as people (military and civilian) die by the thousands (Freud, 1963). Freud emphasizes that war takes away the influence of civilization on human mind and forces it to return to its original state (inanimate, inorganic), after all, the desire for death is present in any person, which is associated with an unconscious desire for self-destruction. Freud concludes the essay with the thought: if you wish to endure life, be prepared to die (Freud, 1963, c.133).

Myronchak and Dvornyk (2021) studied attitudes toward death and means of psychological assistance to military and civilians in the conditions of a hybrid war in Ukraine. A typology death fear models and behavioral strategies of an individual in the situation of encountering death was developed: for a military, a common variant of attitude towards death is constructive practices of integration of the fear of death, such as ritualization, investment and awareness; for the civilian population - normalization, ignoring and substitution (Myronchak, Dvornyk, 2021)

The last ten years of the war in Afghanistan have led to a deterioration in the mental health of military and civilian population: worse mental health has been associated with a negative attitude towards death, and religious and spiritual practices have been used to overcome this condition (Cardozo et al., 2004).

A study of attitudes towards death during the war in the Balkans found the following: Bosnian refugees who remained in the region exhibited mental disorders and negative attitudes towards death; in Kosovo Albanians,

there was a significant linear decline in mental health and social functioning with an increase in the number of fatal events; high levels of posttraumatic and grief symptoms were reported in the Serbian ethnic minority (Mollica et al., 1999; Mollica et al., 2001; Rose, 1994; Salama, Spiegel, Van Dyke, Phelps, Wilkinson, 2000; Westermeyer, 2000; Smith, Perrin, Yule, Hacam, Stuvland, 2002).

In the studies of Granville-Chapman (2004), De Jong et al. (2004) and De Jong et al. (2007) among the Chechen population, asylum seekers in Great Britain, showed the influence of the death factor itself, which the subjects encountered during the war, on attitudes towards death. Coping strategies such as prayer, talking, keeping busy, and seeking support from family members helped to deal with feelings about death.

Thus, the results of research on attitudes to death during wartime indicate that attitudes toward death itself are aggravated and even affect physical and mental health: increased mortality during wartime is a factor in the emergence of mental disorders.

The purpose of the study: to determine the peculiarities of middle-aged people attitude to the phenomenon of death during the war in Ukraine.

Research methods: the "Attitude to Death" method (I.Yu. Kulagina, L.V. Senkevich), the "Attitude to Death Scale" method by D.V. Hardt, J. McLennan's Metaphor of Personal Death – the Revised Death Fantasy Scale (RDFS) method and methods of

mathematical and statistical data processing (U-Mann-Whitney test for independent samples and Spearman's correlation coefficient).

Study sample. A group of 76 subjects who previously participated in our research in 2019 and 2020 during the coronavirus infection took part in the study (Yanovska et al., 2020). The sample consists of 55 women (72.3% of the entire sample) and 21 men (27.7% of the entire sample). The age of the subjects varies: Me=44.00; min=35.00; max=55.00. The research was conducted using a Google form, in which all the above methods were presented. According to the research procedure, the results obtained during the war in Ukraine were compared with the data of the same group during Covid 19.

The results of the research.

Among the answers to the question according to the "Attitude to death" method, options that belong to the scale of optimistic attitude to death prevail (53%), those that belong to the scale of pessimistic attitude prevail (47%). Data on the distribution of scales are presented in Figure 1. Similar results were recorded during our study (Yanovska, Turenko & Timchenko, 2020) during the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, due to the impossibility of a complete reproduction of the sample of the past study, we indicate only the possibility of the invariance of the frequency, and not the absolute fact of the invariance of the frequency.

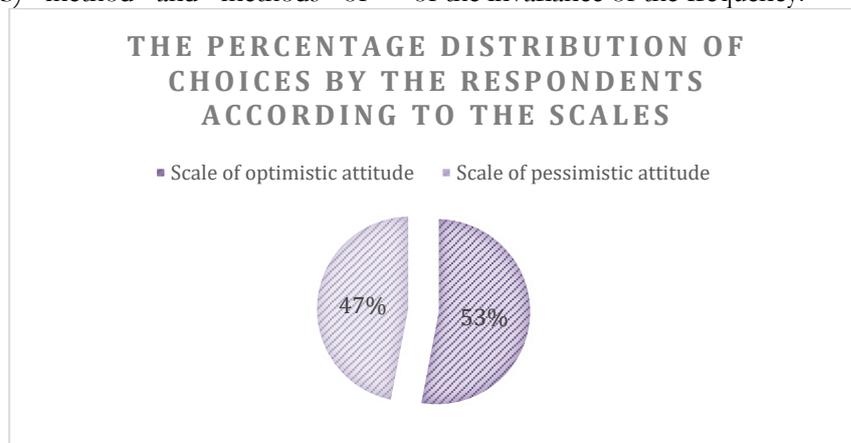


Figure 1. The percentage of choices distribution by the researched answers according to the scales of the "Attitude to death" method

Among the answers of men and women, the options of the answers related to the scale of optimistic attitude towards death prevail, but in women such choices were recorded more compared to men (66% and 76%, respectively). The responses of believers and atheists were also compared. All the subjects more often chose the answer options related to the scale of optimistic attitude to death, but more of such choices were recorded among believers (77.3% and 72%, respectively). In addition to the above-described analysis of individual questions, an interpretation of all the answers of the subjects was carried out according

to the criteria established by the authors of the method: the results, which are in the range of ambivalent attitude towards the phenomenon of death, decreased in comparison with those obtained during the coronavirus infection (Yanovska et al., 2020) (according to 1.1 and 2.67).

So, taking into account the above analysis of the obtained results, we can conclude that according to the "Attitude to Death" method I.Yu. Kulagina and L.V. Sienkovych, this sample recorded an ambivalent attitude towards the phenomenon of death. It was determined that the subjects chose more often the

answer options that refer to the scale of ambivalent attitude to death. It can be added that all the subjects (men, women, atheists, believers) chose more often the answer options that correspond to the scale of optimistic attitude to death than those that correspond to the scale of pessimistic attitude to death. The 2020 study also recorded ambivalent attitudes toward death in the middle-aged group, but in 2022, during the war, the results were lower.

As a result of testing according to Dale V. Hardt's "Attitude to Death Scale" results were obtained on the expressiveness of the test subjects' level of stress resistance, which is associated with thoughts about death, the general attitude to the phenomenon of death (individual and general by sample) and the indicator of thoughts about death, which the author of the method defines as unconscious assumptions about own death.

Women preferred the following answer options more often: "I'm not afraid of thoughts of death, but I don't like them", "thinking about death is not important for me" and "I guess it's hard for me to think about death" (options correspond to an average level of stress resistance, which is associated with thoughts of death). Men mostly chose more positive answers, such as "thinking about death is not difficult for me", "I can accept thoughts about death", "many people overestimate thoughts about death". Women and men gave the greatest preference to answer options that can be attributed to indicators of an ambivalent attitude towards death and an average level of stress resistance.

Most of the studied atheists chose answers that correspond to a high level of stress resistance in relation to thoughts about death: "I don't worry about death" and answers of a medium level of stress resistance: "thinking about death is not important to

me." Believers gave the greatest preference to the following answer options: "I'm not afraid of thoughts about death, but I don't like them" and "thinking about death is not the most important thing for me." Both choices correspond to a medium level of stress resistance, which is associated with thoughts of death.

In the studied sample, a moderately negative attitude towards the phenomenon of death was recorded, it was determined that thoughts about death are not the main thing for the researched. The general interpretation of the conducted methodology does not indicate that the subjects of this sample have an average level of stress resistance, which is associated with thoughts of death. At the same time, it was determined that men and atheists have a slightly higher level of stress resistance, which is associated with thoughts of death, than women and believers, respectively.

As a result of testing using J. McLennan's "Metaphors of Personal Death" method ("Metaphors of Personal Death - RDFS"), results were obtained about the expressiveness of positive and negative thoughts about own death in the studied subjects. The obtained data according to the method were divided into two subscales (according to the interpretation of the method requirements): the subscale of negative metaphors and the subscale of positive metaphors.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of metaphors in the studied sample. Both positive and negative metaphors regarding thoughts about own death were chosen. The total scores on the scales of negative and positive metaphors of personal death differ by only 6.4%, from which the following conclusion can be drawn: the thoughts about own death among the subjects of this sample are ambivalent with a slight deviation towards positive ones.

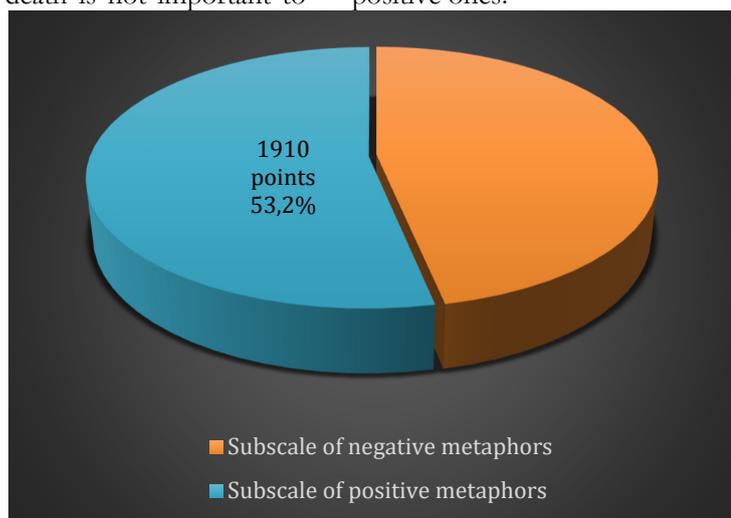


Figure 2. Indicators on the negative and positive subscales of J. McLennan's "Metaphors of personal death" technique

Analysis of metaphors chosen by representatives of different sexes determined that men more often than women choose negative metaphors that describe their thoughts about death. The ratio of negative and

positive metaphors of personal death is different in the groups of men and women. In the group of the studied men, positive metaphors prevail over negative ones by 1.2%, and in women by 9%. Therefore, for the studied

men, ambivalent thoughts about their own death are characteristic, and for women, positive thoughts about their own death are more frequent. Women more often than men chose metaphors that associate death with a natural process, reflections on the cycle of natural phenomena.

A comparison of the answers of atheists and believers using this method determined that believers more often choose positive metaphors of thoughts about their own death. The ratio of negative and positive metaphors of personal death is different in groups of atheists and believers. In the studied group of atheists, positive metaphors prevail over negative ones by 8.4%, and among believers by 11.2%. The metaphors most often chosen by believers are related to dissolution and transition to other forms of existence, while a contemplative meditative state was noted.

Thus, the primary analysis of the results that were obtained using methods that determine the attitude to death indicates the presence of ambivalent thoughts about own death.

Before applying mathematical methods to the results of our research, we determined the normality of the distribution of results for all research methods

using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine the mathematical methods for the results of our research. It was concluded that the distribution of our sample by methods is not normal, as all numerical values of two-sided asymptotic significance methods (0.029; 0.017; 0.044; 0.046) are less than 0.05. Therefore, we decided to use non-parametric criteria: for correlation analysis - Spearman's test, for comparative analysis - Mann-Whitney U-test. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 1.

According to the results of the correlation analysis, a direct relationship was determined between the indicators of two methods that determine the characteristics of the attitude to death: "Attitude to death" by I.Yu. Kulaginoy and L.V. Sienkiewicz and Dale V. Hardt's Scale of Attitudes toward Death.

Subjects who have a pessimistic attitude towards the phenomenon of death are more likely to have negative thoughts about death, while an optimistic attitude towards the phenomenon of death is associated with positive thoughts about death ($r = 0.388$, $p = 0.01$). See Fig. 3.

Table 1. Indicators of correlational analysis of attitude to death in the studied group during the war

		Methodology "Attitude towards death"	Scale of attitudes towards death by D. V. Hardt	Metaphors of personal death (RDFS) (positive)	Metaphors of personal death (RDFS) (negative)
Methodology "Attitude towards death"	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.388**	.121	-.345*
	Val (2-parties)		.001	.296	.002
	N	76	76	76	76
Scale of attitudes towards death by D. V. Hardt	Correlation coefficient	.388**	1.000	.379**	-.473**
	Val (2-parties)	.001		.001	.0001
	N	76	76	76	76
Metaphors of personal death (RDFS) (positive)	Correlation coefficient	.121	.379**	1.000	-.354*
	Val (2-parties)	.296	.001		.002
	N	76	76	76	76
Metaphors of personal death (RDFS) (negative)	Correlation coefficient	-.345*	-.473**	-.354*	1.000
	Val (2-parties)	.002	.0001	.002	
	N	76	76	76	76

*- correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

** - correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

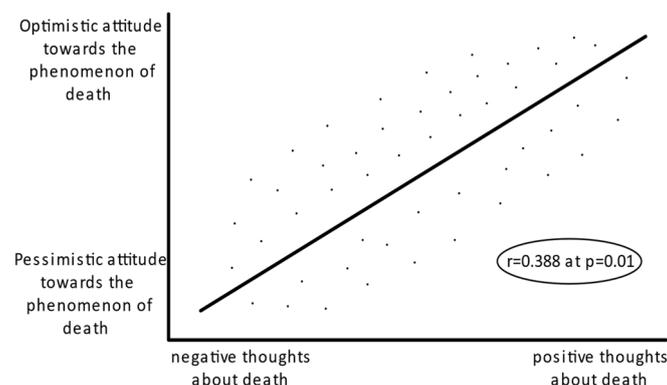


Figure 3. Indicators of the correlation analysis between attitudes towards death and thoughts about death in the studied sample

In addition, these two methods are inversely related to the negative subscale of J. McLennan's "Metaphors of Personal Death" method. Research subjects who have a positive attitude towards death and positive thoughts about their own death are less likely to choose negative metaphors that describe their thoughts about death ("Attitude towards death" by I.Yu. Kulaginoy, L.V. Senkevich: $r = -0.345$, $p = 0.01$; "Death Attitude

Scale" by Dale V. Hardt: $r = -0.473$, $p = 0.01$) (See Figures 4 and 5).

A direct relationship was also determined between the indicators of Dale V. Hardt's Scale of Attitudes to Death and J. McLennan's Metaphors of Personal Death. Subjects in whose positive thoughts about death prevail more often choose positive death metaphors ($r = 0.379$, $p = 0.01$).

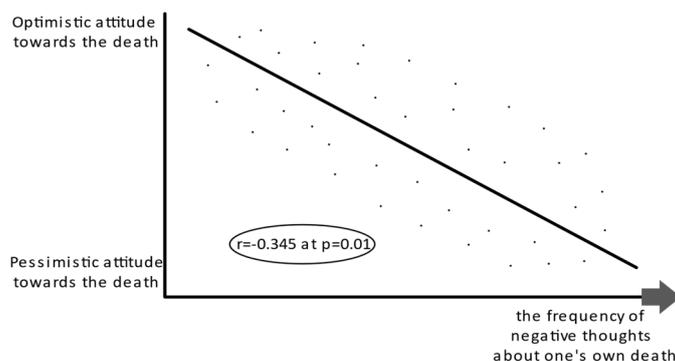


Figure 4. Indicators of correlation analysis between the methods of "Attitude to death" by I. Yu. Kulaginoy, L.V. Sienkovych and the negative subscale "Metaphors of personal death" by J. McLennan

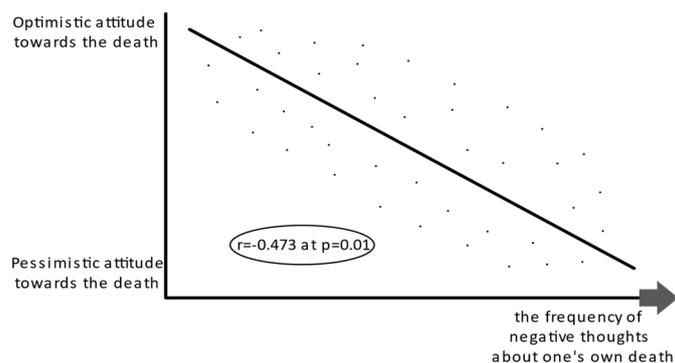


Figure 5. Indicators of the correlation analysis between the methods of Dale V. Hardt's Attitudes to Death Scale and the negative subscale of J. McLennan's Metaphors of Personal Death

According to the results of the comparative analysis, significant differences between believers and atheists were determined: death metaphors chosen by believers are more positive compared to those chosen by atheists (positive subscale of "Metaphors of personal death" by J. McLennan, $p = 0.001$). For believers, positive death metaphors are those that best describe their thoughts about their own death, they face death directly and boldly, and it is not in a way that leads to depression. Similar results were obtained during the Covid 19 pandemic (Yanovska et al., 2020). Also, significant differences were determined in the studied group according to Hardt D.V.'s Attitudes to Death Scale. between men and women ($p = 0.040$). Men have a more positive and "black" humor to the thoughts of death; they are not worried about death and think that thinking about death is not so bad.

Therefore, there is a relationship between life and death, which is intensified in critical situations

(pandemic, war), death penetrates into people's lives and begins to influence it. Death, in a person's subjective experience, prompts awareness of own mortality and affects a person's attitude to this phenomenon.

CONCLUSIONS

The attitude towards death is a complex, complex worldview formation, its essential component is the perception of death as a transcendent (resource) or as a final (dead-end) phenomenon (transition to a lifeless state). War leads to increased anxiety of a person about his own death and fear of death. The cohort of middle-aged people is especially vulnerable to fears related to death.

The attitude towards the death in people of the studied medieval group during the war is ambivalent. Death thoughts are moderately negative, and the level of stress resistance associated with death thoughts is average. Thoughts about own death are ambivalent with a certain deviation towards positive ones.

It was determined that a pessimistic attitude towards death is associated with negative thoughts about death, fixation on its external side, avoidance of contact with death. Lack of seeing a positive perspective in death leads to pessimism and negative thoughts. An optimistic attitude towards death is associated with the rare appearance of negative thoughts about one's own death, perception of death as a necessary aspect of being, openness to contact with death.

Significant differences were found between believers and atheists on the indicator of positive thoughts about their own death: believers showed a high level of acceptance of death. Significant differences in attitudes toward death between men and women were also identified: men have a more positive and "black" humor to thoughts about death.

The prospect of further research may be to determine the specifics of the connection between the attitude to death and the level of neuroticism of people of different ages and religious affiliation, and to create a methodology that would study personal metaphors of death and life.

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ДО ПИТАННЯ СТАВЛЕННЯ ДО СМЕРТІ ЛЮДЕЙ СЕРЕДНЬОГО ВІКУ ПІД ЧАС ВІЙНИ В УКРАЇНІ

На ставлення людини до смерті впливають критичні ситуації, з якими вона зіткнеться в своєму житті. Війна, яка розпочалася в Україні на початку 2022 року, зробила актуальними переживання людини з приводу смерті, адже смерть стала повсякденною реальністю в житті українців. Мета дослідження: визначити особливості ставлення людей середнього віку до феномену смерті під час війни в Україні. Вибірка досліджуваних (N=76), які раніше брали участь у наших дослідженнях в 2019 та 2020 роках під час коронавірусної інфекції. Вік досліджуваних варіюється: $Me=44.00$; $min=35.00$; $max=55.00$. Методи дослідження: методика «Ставлення до смерті» (І.Ю. Кулагіна, Л.В. Сенкевич), методика «Шкала ставлення до смерті» D.V. Hardt, методика Metaphor of Personal Death – the Revised Death Fantasy Scale (RDFS) J. McLennan. Було визначено, що ставлення до смерті людей досліджуваної середньовікової групи під час війни є амбівалентним з певним відхиленням у бік позитивних. Для досліджуваної групи характерним є середній рівень стресостійкості, який пов'язаний з думками про смерть. Вибір метафор про смерть визначається ступенем позитивності ставлення до смерті: песимістичне ставлення до смерті пов'язане з негативними роздумами про смерть, фіксації на її зовнішній стороні, уникненні контакту зі смертю. Відсутність бачення позитивної перспективи у смерті призводить до світоглядної неприкаяності та негативних думок. Оптимістичне ставлення до смерті пов'язане з рідкою появою негативних думок про власну смерть, сприйняття смерті як необхідної сторони буття, відкритість для контактів зі смертю. Були визначені значущі розбіжності між віруючими та атеїстами за показником позитивних думок з приводу власної смерті: віруючі люди виявили високий рівень прийняття смерті. Також було визначено значущі розбіжності в ставленні до смерті між чоловіками та жінками: чоловіки більш позитивно та з «чорним» гумором ставляться до думок про смерть.

Ключові слова: ставлення до смерті, війна, середньовікова група, метафори смерті

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