

Effects of Death Anxiety on Smoking Behaviour and Perception of Future among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the Death Anxiety (DA), Smoking Behaviour and Perception of Future (PF) of young adults under the age group of 18-30. The study included a total of 100 young adults, consisting of 50 males along with 50 females using purposive sampling method. This study investigated the relationship between death anxiety, cigarette dependence, and future anxiety. While a positive correlation was found between death anxiety and future anxiety, there was no significant association between death anxiety and cigarette dependence. Interestingly, a significant positive correlation emerged between cigarette dependence and future anxiety. These findings suggest that death anxiety may not directly influence smoking behavior, but individuals with high death anxiety are more likely to experience heightened future anxiety. Furthermore, cigarette dependence appears to be an independent risk factor for future anxiety.

Keywords: *Death Anxiety (DA), Smoking Behaviour, Perception of Future (PF), Young Adults*

Young adulthood is characterized by exploration, identity creation, and a growing sense of the future. Despite this apparent confidence, some young adults suffer from death anxiety - a dread of their own personal mortality. This thesis investigates the complicated relationship between mortality dread, smoking behavior, and future expectations in this cohort. This research contends that death worry may serve as an incentive towards smoking in young adults. The temporary relaxation and enjoyment associated with smoking may be viewed as a coping mechanism for the agony of contemplating mortality. Furthermore, death worry might affect beliefs of the future. Young adults with significant death fear may perceive their futures as shortened or unclear. This impression could contribute to detachment from healthy activities and long-term goals, thereby boosting the enticement of immediate satisfaction found in smoking.

DEATH ANXIETY

Death anxiety, or thanatophobia, is the apprehension or dread of passing away or the process of dying. Although it is normal to have some degree of dread about dying, death anxiety becomes a notable problem when it hinders everyday functioning and overall well-being

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(Healthline, 2023). This study will examine the essence of death worry, its diverse manifestations, and the influence it can exert on individuals. The recognition of mortality is a distinctive attribute of human knowledge, distinguishing us from other creatures (Klein, 1948). This consciousness can result in an inherent unease regarding the unfamiliarity of mortality and the termination of being. Mortality apprehension can show in diverse manners. Certain people experience apprehension towards the process of dying, namely concerning the potential for suffering or the inability to maintain power. Some individuals may have a greater preoccupation with the notion of absence or the possibility of an afterlife. In addition, anxiety about death can be specifically directed towards the loss of family members, resulting in feelings of grief or separation anxiety.

Death anxiety is a multifaceted syndrome that includes various distinct anxieties. Below are few often encountered forms:

- Postmortem experience: The absence of understanding regarding the postmortem experience is a prominent cause of distress for several individuals.
- Pain and discomfort: Anxiety related to the experience of physical pain and discomfort throughout the process of dying can be a significant cause of fear and distress.
- The fear of losing control: The loss of independence and physiological functions that occur during dying can be a source of fear and anxiety.
- Separation anxiety: The fear of being separated from loved ones can cause tremendous grief, as the mere notion of leaving them behind can be highly distressing.
- Absence of afterlife: The concept of non-existence can instill a profound sense of fear in certain individuals.

CAUSES OF THANATOPHOBIA

The exact cause of thanatophobia is unknown, but a variety of factors can increase a person's risk of developing the disorder:

- Trauma: Phobias can develop from personal trauma or near-death experiences or from hearing someone else talk about their traumatic experiences.
- Environment: Children raised with anxious, overprotective, or overly critical parents are vulnerable to anxiety, including specific phobias.
- History of abuse: People sexually, physically, or emotionally abused are more likely to develop specific phobias.
- Death of a family member: A fear of death can occur after a person experiences the death of a parent or a sibling.
- Religious teachings: Certain religions teach people that they will be punished after death for the way they lived their lives. This can lead to thanatophobia.
- Age: Thanatophobia often occurs in middle-aged people as they begin to experience the death of friends and family.
- Chronic illness: People with chronic illnesses like cancer or advanced chronic pulmonary disease are likelier to have thanatophobia, especially if the illness is incurable.
- Public health crises: Pandemics like COVID-19 and the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s can intensify a person's fear of death.

SYMPTOMS OF THANATOPHOBIA

Thanatophobia can produce symptoms that affect mental as well as physical wellness. These symptoms could include:

- Sweating
- Trembling
- Chills or feeling flush
- Fear of losing control
- Deep feelings of dread or powerlessness
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- A choking sensation
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Numbness or pins-and-needles sensations
- Ringing in your ears
- Confusion or disorientation
- A sudden need to rush to the bathroom

Thanatophobia manifests itself when an individual is presented with random ideas or a particular event that is connected with death. For example, spending time in a medical facility, receiving a notice of passing, or hearing about the death of someone can all trigger symptoms of thanatophobia. Regardless of whether you're in a close connection with an individual who passed away or died, or even if the death is imaginary or real, thanatophobia is characterized by the avoidance of any issue related to death. This is the case regardless of whether the tragedy is fictitious or genuine.

- **Therapeutic Interventions for Thanatophobia:** Psychotherapy is the fundamental and essential approach for treating thanatophobia. Pharmaceuticals are occasionally employed to control symptoms associated with anxiety.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT):** It is a highly efficacious treatment for thanatophobia. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy primarily centers around the recognition and analysis of behaviors, ideas, and emotions related to death and dying. Subsequently, deliberate measures are implemented to modify pessimistic cognitive patterns.
- **Exposure treatment:** It is a specific form of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which effectively addresses phobias. Most people regard it to be the preferred treatment for specific phobias. Exposure therapy entails a systematic process of gradually confronting the object of one's fear, while addressing anxiety symptoms through positive self-talk and methods of relaxation. For instance, the fear of death could manifest by engaging in the pastime of watching films that depict the demise of a character.
- **Medications:** Phobias are typically not treated with medications, although they can be helpful in alleviating anxiety symptoms that can have a detrimental effect on an individual's quality of life. Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) and Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs) are often prescribed medications for the treatment of anxiety associated with phobias. While effective, it can take weeks for SSRIs and SNRIs to improve your symptoms. There are 11 commonly prescribed antidepressants that are used to alleviate anxiety.

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The following are five antidepressant medications:

1. Zoloft (sertraline)
2. Lexapro (escitalopram)
3. Prozac (fluoxetine)
4. Effexor (venlafaxine)
5. Celexa (citalopram)

The pharmacological category of medications known as benzodiazepines is one that can be utilized for the purpose of therapeutically treating phobias. In the event that you are experiencing acute anxiety or panic, these drugs are supplied specifically because of their rapid onset of effect. These medicines have the potential to cause adverse effects such as fatigue and sleepiness, in addition to the fact that they might lead to the development of dependence. The following are four often prescribed medications for anxiety and panic disorders:

1. Ativan (lorazepam)
2. Xanax (alprazolam)
3. Valium (diazepam)
4. Klonopin (clonazepam)

PHOBIA

The term "phobia" refers to an intense and illogical dread or aversion that is directed towards a particular thing, circumstance, or action. An excessive, frequently illogical, and incapacitating fear of a certain object or event is the defining characteristic of a phobia, which is a type of anxiety disorder. In spite of the fact that they may be aware of the absurdity of their condition, those who suffer from a fear of heights may nonetheless have a difficult time controlling their overwhelming terrified feelings. The Institute of Mental Health of the United States estimated that roughly 12.5% of the adult population in the United States may have a specific fear at some point in their lives. Agoraphobia, also known as the fear of certain areas, arachnophobia, often known as the fear of spiders, and social anxiety, which is considered to be the fear of being appraised or embarrassed in social contexts, are all examples of prevalent phobias. Individuals who additionally suffer from comorbid mental health illnesses, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and bipolar disorder, are more likely to exhibit symptoms of phobias, particularly thanatophobia. Personal trauma, experiences of coming dangerously close to death, or exposure to other people talking about their traumatic experiences can all lead to the development of phobias.

Children who are reared by nervous, overprotective, or too critical parents are susceptible to developing anxiety, including specific phobias. Thanatophobia is not an independent condition, but rather a subset of certain phobias. Specific phobias are diagnosed based on the following criteria:

- A. There is a significant level of fear or worry related to a particular object or scenario, such as death or dying.
- B. The object or scenario typically elicits immediate fear or anxiety.
- C. The level of fear or worry is disproportionate to the real level of danger.
- D. The individual actively avoids or endures a specific object or situation with intense fear or anxiety.
- E. This fear or anxiety, or the avoidance of it, leads to ongoing distress and hinders the person's ability to work, participate in social activities, or function normally in daily life.
- F. The fear or anxiety persists for more than six months.

(Note: The symptoms cannot be attributed to other conditions such as agoraphobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), separation anxiety disorder, or social anxiety disorder.)

PERCEPTION OF FUTURE

When it comes to the future, which is a large and uncharted realm, people have a variety of perceptions. Exciting things can come from it, and it may serve as a source of motivation for dreams and goals. On the other hand, it has the potential to cause worries and doubts. For a variety of fields, including sociology, psychology, and even economics, it is essential to have a solid understanding of how humans interpret the future. In our minds, the future doesn't have a blank slate; it is already shaped. Factors such as the following contribute to its formation:

- Previous experiences: According to Carstensen et al. (2003), positive past experiences have the potential to cultivate enthusiasm about the future, but negative past experiences may give rise to pessimism instead.

Cultures that have a straight-line view of time may place a greater emphasis on advancement and preparing for the future as a whole, whereas cultures that have a cyclical view of time may place more of an emphasis on the continuity of customs (Hofstede, 1980).

Personality qualities such as neuroticism and optimism can influence how individuals approach their prospects (Moran, 2002). Individual variances such as these can be observed. It is the power of anticipation that the way we perceive the future is significantly influenced by the expectations that we have pertaining to the future. Due to our prior experiences, the knowledge available, and our own personal views, we develop expectations (Frisch, 1992). Our view of the future's dependability is strengthened whenever our expectations have been met by the reality that we have experienced. Unexpected occurrences, on the other hand, can confront our expectations and cause us to modify our vision. It is possible to see the future that is flexible and predetermined. As a result of our actions and decisions, we are aware of agency, which means we believe we can shape our destiny (Bandura, 1997). At the same time, there is a consciousness of other factors that are beyond our control, such as natural disasters or swings in the economy. Due to this dualism, a complicated interaction between free choice and determinism is created, which shapes our vision of the future.

YOUNG ADULTS AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF FUTURE:

Young adults, often classified as those between 18 and 29, have a special place in their minds for the future. The age range in question is characterized by substantial professional and personal transitions, which makes their vision of the future a topic that is both complex and multifaceted. Here is a rundown of some of the most important aspects that influence the way young adults think about their futures:

Research indicates that young persons have a tendency to be more positive about their own futures than older individuals, even during times of economic difficulty. This holds true even when comparing younger adults to older ones. One possible explanation for this optimistic outlook is that they have faith in their own capabilities and potential for achievement.

In spite of their optimism, young adults are confronted with a great deal of uncertainty and struggle with a variety of obstacles. These can include worries about the following:

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Education and professional: Finding a professional path that is emotionally satisfying and successfully handling debt from student loans can be significant sources of stress.

Instability in the Economic and Political Spheres: Things like environmental degradation, political polarization, and economic downturns are examples of global challenges that have the potential to make people feel uneasy about the future of the globe.

Anxieties can be exacerbated by social pressures, which include the importance of fulfilling society standards around family, relationships, and financial stability.

Influence of the Media and Technology: The constant onslaught of information and images that is disseminated throughout social networking sites and news outlets has the potential to mold beliefs and perspectives regarding the future. It is possible for this to be either good, highlighting accomplishments and possibilities, or negative, highlighting risks and problems that are prevalent in society.

Personality qualities, cultural upbringing, and personal experiences are all factors that contribute to the formation of young people's perspectives on the future. Individual differences are also a critical factor. For instance, those who come from families that are encouraging or who have a network of friends may have a greater sense of confidence over their prospects.

By understanding these characteristics, we can provide more effective assistance to young adults while they negotiate their futures. It is important to note the following:

Empowering Optimism: While understanding the difficulties that lie ahead, cultivating a sense of control and autonomy by means of education, mentorship, and the development of skills can lead to the cultivation of optimism for the future.

In order to address concerns, having open conversations about worries and uncertainties can assist young adults in the development of coping skills and resilience.

Young adults can develop a more educated and realistic view on the future if they are encouraged to engage in critical thinking skills. This can be accomplished by encouraging them to critically assess material and depictions in the media.

Building Social Support: During difficult times, having a variety of mental health resources and having strong social networks can provide a sense of belonging and a safety net for those who are struggling.

SMOKING BEHAVIOUR

Even though smoking is associated with numerous health concerns, it continues to be a common behaviour. In order to have an understanding of the reasons that contribute to people's persistent smoking addictions, it is necessary to investigate the notion of "risk reward." In this area of your thesis, you will investigate the psychological elements that contribute to smoking, as well as the impact that the risk-reward notion plays in the overall process. In accordance with Benowitz (2008), cigarettes are a source of nicotine, a chemical that is extremely addictive and causes effects that are enjoyable. The momentary reduction in stress and the increase in alertness that smokers experience can be reinforcing and help to the building of a routine (Hughes, 2008). Also, smokers perceive an increase in alertness.

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Smoking becomes a go-to behaviour for coping towards stress or obtaining a mood boost as a result of this, which builds a favourable connection with smoking.

A comprehensive understanding of the risk-reward relationship is essential for the development of smoking cessation treatments that are successful. It is possible for those who smoke to break free from the vicious circle of dependent through the implementation of treatments that address the rewarding benefits of nicotine, challenging dismissal of risks, and give alternative coping strategies for stress and adverse feelings.

CIGARETTE DEPENDENCE IN YOUNG ADULTS:

Nicotine addiction, often known as cigarette dependency, is a significant public health concern, particularly among young individuals. Compared to older persons, younger adults have a higher risk of beginning to smoke cigarettes and developing an addiction to them. It is possible that this is due to a number of different factors, including the following:

- **Brain development:** At the time of young adulthood, the brain remains in the process of developing, and this encompasses the regions of the brain which are engaged in the process of addiction. Nicotine has the potential to disrupt this development, which in turn increases the likelihood that young adults may develop an addiction to the substance.
- **The influence of peers:** Young adults are frequently more sensitive to the influence of their peers than older adults. If they have friends who smoke, there is a greater possibility that they may start smoking themselves.
- **Marketing:** The tobacco business frequently directs its marketing initiatives towards young adults as their target demographic. Campaigns like these have the potential to make smoking appear hip or defiant.
- **Accessibility:** Cigarettes are frequently easily accessible to young individuals, both at retail establishments and through the recommendations of their peers.
- **Dependence on cigarettes** can have a variety of adverse effects on young adults, including the following:
 - **Health concerns:** Several health issues, including cancer, stroke, heart disease, and lung disease, can be brought on by smoking. These are only some of the associated health issues.
 - **Academic concerns:** Problems in the classroom, smoking can inhibit one's ability to concentrate and remember information, which can result in difficulties in the classroom.
 - **Social concerns:** In terms of social issues, smoking might make it more challenging to acquire new acquaintances and maintain existing connections.

YOUNG ADULTS

The use of tobacco, and more specifically the smoking of cigarettes, continues to be an important health issue in India, at a concerning frequency among young people between the years of 18 and 30. The purpose of this part is to investigate the current state of smoking among this population by examining the reasons that contribute to the beginning of smoking, the effects that smoking brings, and the potential remedies that could be implemented to stop the trend. India continues to struggle with an excessive smoking prevalence despite the fact that there have been campaigns to raise awareness about health and legislation efforts:

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In accordance with the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2 (2016-17), national numbers indicate that 20.3% of adults in India who are 15 years old or older are currently using tobacco, with 10.7% of them smoking cigarettes on a daily basis (GATS India, 2017). Strategies for the Control of Tobacco Use:

- **Policy:** The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) 2003 restricts tobacco advertising, prohibits smoking in public places, and enforces explicit health warnings on packages of cigarettes (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, 2003). This legislation was passed in 2003.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Campaigns are run by the government and non-profit organisations to educate young adults about the health dangers associated with smoking and to promote lifestyles that do not involve smoking (National Tobacco Control Programme, Government of India, 2023).
- **Increases in Price:** According to the World Health Organisation (2023), the imposition of taxes on cigarettes can serve as a deterrent, so rendering them less accessible for young adults.
- **Programmes for Quitting Smoking:** According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2023), providing smoking cessation programmes that are easily available and cheap, including counselling and medicines, can be of assistance to young adults who are interested in quitting smoking.

When these techniques are executed efficiently and consistently, they can contribute to a reduction in the prevalence of smoking among youthful adults. Guiding Teens and Young Adults to Decide on a Free of cigarettes Life: Going Beyond the Regulatory Framework. It is essential to enable youngsters to make educated decisions, which goes beyond the modification of policies.

FIELD OF RESEARCH

Clinical psychology places a large amount of importance on the notions of death anxiety and the view of the future. These two concepts are closely connected and hold significant weight. When it comes to providing support for clients who are struggling with existential concerns, it is essential for therapists to have a solid understanding of this link.

One of the factors that can contribute to a fear of unfathomable things is death anxiety. The fear of passing away can be a result of being unsure of what lays beyond. The client's impression of the future may be badly impacted because of this uncertainty, which may cause the future to appear gloomy or meaningless. These fears are discussed with clients by clinical psychologists, who then assist the clients in the development of coping mechanisms and the discovery of meaning in the current moment. Anxiety over dying can be exacerbated by having a pessimistic vision on the future, when one is plagued with fears and anxieties. The fear that might arise from the idea of losing out on prospective experiences in the future may turn into an important cause of anxiety. Counsellors can help their clients recognize and challenge negative thought patterns regarding the future, resulting in a more optimistic attitude. Anxiety about death can be a spur for growth for certain people. For some people, fear of death can be an encouragement for leading a life that is more satisfying. It is possible for individuals to be motivated to prioritise their goals, value their relationships with others, and make the best out of each day when they are conscious of the short amount of time they have on earth. Clients can benefit from the assistance of therapists in utilising this understanding to establish meaningful goals and to construct a life that is in alignment with their beliefs.

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A positive view of the future, which is filled with ambitions, objectives, and an overwhelming sense of objective, can work as a buffer versus death anxiety. This is because having a favourable view of what is to come can help reduce the feelings of anxiety associated with death. The ability to develop a sense of acceptance and peace can be achieved by concentrating on the positive parts of what is to come. It is possible for therapists to aid clients in recognizing their own strengths, establishing goals that are within their reach, and cultivating a sense of worth in their life, which ultimately results in a reduction in death fear.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: To explore the effect of death anxiety on smoking behaviour and perception of future among young adults.

Objectives:

- O1- To study the effect of death anxiety on smoking behaviour.
- O2- To study the effect of death anxiety on perception of future among smoking young adults.
- O3- To study the associations of death anxiety with smoking behaviour and perception of future among young adults.

Hypothesis:

- H1- Significant effects of death anxiety on smoking behaviour of young adults.
- H2- There will be significant effect of death anxiety on perception of future among young adults.
- H3- There will be significant association of death anxiety with smoking behaviour and perception of future among young adults.

Young adults from the age of 18-30 are the target age group for this investigation. Purposive sampling was used considering the fact that teenage years and early adulthood are when most people start smoking. Additionally, as young individuals traverse identity formation and think about their long-term aspirations, they may have particularly strong feelings of fear related to mortality and the future during this phase of life.

RESULTS

Table-1 Add Table name

		Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Cigarette dependence	25.68	11.47
2	Death anxiety	14.80	7.01
3	Future anxiety	16.10	8.43

Table-1 represents the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of all the study variables – Cigarette dependence, Death anxiety, Future anxiety.

Table-2 Add Table name

	Cigarette dependence	Death anxiety	Future anxiety
Cigarette dependence	-		
Death anxiety	.13	-	
Future anxiety	.29**	.52**	-

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

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- Table-2 represents the coefficient of correlation between cigarette dependence, death anxiety, future anxiety use.
- The correlation between cigarette dependence and death anxiety was not significant and positive.
- The correlation between cigarette dependence and future anxiety was significant and positive.
- The correlation between death anxiety and future anxiety was significant and positive.

Table-3 Add Table name

Criterion	Predictors: death anxiety								
	B	S.E.	β	t	R	R ²	Adj.R ²	α	F
Cigarette dependence	.22	.16	.13	1.35	.13	.01	.00	22.40	1.83
future anxiety	.63	.10	.52	6.11**	.52	.27	.26	6.75	6.11**

significant at 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$)

Table-3 represents the linear regression with death anxiety as predictor of future anxiety and cigarette dependence. The model did present a significant fit while excluding cigarette dependence from the model. Hence, there was 27% positive variance explained by death anxiety on future anxiety.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study is to explore the effect of death anxiety on smoking behaviour and perception of future among young adults.

The findings the research offer interesting and useful insights into the intricate interaction that exists between concern about mortality, dependence on cigarettes, and anxiety about the future. Consider the effects of each correlation for your thesis on the consequences of death anxiety on smoking behaviour and the view of the future. Let's break down the ramifications of each correlation.

Relationship between Cigarette Dependency and Death Anxiety: An interesting finding is that there is no discernible positive link between cigarette dependency and death anxiety. According to this, contrary to the preconceptions of some people, it appears that people who have become heavily dependent on cigarettes would not necessarily have higher levels of concern around their own mortality. This research calls into question the commonly held beliefs and draws attention to the fact that there is a pressing need for a deeper comprehension of the psychological driving forces behind smoking behaviour. While it is possible that smoking can act as a coping method for some people who are suffering with death dread, it is also possible that smoking is not the fundamental driving force underlying cigarette dependency in all instances.

Relationship between Cigarette Dependency and Anxiety about the future: One important discovery is the substantial positive association that exists between cigarette dependency and future anxiety. The implication is that people who become more dependent on cigarettes are more likely to suffer increased concern about the future. The existence of this association highlights the interconnectedness of smoking practices with broader psychological issues, such as worry about the future. Specifically, it suggests that smoking may function as a

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maladaptive coping method for persons who are attempting to reduce their sense of future uncertainty or dread. The development of tailored interventions that try to reduce cigarette habit and address underlying anxiety issues requires an understanding of this link, which is vital for the development of such interventions.

Relationship between Death Anxiety and Future worry: The considerable positive link between death anxiety and future worry corresponds with current studies demonstrating the interaction between existential worries and future-oriented issues. Based on this study, it appears that those who experience higher degrees of anxiety around mortality are additionally more likely to demonstrate increased concern regarding the future. This demonstrates the need of taking into account existential concerns when attempting to comprehend the ways in which persons perceive and respond to uncertainties that are associated with the future. In addition, it emphasises the potential role that death anxiety may play as an underlying cause to broader anxiety disorders, hence highlighting the necessity of holistic evaluations and therapeutic approaches.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study validates the linkages found in the dissertation's findings about how smoking behaviour and future perception are affected by death anxiety. The absence of a substantial positive association between cigarette dependency and death anxiety poses a challenge to oversimplified explanations of smoking behaviour as a means of coping with existential distress. This underscores the necessity for a more intricate comprehension of the psychological determinants that contribute to cigarette dependence. The deep relationship between smoking behaviour, existential concerns, and future-oriented problems is highlighted by the considerable positive correlations observed between cigarette dependency and future anxiety, as well as between death anxiety and anxiety related to future. This paper makes a valuable contribution to the current body of literature by offering empirical evidence to support the intricate connections between death anxiety, smoking behaviour, and future anxiety. It underscores the significance of taking into account various psychological factors in order to comprehend and tackle these interrelated phenomena.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Gaur, M. & Yadava, V. (2024). Effects of Death Anxiety on Smoking Behaviour and Perception of Future among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(2), 3951-3962. DIP:18.01.351.20241202, DOI:10.25215/1202.351