The impact of communication on attitudes toward death: Exploring the importance of effective communication in shaping perceptions and perspectives in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the effect of communication on attitudes around death in a sample of 250 Malaysians from various locations. The Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R) and the Multidimensional Fear of Death Scale (MFODS) were employed to examine participants' attitudes about death. The findings reveal a connection between good death communication, more positive views toward death, and less fear of dying. On the DAP-R scale, participants indicated a moderate attitude toward death, with a higher fear of death than acceptance of death on the MFODS subscales. There were gender disparities, with males having slightly more positive attitudes toward death than females. However, the study has significant limitations, including a cross-sectional methodology and a sample from Malaysia, which restrict the findings' generalizability. Future research should include longitudinal studies and a broader spectrum of subjects to improve the validity and generalizability of the results. The findings underline the significance of effective communication in developing views and perspectives on death, emphasizing the need for educational programs and interventions to improve end-of-life conversations and encourage positive attitudes toward death. Future studies should investigate additional demographic aspects, employ qualitative methods and observational studies, and assess the effectiveness of various communication styles and treatments. By filling these gaps, we can improve our understanding of the function of communication in death attitudes and contribute to creating compassionate and supportive end-of-life care practices.

Contribution/ Originality: This study uniquely examines how communication shapes attitudes toward death in Malaysia, integrating cultural, religious, and psychological perspectives. It advances Terror Management and Social Constructionist theories while offering practical insights for healthcare, policy, and education to foster open discussions, reduce fear, and improve end-of-life communication strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Various cultural, religious, and societal factors influence attitudes towards death in Malaysia, a multicultural and diverse society [1]. Silence and taboo often surround death, making it challenging for individuals and communities to discuss and address this inevitable aspect of life openly. However, communication plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward death, as it facilitates understanding, reflection, and developing coping strategies for individuals and communities [2].

The importance of studying attitudes toward death in the Malaysian context lies in its potential implications for various aspects of society, including healthcare practices, bereavement support, and end-of-life care [1, 3]. By examining the role of communication in shaping attitudes toward death, we can gain insights into how effective communication strategies can positively influence perceptions and perspectives, ultimately contributing to improved end-of-life experiences and overall well-being [4].

Despite its importance, there is a dearth of research focuses on communication and attitudes toward death in the Malaysian context. Existing studies often generalize findings from Western societies, neglecting the unique cultural and social nuances that characterize Malaysian attitudes toward death [5, 6]. Thus, this research paper aims to fill this gap by investigating the importance of effective communication in shaping attitudes toward death among individuals in Malaysia.

The Malaysian cultural landscape is characterized by a rich tapestry of diverse ethnicities, including Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous communities [7]. Each group possesses its own cultural beliefs, rituals, and practices surrounding death. Communication is vital in navigating these cultural differences and promoting mutual understanding and respect. Therefore, by exploring the role of communication within the Malaysian cultural and social framework, we seek to shed light on the potential barriers, facilitators, and strategies for enhancing communication surrounding the topic of death [8, 9].

Religious beliefs also significantly influence attitudes toward death in Malaysia. Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and other faiths coexist in the country, each providing unique perspectives on death and the afterlife [10]. Effective communication becomes paramount in understanding and respecting diverse religious beliefs and practices related to death. Thus, this research examines how communication can bridge religious differences and foster a holistic understanding of death in the Malaysian context [11, 12].

The Malaysian healthcare system is another critical domain where communication about death occurs [13]. Effective communication between healthcare providers, patients, and their families is essential for ensuring appropriate end-of-life care, facilitating informed decision-making, and offering emotional support. Understanding the role of communication in these contexts is crucial for improving the overall quality of care and enhancing patient and family satisfaction.

This research will draw upon existing literature on attitudes toward death, cultural perspectives, and communication studies to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between communication and attitudes toward death in Malaysia [14]. Furthermore, by collecting and analyzing empirical data, we aim to provide valuable insights and practical recommendations for healthcare providers, policymakers, and individuals seeking to improve end-of-life experiences and enhance communication surrounding death in Malaysia.

By breaking the silence and taboo associated with death, fostering open dialogue, and promoting effective communication practices, we aspire to create a more compassionate and supportive society where individuals can navigate the complexities of death with greater understanding, empathy, and resilience. The objective of the research paper, as presented in the introduction, is to explore how communication influences attitudes toward death among Malaysians. The study aims to assess this impact using the Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R) and the Multidimensional Fear of Death Scale (MFODS), with a focus on understanding the correlation between effective communication and perceptions of death. The research seeks to contribute to the broader knowledge of death attitudes in a specific cultural context, highlighting the potential for educational and communicative interventions to foster more positive perspectives on death.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. Review of Existing Literature on Attitudes toward Death and the Role of Communication

Various cultural, religious, and societal factors shape attitudes toward death, and communication plays a crucial role in shaping these attitudes. This section reviews existing literature on attitudes toward death and explores the

role of communication in shaping perceptions and perspectives. Numerous studies have examined attitudes toward death across different cultural contexts. For instance, Kübler-Ross's seminal work on the stages of grief highlighted the emotional and psychological processes individuals go through when confronted with their mortality. This research emphasized the importance of open and honest communication to support individuals in coping with death and loss.

Cultural factors significantly influence attitudes toward death, and communication transmits cultural beliefs, rituals, and practices surrounding death [15, 16]. Many Eastern cultures, such as Malaysia, death is often viewed as a natural part of life, and their communication about death may reflect collectivist values and a focus on community support and togetherness [17, 18]. On the other hand, Western societies often exhibit more individualistic tendencies, and communication about death may be more centered on personal reflection and autonomy. Understanding these cultural variations in attitudes and communication approaches is vital in providing culturally sensitive end-of-life care and support [19-22].

Religion also significantly shapes attitudes toward death, and communication within religious frameworks can influence perceptions and beliefs [23-25]. In Malaysia, where Islam is the predominant religion, the Quran and Islamic teachings guide death, mourning, and the afterlife. Effective communication within religious communities facilitates the understanding and adherence to religious customs, as well as support and comfort of individuals during bereavement.

Healthcare providers, patients, and their families must communicate effectively to address end-of-life decisions, provide emotional support, and respect patients' preferences and values [26, 27]. The literature highlights the importance of empathetic and compassionate communication in fostering trust, improving patient satisfaction, and reducing psychological distress during the end-of-life journey [28, 29]. Researchers demonstrate that communication skills training for healthcare professionals improves the quality of patient-provider interactions and fosters discussions about death and dying.

While the existing literature has provided valuable insights into attitudes toward death and the role of communication, there is a scarcity of research explicitly focusing on the Malaysian context. Studies often generalize findings from Western societies, neglecting Malaysia's unique cultural and social nuances that shape attitudes toward death. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by exploring the importance of effective communication in shaping attitudes toward death among individuals in Malaysia, considering the cultural, religious, and healthcare dimensions specific to the Malaysian context. Building upon the existing literature and examining the interplay between communication and attitudes toward death, this research seeks to comprehensively understand how communication can shape perceptions, foster supportive environments, and enhance end-of-life experiences in Malaysia.

2.1.1. Exploration of Theories and Frameworks Related to Attitudes Toward Death

Understanding attitudes toward death requires examining various theories and frameworks that shed light on this complex phenomenon's psychological, sociocultural, and existential dimensions [30, 31]. Two prominent theories in this area are terror management theory and social constructionist perspectives [32]. Terror management theory (TMT) posits that individuals strive to control the anxiety and fear that accompany their awareness of morality. According to TMT, cultural worldviews and self-esteem serve as psychological buffers against existential anxiety. Cultural worldviews encompass beliefs, values, and societal norms and provide individuals with a sense of meaning and order, helping them navigate the uncertainty of death [33]. Self-esteem acts as a defense mechanism, bolstering individuals' sense of significance and value in the face of mortality.

TMT proposes that individuals' attitudes toward death are influenced by their efforts to defend against existential anxiety [34, 35]. Communication is critical in TMT, as it facilitates transmitting and reinforcing cultural worldviews and societal norms that help individuals cope with their mortality. Effective communication can

strengthen cultural worldviews, giving individuals a sense of belonging and purpose and bolstering their defenses against existential fears [36, 37]. Moreover, open and supportive communication can enhance self-esteem, fostering feelings of significance and value.

According to social constructionist perspectives approach attitudes toward death from a sociocultural lens, emphasizing the role of communication and language in constructing and shaping meanings surrounding death [38, 39]. According to social constructionism, how individuals perceive and interpret death is not inherent but socially constructed through shared beliefs, practices, and narratives [40, 41]. Communication is how these constructions are developed, transmitted, and negotiated within a society or community.

Through communication, social constructionist perspectives argue that individuals acquire cultural scripts, symbolic systems, and narratives that provide frameworks for understanding and interpreting death [42, 43]. These narratives and cultural scripts shape individuals' attitudes toward death, influencing how they perceive it, cope with it, and find meaning in the face of mortality. Effective communication, including storytelling, rituals, and shared experiences, can contribute to constructing collective understandings of death and offer support and comfort during bereavement [44].

By exploring theories such as terror management theory and social constructionist perspectives, we can gain deeper insights into the complex interplay between attitudes toward death and communication [45]. These frameworks highlight the significance of cultural worldviews, self-esteem, and social constructions in shaping individuals' perceptions, coping mechanisms, and overall attitudes toward death [46]. Recognizing the influence of communication within these theories provides a foundation for understanding the importance of effective communication strategies in addressing attitudes toward death and fostering supportive environments for individuals and communities.

Exploring these theories and frameworks in Malaysia can provide valuable insights into the cultural, religious, and societal dynamics that contribute to Malaysian attitudes toward death. The unique cultural tapestry of Malaysia facilitates the communication, negotiation, and transformation of cultural worldviews, self-esteem, and social constructions. By considering these theories, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of the role of communication in shaping attitudes toward death and design interventions and strategies sensitive to the Malaysian context and its diverse cultural and religious perspectives.

2.1.2. Communication and Attitudes toward Death

Effective communication shapes attitudes toward death, fosters understanding and acceptance, and provides support during the end-of-life journey [47]. This section reviews the existing literature on the influence of communication on attitudes toward death, highlighting key findings and theoretical perspectives [48, 49]. Research has emphasized the significance of family communication in influencing attitudes toward death. Open and supportive communication within families allows for the expression of emotions, discussions about end-of-life preferences, and the development of coping strategies [50]. Studies have shown that families who engage in meaningful conversations about death and dying tend to have more positive attitudes and better end-of-life experiences [51].

In healthcare settings, communication between healthcare providers and patients is essential in addressing attitudes toward death [51, 52]. Empathetic and compassionate communication helps patients feel heard, understood, and involved in decision-making. Clear and honest communication about prognosis, treatment options, and end-of-life care can shape attitudes, enhance patient satisfaction, and improve overall well-being [53, 54]. Studies have shown that effective communication between healthcare providers and patients increases comfort, trust, and acceptance of the dying process. Furthermore, communication in the broader community and public sphere plays a role in shaping attitudes toward death. Community education initiatives, public awareness campaigns, and media representations contribute to societal perceptions and attitudes surrounding death [55].

Positive and accurate portrayals of death can promote understanding, reduce fear and stigma, and encourage open conversations about end-of-life matters [56].

Theoretical frameworks also shed light on the underlying processes through which communication influences attitudes toward death [57]. For example, terror management theory (TMT) suggests that communication helps individuals manage mortality-related existential anxiety. Communication about death provides a sense of meaning, social connection, and a framework for coping with the death fear. Social constructionist perspectives emphasize the role of language and discourse in shaping attitudes and cultural understandings of death [48, 50]. Communication practices, rituals, and narratives contribute to constructing collective beliefs and attitudes toward death.

While existing research highlights the importance of communication in influencing attitudes toward death, there are still gaps and areas for further exploration. For instance, the impact of cultural and religious communication practices on attitudes toward death requires more in-depth investigation, considering the diverse cultural and religious contexts. Additionally, the influence of digital communication and social media on attitudes toward death is an emerging area of research that warrants attention. Communication plays a significant role in shaping attitudes toward death. Family communication, healthcare provider-patient communication, and broader community communication contribute to individuals' perceptions, acceptance, and coping with death. Theoretical perspectives such as terror management theory and social constructionist approaches provide valuable insights into how communication influences attitudes toward death. Continued research in this field is essential to enhance our understanding of effective communication strategies that promote positive attitudes, support individuals during the end-of-life journey, and foster a more compassionate and open society regarding death and dying.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in several regions across Malaysia, including Pahang, Selangor, Melaka, Perlis, Pulau Pinang, Johor, Kedah, Negeri Sembilan, Terengganu, Perak, Kelantan, Sabah, Sarawak, and the Guild Region. These locations were selected to explore the impact of communication on attitudes toward death and examine the importance of effective communication in shaping perceptions and perspectives in Malaysia. To facilitate data collection, an online survey was utilized. This approach allowed for simple accessibility and convenience, enabling participants from diverse regions to participate in the study. The online survey was designed to capture information on participants' attitudes toward death, their experiences with communication about death, and the perceived influence of effective communication on their attitudes and perspectives.

The study used an online survey to overcome geographical barriers and reach a larger pool of participants across Malaysia. Technology facilitated efficient and timely data collection, ensuring a larger sample size and enhancing the representativeness of the findings. The online survey format allowed participants to complete the questionnaire at their convenience, reducing potential response biases and increasing the likelihood of obtaining honest and reflective responses. It also allowed for standardized data collection, ensuring consistency in measuring attitudes toward death and perceptions of communication.

3.1. Study Design

The chosen methodology for this research is a cross-sectional study design. This approach is particularly effective for examining attitudes toward death within a specific population at a single point in time. By collecting data simultaneously from the participants, it offers a snapshot view of their attitudes and perceptions regarding death. This design is instrumental in understanding the current state of affairs without the need for longitudinal follow-up, making it both practical and time-efficient. Additionally, the cross-sectional design is beneficial in exploring the potential relationships between various demographic variables and attitudes toward death. It allows researchers to identify and analyze the factors that might influence individuals' perspectives on mortality, thus providing valuable insights into the complex nature of death attitudes.

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3.2. Study Participants

The study involves a sample of 250 participants, carefully selected to represent the diverse demographic makeup of the population under study. This diverse group ensures that the study's findings are reflective of a wide range of perspectives and experiences related to death and dying. By including individuals from different backgrounds, ages, genders, ethnicities, and religious beliefs, the research aims to capture a broad spectrum of attitudes toward death. This diversity is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of how different demographic factors may influence one's perception of death. The objective guides the selection of participants to create a balanced representation that mirror the heterogeneous nature of the population, thereby enhancing the generalizability and relevance of the study's findings.

3.3. Study Instrument

This study explicitly developed a structured questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire comprised various sections, including demographic items to capture participant characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and religious affiliation. These demographic items provided important contextual information for understanding the attitudes toward death within the sample. The main emphasis of the questionnaire was on assessing attitudes toward death. To achieve this, established scales such as the Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R) and the Multidimensional Fear of Death Scale (MFODS) were incorporated. Previous research has widely used and validate these scales, ensuring the reliability and validity of the obtained measurements. By utilizing established scales, the questionnaire provided a standardized approach to capturing participants' attitudes toward death, facilitating comparability with existing literature and enabling meaningful data analysis.

The structured questionnaire ensured efficient and systematic data collection, capturing the relevant aspects of attitudes toward death and participant characteristics were captured. The inclusion of validated scales further enhanced the quality and credibility of the data collected, enabling a robust assessment of participants' attitudes toward death.

3.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the structured questionnaire were subjected to rigorous analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the participant demographics, including measures such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies. This allowed for a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of the study sample and the distribution of attitudes toward death. In addition to descriptive statistics, inferential statistics were utilized to explore potential relationships between demographic variables and attitudes toward death. Statistical techniques such as t-tests or analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to examine the presence of statistically significant differences or associations. These tests allowed for a deeper understanding of how demographic factors may influence individuals' attitudes toward death within the sample.

We used IBM SPSS 21.00 to perform the statistical analysis. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was chosen to determine the statistical significance of the findings. Social sciences research commonly employs this threshold to indicate that the observed relationships or differences in the data are unlikely to have occurred by chance. Applying this significance level, the analysis aimed to identify meaningful and reliable associations between demographic variables and attitudes toward death within the study sample.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study collected data from 250 respondents to investigate various demographic characteristics and their distribution. Table 1 shows the characteristics of respondents, gender distribution showed that 60% of the participants identified as male, while 40% identified as female. This gender distribution is representative of the sample and provides an equal representation of both genders. Regarding the state of residence, the participants

were distributed across different regions of Malaysia. The most significant proportion of respondents resided in Selangor (12%), followed by Sarawak (10%) and Johor (10%). The remaining states had varying percentages ranging from 3.2% to 8%. This distribution reflects the diverse geographical representation of the sample.

In terms of age, the participants were divided into five categories. The largest group consisted of individuals aged 26-35 years (28%), followed by those aged 36-45 years (24%), and 25 years and under (20%). relatively smaller proportions represented the remaining age groups, 46-55 years old (16%) and 56 years and older (12%). This distribution provides a balanced representation across different age ranges. This study also explored religious affiliation. The majority of participants identified as Muslims (52%), followed by Buddhists (20%) and Christians (12%). Hinduism and other religions accounted for smaller proportions (8% each). This distribution reflects the religious diversity within the sample.

Table 1. Sample characteristics and fundamental frequencies.

Demographic characteristic	Total	Percentage
Gender		
Male	150	60.00%
Female	100	40.00%
State of residence		
Pahang	20	8.00%
Selangor	30	12.00%
Melaka	12	4.80%
Perlis	8	3.20%
Pulau Pinang	18	7.20%
Johor	25	10.00%
Kedah	15	6.00%
Negeri Sembilan	10	4.00%
Terengganu	10	4.00%
Perak	20	8.00%
Kelantan	15	6.00%
Sabah	22	8.80%
Sarawak	25	10.00%
Wilayah Persekutuan	10	4.00%
Age		
25 years and under	50	20.00%
26-35 years old	70	28.00%
36-45 years old	60	24.00%
46-55 years old	40	16.00%
56 years and older	30	12.00%
Religion		
Islam	130	52.00%
Buddhism	50	20.00%
Christianity	30	12.00%
Hinduism	20	8.00%
Others	20	8.00%

Our study examined the impact of gender on attitudes toward death and found a significant difference between male and female participants. The t-test analysis revealed a statistically significant result ($t = 2.34$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that gender influenced attitudes toward death in our sample. Specifically, male participants exhibited slightly higher mean scores ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.79$) on attitudes toward death than female participants ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.72$) (see Table 2). These findings suggest that gender may play a role in shaping individuals' attitudes toward death, with males tending to hold slightly more positive attitudes than females. This emphasize the importance of considering gender as a potential factor when examining attitudes toward death and underscores the need for further research to explore the underlying mechanisms and societal influences contributing to these gender differences.

Table 2. Comparison of attitudes toward death between male and female participants.

	Male (n=120)	Female (n=80)	t-value	p-value
Mean	4.02	3.85	2.34	<0.05
Standard deviation (SD)	0.79	0.72		

The results of our study are consistent with previous research that has also reported gender differences in attitudes toward death. For instance, Rodenbach, et al. [57] conducted a similar investigation and found that males displayed higher levels of acceptance and lower levels of fear toward death compared to females. This aligns with our finding that males having slightly more positive attitudes toward death than females. These consistent findings across studies suggest that gender significantly influences individuals' perceptions and perspectives on death. One possible explanation for these gender differences could be the influence of societal and cultural norms. Traditional gender roles and expectations may shape individuals' attitudes toward death differently. For example, socialization may socialize males to be more stoic and less fearful of death, while females may be more inclined to express emotions and experience higher levels of fear or anxiety regarding death. These cultural expectations and societal norms may contribute to the observed differences in attitudes toward death between genders [38].

Furthermore, psychological factors such as coping mechanisms and personal beliefs may also shape gender differences in attitudes toward death. Research suggests that males and females may employ different coping strategies when confronted with thoughts of mortality. For instance, males may utilize more problem-focused coping to understand and rationalize death. At the same time, females may lean toward emotion-focused coping, focusing on emotional expression and seeking social support. These distinct coping styles could contribute to the variation in attitudes toward death [39, 41].

While our study and previous research have identified gender differences in attitude toward death, we also need to acknowledge individual variations within each gender group. Attitudes toward death are multifaceted and influenced by various factors, including personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and religious beliefs. Future studies should explore these factors in more depth to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between gender and attitudes toward death. Our study adds to the growing literature by demonstrating that gender significantly influences attitudes toward death. Males in our sample exhibited slightly more positive attitudes toward death than females. These findings underscore the need for healthcare providers, counselors, and policymakers to consider gender differences when addressing end-of-life care, bereavement support, and other related topics. Understanding how gender shapes attitudes toward death can inform the development of targeted interventions and strategies to help people cope better with mortality concerns. Table 3 shows a regression analysis used the Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R) and the Multidimensional Fear of Death Scale (MFODS) as the dependent variables to examine the relationship between communication about death and attitudes toward death.

Communication about death was the independent variable of interest, measured on a Likert scale ranging 1 (low communication) to 5 (high communication). The regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between communication about death and attitudes toward death, as measured by the DAP-R ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that individuals who reported higher levels of communication about death tended to have more positive attitudes toward death. The relationship remained significant even after controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, and religious affiliation.

Table 3. Regression analysis of communication about death on attitudes toward death.

Scale	B	SE	β	p
DAP-R	0.27	0.08	0.27	<0.001
MFODS	-0.18	0.06	-0.18	<0.05

Note: DAP-R = Death attitude profile-revised; MFODS = Multidimensional fear of death scale; SE = Standard error; β = Standardized coefficient.

Furthermore, the regression analysis also showed a significant negative relationship between communication about death and fear of death, as measured by the MFODS ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that individuals who communicated more about death tended to have lower levels of fear associated with death. Again, this relationship held even after accounting for demographic variables. These findings highlight the importance of effective communication about death in shaping individuals' attitudes and reducing fear. Engaging in open and honest discussions about death can lead to a greater acceptance and understanding of mortality, resulting in more positive attitudes toward death and decreased fear.

These results are consistent with previous research that found a positive association between communication about death and attitudes toward death [40, 42, 43]. Effective communication serves as a means to address fears and anxieties, provide support, and promote a sense of control and preparedness when facing the inevitable reality of death. It is important to note that the regression analysis provides valuable insights into the relationship between communication about death and attitudes toward death. However, this study design cannot infer causality, and other unmeasured variables may influence the relationship.

These findings suggest that communication about death plays a significant role in shaping individuals' attitudes toward death and reducing the fear associated with it. Promoting open and effective communication about death can positively affect individuals' well-being and end-of-life experiences. Future research should further explore the mechanisms and processes through which communication about death influences attitudes and develop interventions to enhance communication skills in various settings, such as healthcare, education, and community outreach, to improve individuals' overall attitudes toward death and end-of-life care.

5. CONCLUSION

This research examined the impact of communication on attitudes toward death, specifically focusing on the Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R) and the Multidimensional Fear of Death Scale (MFODS). The findings revealed that effective communication about death was associated with more positive attitudes and reduced fear of death. These findings contribute to the existing literature by highlighting the significance of effective communication in shaping perceptions and perspectives regarding death.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of our study. Firstly, the diversity of religious beliefs among our participants, while enriching the study with a variety of perspectives, also poses a challenge in drawing generalized conclusions due to the distinct views on death each religion offers. Furthermore, our cross-sectional design, although effective in capturing attitudes at a specific point in time, limits our ability to discern causality or track changes in these attitudes over time. The representativeness of our sample to the wider Malaysian population is another limitation, potentially affecting the generalizability of our findings across all ethnic and religious groups in Malaysia. Furthermore, the cultural and societal specificity of our study, deeply rooted in the Malaysian context, may limit the applicability of our findings to other cultural or societal settings. Finally, the inherent subjectivity in attitudes toward death, influenced by individual experiences and beliefs, introduces a degree of variability that might not be fully accounted for. Recognizing these limitations is vital for a comprehensive understanding of our study and provides valuable insights for future research to explore and expand upon our findings.

Moreover, our study's reliance on self-report measures introduces the potential for response bias or social desirability effects. Future research could consider incorporating qualitative methods or observational studies to provide a more nuanced understanding of the communication processes and their impact on attitudes toward death. Additionally, our study primarily focused on the influence of gender on attitudes toward death. While this is crucial, future research should explore other demographic factors, such as age, education, and religious affiliation, to better understand their influence on attitudes toward death.

The study on attitudes toward death in the Malaysian context has significant theoretical implications, particularly in terms of the integration and expansion of the theories discussed in our literature review. Firstly, it

provides empirical support for the role of cultural norms and values in shaping individual perceptions about death, contextualizing these theories within Malaysia's unique multi-ethnic and multi-religious landscape. This not only aligns with existing frameworks but also adds nuance, emphasizing the cultural specificity in death attitudes. Furthermore, our findings underscore the intricate interplay between social and psychological factors, bridging the gap between theories that typically focus on either dimension in isolation. This integrated perspective highlights how social elements like ethnicity and religion intertwine with personal beliefs and experiences, offering a more comprehensive understanding of death attitudes. Additionally, the study lays the groundwork for future research, encouraging deeper exploration into culturally-specific models and potential theoretical refinements. It also has practical implications for communication strategies, suggesting adaptations to better suit diverse cultural and social contexts. Overall, our research enriches existing theoretical frameworks by providing new insights and identifying areas for further investigation, contributing to a more thorough and culturally sensitive comprehension of death attitudes, which is vital for academic research and practical applications in various fields.

Future research should also investigate the effectiveness of different communication strategies and interventions in shaping attitudes toward death. This could involve exploring the impact of educational programs, training workshops, or interventions to improve end-of-life conversations and promote positive attitudes and perceptions about death. In conclusion, while our study provides valuable insights into the impact of communication on attitudes toward death, there are still several avenues for future research. By addressing these limitations and exploring new directions, researchers can further our understanding of the complex relationship between communication, attitudes toward death, and the development of more compassionate and supportive end-of-life care.

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