

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

AGNĖ JURGAITYTĖ – AVIŽINIENĖ

**THE THEORY OF YOUNG ADULTS' EXPERIENCE OF THE FINALITY OF  
LIFE: STRIVING TO LIVE MORE VALUABLY**

Summary of Doctoral Thesis  
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SIEKIS GYVENTI VERTINGIAU**

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## INTRODUCTION

The unquestionable truth of human life is the fact that his life is finite. Thus, the experience of the finality of life is a complex, yet relevant and very human issue. “Human meditation on death are nearly as old, as our species” (Neimeyer, 2008, p.1), therefore, it is understandable that as a researcher starts being interest in death psychology, he or she faces an abundance of literature, opinions of people, historical, anthropological, religious, philosophical and other views. Perhaps, it explains the complexity and variety of concepts. A lot of various definitions and conceptions for analysis of death phenomenon and of human perception of mortality are found in the literature on psychology research: the fear of death and dying, death anxiety, threat of dying, view towards death, concern about death, encounter with death, acceptance of death, etc. The terms in this field are used in a quite free way without any accurate separation and definition (Tomer, 1994; Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė, Kočiūnas, 2004; 2013). They are employed, while examining very different experiences of people, often without going deep into the fact, what precise experience it is talked about, how comprehensively it describes the well-being and life of person, what influence it is characterized by.

However, despite this fact, the research on death becomes increasingly popular, e.g., Hayes et al. (2010) notice that the death - thought accessibility of research, carried out during the recent 3 years, is equivalent to the number of research, carried for approximately 13 years. Yet, the results of research are quite controversial, since as modern social sciences start examining the topic of death, it is done in a very simplified, theoretically weak manner, preventing from interrelating and seeing a deeper Western heritage (Neimeyer, 2008). As a consequence, a random, superficial distribution of correlations emerges, which does not reach the human depths, linking us with mortality. Moore and Williamson (2003), Tomer et al. (2008) also emphasize a multifactorial research of death phenomenon by stressing the relevance of culture, religions, philosophies and the position of public of that age, and its interdisciplinary aspect. The review of various psychological theories and research, explaining the death, clearly demonstrates that a holistic approach is often ignored and narrow-field research is more

popular, when examining the encounter with death anxiety and perception of own mortality (Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė, Kočiūnas, 2013). This often leads to controversial results of research, i.e., the research as death thoughts, death anxiety distribution among people of different age and gender (De Raedt, Van der Speeten, (2008) and research by Schumaker (1991) and Russac et al. (2007)). Obviously, there is a great need of integration, which could reduce the confusion, emerging from abundance of often similar and at the same time different research and views (Tomer, 1994). Furthermore, the attempts to remain very scientific and maintain an accurate focus on specific research have impoverished the researched phenomenon itself. According to researchers (Mikulincer & Florian, 2008; Wong, 2008; Neimeyer, 2008), the research on death anxiety is usually characterized by lack of deeper understanding of phenomenon and often a philosophical foundation. The present research will follow Heidegger's (1992) view towards death, while a human life is considered as being-towards-death. In this context, the concept of the **finality of life** seems to be more appropriate than the concept of death anxiety. The term of finality of life does refer to the event that terminates the life, but highlights what is happening in the life process, refers to the death phenomenon in the context of life. While carrying out the exploratory research during the process of operationalization of the main concept, it was revealed that the question, related to death anxiety, is completely incomprehensible to people. It is evident that it is more a psychological structure than the really experienced phenomenon. It is worth mentioning that the wording of concept about finality of life and its experience used to be clear and acceptable enough for the surveyed ones, in order they could disclose and share their unique experience.

Importantly, while examining the everyday phenomenon of encounter with death, it is recommended to separate and avoid experiences, which manifest, when overcoming the real threats to life or situations of bereavements, since they can have a significant impact on the experience of anxiety itself, because the research in this field is quite controversial and the link among death anxiety, giving meaning to life and traumatic events is not completely clear and unambiguous (Floyd et al., 2005). Seeking to maintain a purity of phenomenon researched and in order it would not be influenced by any external factors, the age of people is limited too. In the present research, the attention is

paid only on age of early maturity, the so-called young adults. This age is the period of matured adults, usually with maximum strengths, when they encounter the lowest number of health problems (Levinson, 1978). What is more, the research by Russac et al. (2007) shows that there are no exceptional peaks, while exploring the level of death anxiety in the group of this age, therefore, it could be considered as sufficiently homogenous.

The above described situation in the field of research on death reveals the need of complex structural models, which would link different theories (taking into account their multiple and multilayer content). Therefore, the methodology, used by grounded theory (GT), seems to be logical and acceptable, since it allows reviewing the phenomenon under research in a broad and comprehensive manner without distorting its essence and without pre-narrowing it, by presenting a substantive theory, which explains it.

### **Originality and Relevance of Research**

- The research on death anxiety is very popular in the science of psychology, however, it often simplifies the phenomenon under research and lacks deeper analysis and understanding, precise usage of terms. After operationalizing the definition of death anxiety, the concept of finality of life is used in research, which is grounded on unique philosophical position and enables to explore the interested phenomenon in a new way, as well as to look at its experiences in a different manner.
- The method of grounded theory was selected for research, which allows exploring the interested phenomenon in a comprehensive manner and presenting a theoretical model that explains it, identifying its essential points and giving insights, which could be overlooked in case of using narrower research methods.
- The usage of selected concept is in line with the used method of grounded theory and allows exploring this phenomenon without distorting its essence and without pre-narrowing it.
- This method allows going deep into the experience of specific people by defining the group of subjects, and analyzing the experience of people by collecting various data and monitoring the experience in time interval.

- The analysis of experience of the finality of life could generate new thoughts and insights, which could be used for promoting new systematic research. What is more, the obtained results could be applied when consulting people, trying to achieve a deeper understanding of their experience, the potential threats and the existing possibilities, and helping to overcome the difficulties of encounter with death.

**The aim of thesis:** To disclose young adults' experience of the finality of life and to develop a substantive theory based on experience of participants.

**The tasks<sup>1</sup>:**

1. To name and reveal the main elements of experience of the finality of life and their links:
  - a. To find the main concern;
  - b. To identify and describe the core category and its features in details;
  - c. To name and describe the substantive categories and their features;
  - d. To reveal the interrelationship of categories.
2. To develop and describe a substantive theory, explaining the experience of the finality of life.

## METHOD

**General methodological principles of classic GT.** The research was carried out, following the method of the *classic grounded theory* (GT) (Glaser, 1978; 1998; 2001; 2003; 2009), which was the most appropriate for achieving the set aims. In case of classic GT research, a researcher can be flexible and start from his curiosity by knowing that “all is data” (Glaser, 2001), and continue by further following the subjects, coming into place, where there is their main concern, and trying to understand, how the latter is solved. A successful research gives a theoretical construct, a substantive theory, which explains the phenomenon under research, enables to understand it better and to research it further. However, it is very important to avoid preconceptions, hypotheses or support

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<sup>1</sup> The tasks are set according to the methodological principles of classic GT.



of one or another theory.<sup>2</sup> What is more, it should be noted that despite the fact that GT research is often classified as a qualitative one, a classic GT is perceived as general research methodology rather than a qualitative research methodology. It can cover various epistemological or ontological perspectives, and not support any of them, and remain neutral (Glaser, 1998; 2003; Holton, 2007; 2008; 2012).

While carrying out the research, according to the principles of classic GT, a researcher follows the principle of “full package” (Glaser,1998) and implements the following processes: 1) problem identification; 2) theoretical sampling; 3) data collection; 4) analysis; 5) writing up the memos; 6) theory development. It is obvious that it is possible to describe and name the individual GT steps, however, it cannot be called a linear process. This systemic method is cyclical and a researcher is constantly “walking in circles” among data collection, analysis, conceptualization, writing up the memos, and returning back to data collection, etc. Thus, the aforementioned principles were also followed during this research, data were collected and analyzed simultaneously. Importantly, as the data from interview started indicating that theoretical saturation is achieved, data collection was stopped.

**Participants and course of research.** The research consisted of the following stages: first of all, exploratory research was carried out, during which the instruction was specified, the most precise words and questions, which would help to keep a productive conversation with subjects and to obtain a necessary information, were sought for. What is more, the author of thesis personally conducted the interview with herself and described her experience and the view towards phenomenon under research. Then the main research was carried out after selecting people, who are able to reflect on their thoughts, to verbalize them, and who met the criterion of theoretical sampling<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that a final version of this article is presented by usual procedure, the research itself was carried out by following the requirements of classic GT methodology: first, the aim was set, research and analysis were carried out, and only then, when the first contours of the theory were obtained, the analysis of scientific literature took place. Here, the belief that the obtained result should emerge from the real experience of participants and not from the hypotheses of scientific literature, was followed. Thus, it is ensured that the obtained results of research are really based on empirical data and not on theoretical considerations.

<sup>3</sup> A theoretical sampling is the contraposition of random sampling. During theoretical sampling, the process of data collection is controlled by the theory developed, while a researcher constantly asks himself, what people or groups of people I need now, in order to understand the phenomenon under research better, and what theoretical benefit and aim it will cause. (Glaser, Strauss, 1967).

They voluntarily agreed to take part in psychological research and confirmed their consent to take part and to use their anonymous data for the purposes of research. 17 subjects of both genders and of 22 – 45 year old, who currently have no health problems and recently have not experienced any severe problems of physical or mental health, traumatic situations, participated in research (their case history was selected and specified during introductory interview). Another 4 persons, who expand and complement the research field and step over the boundaries of the defined field, were selected during additional survey.

The research consisted of some parts: first of all, introductory interview was conducted with each participant. It was followed by the first in-depth interview, which lasted for approximately an hour. The second interview (which usually lasted for shorter time) was conducted not earlier than after a month, while subjects were requested to write a diary of free form on the theme of the finality of life during the mentioned period. They were also informed about availability of help in case of facing difficulties, related with the topic under research. In order to keep the confidentiality of the surveyed ones, all names as well as some life facts, which, according to researcher, could not affect the conceptualization or understanding of research data and could not influence the theory to be developed, are changed.

**Data analysis: how grounded theory emerges.** In case of classic GT, as a researcher starts carrying out the research only with the general aim and his interest, he is immediately requested to code and conceptualize the obtained material. The coding starts at the same time as data collection. During research memos were filled, analyzed and then sorted. While coding, the method of constant comparison was followed, when the codes are distinguished during open coding and compared with each other, later – with emerging concepts, and again with each other, and with emerging wider and more abstract categories. As the core category emerged, it was moved to selective coding by maintaining the main focus on the core category. According to Glaser (1978), the core category abstractedly expresses the main concern of all or almost all participants. Memo about emergence of the core category is presented below:

**Memo about emergence/rise of the core category, dated 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 2011 (EXTRACT)**

Already the first intelligence interviews make it clear that the essential theme around which the entire conversation evolves will be somehow related with life and attempt to do something in life. The

essential movement from death towards life is so evident that it could not be left unnoticed. It used to catch the eye. To external observer it was also obvious that the core theme will really be related with life. After the fourth interview, the main concept acquires the working title: “*to increase the value of life*”. It is well illustrated by memo, dated 12 01 2011: “It seems that the core category is related to coming back to life. Focusing not on life, but on what is now and on quality of the present. Here, the quality of life itself is of utmost importance. A person wants to live in a quality way and in a way that is valuable to him”.

The category is significant and became evident quite early, therefore, it was noticed by me as well as by those, who read texts and extracts during seminar. However, the doubts that maybe it is nothing new or special arouse and this stimulated to search further. I started looking at the same extracts of stories, open codes in different way and attempting to notice other aspect of not less significance. Obviously, other attempts, for example, “reduction of threat of death” or “emphasis on transience, limitation”, were far from being the central figures that could fit and shape all experience. And the change from death to life was increasingly catching my eye.

Further process of work with core category was more a search for title, which would be as precise as possible and would reflect the phenomenon under research. The initial version was: *to increase the value of life*. However, it was characterized by disadvantage that the finite process of phenomenon is fixed in it, where all intricacy, searches, forgetting and further attempts are lost. The other considered version was *transformation from death towards life*, however, this construct reflects only a part of the core category by losing the qualitative part, when a person emphasizes and speaks about changes, which take place in his life. The third version “*trying to live more valuably*” met the requirements and became a suitable working definition, since it contained three significant elements/features, which are the pivotal in the structure of this category:

1. The word “to live”, specifying the mentioned person’s move from death towards life;
2. The term “valuably” – highlighting that this move takes place not chaotically, but in a targeted manner, to the direction, which seems valuable to person at that moment;
3. The word “trying” specifies the attempts and searches rather than a final and complete action.

After work with linguists and terminologists, it was recommended to replace the word “trying” with the word “striving” by highlighting that the latter better reflects the targeted activity and attempts of person, and is more suitable to name the described phenomenon. Thus, the final name of the core category was formed: *striving to live more valuably*.

It is worth mentioning that the relationships between the core category and concepts are sought for during theoretical coding and while sorting the conceptual memos. In the final stage, the sorted memos make the theory, which in this case is *striving to live more valuably*. Furthermore, it should be noted that GT must be conceptual, which means that the developed concepts must be independent of *time, place, people* (Glaser, 2001). Memo, illustrating the stages of theory development, is presented below:

**Memo about stages of grounded theory development, dated 13<sup>th</sup> of December, 2011 (EXTRACT)**

When looking back and through memos, 3 evident stages are clearly visible. Although they were intertwined and used to switch one to another and back, their presence was quite evident. The best illustration of these stages in my participation in GT seminars and presentation of my “theory” or its data, and respectively emphasis on the themes and issues I am concerned.

- The first stage – TYPOLGICAL. My focus and the prism I looked at data through primarily was the experience of specific person. I evaluated how he shows, whether he understands and experiences the finality of life, whether he depreciates and denies this. I simply considered everything on the basis of aspect, whether life is finite or eternal to person. It was

very dichotomous division, which prevented the theory from development. There also was a later return to search for typology by integrating more different factors: perception, behaviour and reaction to reality of death. The following types could be distinguished: deniers, those tended to romanticize, stoics, “enlightened”, unintentionally understanding, etc.

The preparation of presentation in February, 2011, and the presentation itself revealed that the selection of evaluation of finality is just a separate variable, which fails to cover the abundance of data, and this division was not essential, just descriptive, preventing from achieving the conceptualism free from person or his internal decision. The clear emerging and strengthening of the core category allowed taking a deeper look at data and conceptualizing them, and not just remaining in the level of description.

- The second stage – PROCEDURAL. This stage also used to emerge for a few times. It was noticeable as soon as first interview started and took a major part of my first codes, memos or reflections. However, it should be mentioned that the process so far was a description of how the event takes place directly in time. Although it already had a clear axis, i.e., the core category, which seemed to be a point of transition. However, the direct relationship with present time and affection to time prevented from suitable theoretical coding and the descriptive level remained.

Presentation in GT seminar, in September, 2011. The process of experience of the finality of life was presented, however, this process was still quite largely related with present time. Thus, the direct placement of events did not allow to achieve a higher level, significantly narrowed the understanding of phenomenon, made it highly one-dimensional. In specific case, it was obvious that as a person encounters with death, something happens and, therefore, a person tries to do something. If a man fails to reduce the internal tension, he tries to do something again etc. All the remaining variables and categories were related to this process. The process also included many small details, and a number of categories was quite high, while the core category did not function in full.

- The third stage – CONCEPTUAL – SYSTEMIC. This stage was achieved after performing the theoretical coding and sorting the memos again. These procedures helped to draw back from direct time, specific person and place, and to have a wider look at the phenomenon. The core category was distinguished and converged, it succeeded to structure them as consequences, conditions and contextual phenomena. The obvious triad with its dynamics emerge after sorting: “*striving to live more valuably*”, “*negotiating reality of death*”, “*negotiating changes in life*” and one more concept of *affectability*, which, although narrower than the aforementioned 3 categories, brings to GT a new dimension, interrelates the categories, takes part in each of them and fills a contextual space.

**Procedures for ensuring the creditability of research.** According to authors of the methodology (Glaser, Strauss, 1967), GT is subject to slightly different requirements for transparency and creditability, since the aim of GT is to create not a precise and universal truth, but a theory with the meaning both in the specified field, where research is carried out, and for those, who are interested in this phenomenon. By answering the question of creditability, Glaser (1998, p.170) emphasizes that “...proof is in the outcome. Does the theory work to explain relevant behaviour in the substantive area of researcher. Does it have relevance to the people in the substantive field. Does the theory fit the substantive area. is it readily modifiable as a new data emerge”. Finally, the theory must be characterized by instant “grab”, which means that it should be attractive and

memorable for those, who hear it (Glaser, 2001). While preparing and writing this thesis, the transparency is also sought through naming the subjectivity of researcher and through constant reflection, in order it would be clear to reader how research was carried out, how one or another categories were developed, what difficulties were faced by researcher and how they influenced the elaboration of theory. Moreover, it also should be noted that this research was carried out in Lithuanian language, while translation to English would be an additional creation and development of grounded theory (Tarozzi, 2012). Therefore, while translating, it was sought to find the most precise equivalent to Lithuanian concept, even if it caused a negative impact on English meaning of the new translated concept.

## RESULTS

First, the present section provides the structure of the developed theory in the form of both narratives and graphic figure, as well as presents the main concern, faced by young adults, when experiencing the finality of life or considering this theme. What is more, the main and central component of theory – *striving to live more valuably* – is discussed. The extent to which the theory solves the main concern of participants and explains their behaviour in details is reviewed. Then substantive categories are presented.

**Main concern: inevitability of death.** First of all, it is wanted to start from naming the main concern, since GT primarily focuses on how the participants solve it (Glaser, 1998). As conversation starts, the first thoughts and comments are always related with death, both the situations of personal encounter with death and becoming a witness of other people's encounter with death are named. The latter can be very significant, stressful situations – not only bereavements, but also daily events, for example, the car accidents, which caused only a minor damage. It might also include the self-imposed situations, fantasies or just memories, when the death was near, or its mentioning in news programs and poetry. Furthermore, regardless of age, all participants have memories, experiences, thoughts, ideas, philosophical insights about death and its meaning, influence in human life. During conversation the question how to accept the

fact that “I will die one day” and “cannot do anything” for that, the death becomes noticeably inevitable, and will come one day and I will not escape from it, becomes immediately important to subjects. A human being feels, understands and shortly experiences the *inevitability of death*. It is often emphasized that the aforementioned questions arouse in childhood or adolescence. What is more, it is highlighted that there is a lot of information, reflections and a wish to share them. Usually, naming the death generates various strong feelings, e.g., anxiety, fear or confusion, however, a person attempts to control himself and to remain calm, even to demonstrate courage.

### **Striving to Live More Valuably: Reviews and Features of the Theory**

The heart of grounded theory is the core category, which is “consistently related to many other categories and their properties” (Glaser, 1998, p.26), and it is the centre of all data and theoretical construct. In the present research, the category “*striving to live more valuably*” is one of the methods which the young adults solve their main concern by – the perception of inevitability of death. Naming the core category “*striving to live more valuably*” provided the possibility to relate data, which were collected during this research and to combine the central themes of the research: to find a life (the concept – *finding a lively life*) and to live more valuably (the concept – *striving for subjective value of life*).

The central construct – “striving to live more valuably” – clearly indicates and separates a few things. First of all, it is an evident contradiction to the concept of death. All subjects talked about life and clearly understood that as long as there is no death, there remains and is life, thus, the conversation used to naturally turn to side of their life. Moreover, it is always the conversation about life, which is important and valuable for them, and about how they perceive what is subjectively valuable for them. Consequently, the following different value aspects can be distinguished: *condition facilitation, satisfaction with life*.

When carrying out the research and conceptualizing, Glaser’s (1998, p.190) suggestion that “the smaller the amount of concepts that account for the greatest variation in substantive behaviour resolving the main concern is the goal. Less relevant and workable categories dilute by derailment the core and subcore categories” was

followed. Thus, 2 substantive categories, which were related with the main concern of participants and with conditions for its appearance, emerged along the core category through a constant comparison of data: “negotiating reality of death” and “negotiating changes in life”. As three categories were combined, the basic social psychological process was formed<sup>4</sup>. In this theory, the process is closely related with the core category and other two categories, and reflects a constant internal and external “movement”, search, which could be conceptualized as *becoming*, as a constant and continuous action, where there is a person.

The categories mentioned in the theory “*striving to live more valuably*” are closely interrelated and intertwined. Although it is attempted to “extract” and to discuss each category separately by describing and explaining in, in order to understand and explain the researched phenomenon, the amount and interrelationship of these categories should be considered. Below there is Figure 1, illustrating the main elements and concepts of this theory.

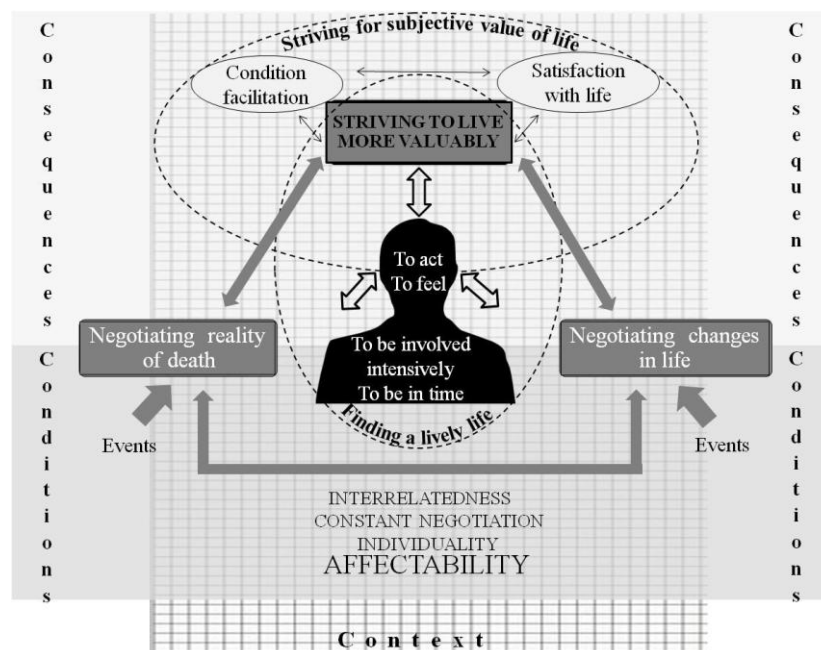


Figure 1: Theoretical Structure of “Striving to live more valuably” Revealing the Experience of the Finality of Life

<sup>4</sup> According to Glaser (1978, p. 100), the basic social process is “theoretical reflections and summarization of the patterned, systematic uniformity flows of social life which people go through”. Usually, a few types of this process are identified: the basic social – psychological, the basic psychological, the basic social, etc. (Glaser, 1978; 1998), as the best which theoretically reflect the patterns that take place in human life.

First of all, the following 4 contextual concepts are presented: *interrelatedness*, *constant negotiation*, *individuality* and *affectability*. As it has already been mentioned, the interrelation and intertwining of categories and concepts is a significant aspect of this theory. It is well reflected by the concept *interrelatedness*. The participants of the present research often switched from one to another theme – from death to life. While talking, they used to emphasize “entanglement” and natural indivisibility. The words “related”, “network”, “intertwined” were directly used during conversation by demonstrating and illustrating the inability to dissociate, by highlighting the relationship among various things, by paying attention on the relation of death with life, the relationship of the world with experiences and well-being, the human relationship, the relationship with the next world, etc.

The other mentioned concept reflects in the theory as the emphasis of “negotiation” and “striving” in the core categories by demonstrating that they are a constant movement, which takes place both among the categories and in the categories, rather than a static process. Some people consciously understood and reflected this dynamic aspect – *constant negotiation* – by naming it clearly. While other people used to express it in words without complete understanding of that impact. It is obvious from the data obtained that after certain events, insights and changes take place a person is no longer the same. His relationship with both himself, the world and other people changes inevitably. It forces to reconsider various beliefs, values and other basic issues, to look for new solutions and new inner balance. For example, after hearing about illness of a relative, various processes, which affect many different fields, start taking place inside spontaneously. The other very typical situation is that as a person celebrates anniversary, the life changes, values or value of relationships are reflected on.

This model is related with young adults. However, it is obvious that the participants have different experience, knowledge and skills to overcome the difficulties of life besides the fact that they are very different personalities. Importantly, the extent of “success” of “*striving to live more valuably*”, the extent of efforts required by “*striving to live more valuably*” are both closely related with a person himself. The described phenomenon is defined by the concept of *individuality*, thus maintaining the abstraction of “time, place, people”.



Both while talking on this theme during interviews and while later writing a diary or meeting during second interview, it can be seen that this topic excites and involves, prevents from being indifferent, forces to express the position both in respect of experiences and while being interested in position of other people or just simply speaking on the theme. One fails to remain neutral in the topic of the finality of life. It is also revealed through intense experience by remembering the events or experience and sharing them. Even the arising desire to defend or simple avoidance demonstrates that it is impossible not to get involved, to remain unaffected or neutral. This phenomenon is generalized by the concept of *affectability* in the theory and it exists during all research by playing an important role and interacting with individual categories.

The theory *striving to live more valuably* explains the context, conditions and consequences, faced by healthy young adults, when experiencing the finality of life. There is a person in the centre of aforementioned theoretical structure. This person is defined by individuality and affectability, and placed in the field of interrelatedness, thus, forcing him to look for solution and to balance between tensions that appear, when negotiating the reality of death and life changes. By doing so, a person finds a life in a new way through activity, feelings, being in time and intensive involvement, and seeks the value in a few fields: condition facilitation and satisfaction with life. What is more, the balance inside other substantive categories is also sought: as a person looks for (negotiates) relationship with reality of death and life changes, which would satisfy him.

### **Striving to Live More Valuably: the Main Theme of Experience of the Finality of Life**

Thus, the core category of finality of life – *striving to live more valuably* – emerges in the described background of the concepts. This category consists of two sub-core categories: *finding a lively life* and *striving for subjective value of life*. The main concept of the category contains and assimilates the both mentioned sub-core categories, which are the key characteristics and components of this core category. In this way, the axis is formed around which the whole grounded theory revolves.

#### ***Finding a lively life: a sub-core category***

After encountering with the finality of life and naming death as tangible, people move to their life and taking care about it in a relatively fast manner. *Movement from death towards life* is a typical action, although the participants may not realize it. The encounter with death is always accompanied by experience of sudden and intense vitality, which can be illustrated by slogan “but I am still alive!” It should be noted that although this experience of vitality is accompanied by euphoric tone, it is not always pleasant due to its high intensity and resulting quite strong anxiety. 4 quite clear characteristics, accompanying the experience of vitality, can be distinguished: *to act, to feel, to be involved intensively and to be in time*, which not only help to feel vitality, but also fix the vitality in the experience of the finality of life, and, thus, further pull back from inevitability of death. It is like the mechanisms, when it seems that a person is forced to survive in his life through some activities, experience of feelings, intensive involvement and feeling of finite time, thus, the life involves and does not allow a man to escape from his vitality.

Even considering about death, more specifically, about the process of dying, people look for the ways, how they could feel better in the aforementioned process while being alive, thus, the focus turns to life. This phenomenon is called *finding a lively life*. It is well illustrated by the following quote:

“...we will die one day in one way or another either of old age, disease or being struck down by car. We all understand this, however, the life till death rather than a thought that you will die is threatening. It is threatening. The scariest thing to experience is the realization that you should be there. I mean that fifty, eighty or some year old. The fact that I will die is not fearsome. I would not be afraid of it at all. So, you will die means you will die, since your time has come. It is scary how you will live till that time. In a quality manner or not? Will you do the things you had to do?”

### ***Striving for subjective value of life: a sub-core category***

As all elements of vitality become active, the mechanism, stimulating a person to do something and *to be striving*, is turned on. It is related with aforementioned characteristic, which accompanies the experience of vitality, i.e., “to live means *to act*”, however, the accent of time differs: here the possibility of future rather than the present is highlighted. The concept *to be striving* is characterized by features as *openness to experience and striving for completeness*. Although they seem to be contradicting

features, they give possibilities and movement directions to person. The openness to experience enables to do, experience, try something in the future, since while there is time there is a possibility to do something – anything. It seems that this moment is the transformation, when a person turns from death towards life, starts thinking and acting within the limits of possibilities, really experiences the provided future possibility. It is frequently accompanied by a strong feeling of freedom. Regardless of great affectability and openness, seeing the possibilities, while experiencing the finality of life, a person also has a *striving for completeness*, which stimulates and prompts to make a specific decision, to have a final insight, to evaluate own achievements, thus, putting an end to the condition of uncertainty.

After moving from death towards life and discovering the life with possibilities, a person tries to live in a subjectively meaningful way and to set out his priorities. He starts looking for and actively seeks for what could be called a value. Here, an important role is played by subjectively meaningful experienced subjectivity, therefore, the category is called a *subjective value of life*. A person appreciates only that what is valuable for him and not for others. Even if the moment of value is not a long-term one, it shortly exists in the mind of person and, thus, motivates a person to follow it. For example, when a man sees an accident, is suddenly realizes that instead of working he will spend evening with family and relatives because it is more important to him. The effect on man and the extent of persistence of his changed behaviour or trait will depend not on duration of search, but more on value, which is assigned by person to that phenomenon and experience. Usually, he makes it in two ways: by looking for *satisfaction with life* and *condition facilitation*. It is essential to note that these are not contradicting phenomena and they can take place simultaneously in a man by influencing each other. Thus, these two concepts of *striving for subjective value of life* will be discussed in details by highlighting their essential features.

The concept of *satisfaction with life* is well described by several features, for instance, *subjective value*, *self-being* and *sufficiency*. The issue of *subjective value* becomes very important precisely in the background of the finality of life. It seems that while facing the possibility of death and realizing (although for a short time) the possibility of disappearance, a man immediately faces the question of what is valuable,

meaningful, and starts seeking this value. The mentioned issue of value can also include very wide fields: it can be simple physical things (e.g., purchase of book, which has been wanted for a long time), social matters (e.g., remembering the classmates, drinking with friends in bar), personal (e.g., striving for independence, divorce with wife, who has been irritating for a long time), spiritual (faith in God), ethical (discovery of honesty). It seems that a person gets free then and allows himself starting (although for a short time) behaving in the way he wants – in the way that seems valuable for him.

It seems like a person recognizes himself in that behaviour, and is accompanied by strong feeling that that it is really me, which can be described as *self-being*. By continuing to practice the mentioned behaviour, he more experiences the satisfaction with what he does, creates, selects. It becomes as an evident contraposition to alienation – a clear understanding of what really does not exist, what is completely alien. Following the aforementioned feeling of self-being, it is oriented in life, while selecting what is own and suitable and what is not. It should be noted that the experience of self-being causes a great satisfaction and stimulates to continue the activity without being interested in how it is evaluated by others.

In this context, the concept of *sufficiency* emerges, when a person realizes that he cannot have everything, achieve, make, experience everything, and starts looking for the extent which would be sufficient for him. It can also include the realization that what one already has or had, experiences or experienced, is sufficient. The experience of sufficiency is often accompanied by a sense of relief and causes an inner satisfaction. The described features of *satisfaction with life* (value, self-being and sufficiency) are well illustrated by the following quote:

*“However, despite this fact, I realized what people I want to see near, that some of my weaknesses, pleasures, perverse things were more significant before. Then I stopped seeking those things, perverse things. For example, the parties, which do not create any value, or some meaningless communication for benefit. Why is it needed? It will give a moment pleasure, attention. However, why? And when setting against the feeling I experienced when sitting in oncologic room. You think, oh God, how simple it is and does not create any value. Maybe, my opinion about striving for some benefit changed. I felt freer. The calm appeared. It is how it is. However, the calm is not apathy, it is like concentration ... I could say that the searches for pleasures and comfort decreased. I will tell a simple example. We live in flat and I think about moving to house, building something, and I thought ... do I really need this, what is wrong here? Then you think ... that everything ... home, relationship, pleasant and meaningful activity ... meaningless*

... a circle shrank. I noticed that I have changed since then: as a clear extrovert, looking for energy elsewhere, I find the energy in myself now. Maybe it is a coincidence, maybe other things changed. But you ask what it gave me? Immersion in myself ...”

The other aspect of *striving for subjective value of life*, playing an essential role in this category, is the concept of ***condition facilitation***, expressed through concern about condition and accompanied by striving to facilitate it, thus, ensuring a well-being. While encountering the finality of life and after encountering the finality of life, a person starts actively looking for what to do, to make, in order to make it easier, in order to reduce an inner stress, which appears as inevitability of death is realized. Condition facilitation has some characteristics: *search for facilitation* and *fading away*. It is important to emphasize that taking care about condition can coincide with striving for subjective value of life, and certain condition achieved becomes the greatest symbol of value.

One of the most obvious reactions which can be noticed, when a man encounters the finality of life, is search for facilitation, because a man immediately starts looking for what could help him to feel better, when fighting against intense feelings, confusion and strong anxiety. One or other efforts are made, in order to achieve the facilitation or in order it would be just easier. A person notices that he tries to practice the favourite activity, to be with the loved ones, to become involved in usual routine activity, thus, often trying to forget about the death and the finality of life. Sometimes, a man denies or tries to distance himself from the thoughts, fantasies or memories, related with this experience, and he even does not allow letting them in anymore. It is often possible to feel that failure to think and ability to deny is a great value and is understood as a result of successful inner life and work. Meanwhile, the moments, when unclear fear is experienced, are considered as weakness or inability to cope with. The searches for facilitation are also often observed, when avoiding thinking or doing something else, thus, attempting to pre-protect oneself from difficult experiences and to facilitate the condition even before the concept of *affectability* takes place. The mechanism of avoidance used to be well reflected while writing a diary, when it was observed, how it is difficult to force oneself to think and write on this topic, even if there are thoughts and wish to do it.

The other mechanism, which helps to facilitate the condition, is *fading away*. However, it often takes place without intervention of human will and only its result is

usually observed, which frequently surprises a person himself. While *search for facilitation* is more “acute” reaction to facilitate the condition, *fading away* is a “chronic” phenomenon. It is a gradual, not sudden, internal work, which lasts for certain time and which is like a resistance to the mechanism of affectability. While affectability involves actively, fading away “pulls out” a person often without noticing. It is like the other side of concept of *affectability*, when it seems that a man becomes less affectable. Probably, it is best illustrated by participants’ realization, which became apparent during the second interview, that they think about experience of the finality of life, the inevitability of death far less than they thought during the first interview. As writing a diary used to die away, sometimes even to complete disappearance of desire to write something.

### **Negotiating reality of death: I substantive category**

By combining 2 concepts of *disturbing death events* and *striving to control the death* into one, a wider category of “negotiating reality of death” emerges. In order to highlight the active position and participation of person, when accepting the death, it was decided to use the word “negotiating”. As a man realizes and feels the proximity of death, he starts negotiating, consulting both with himself and with reality of death (its inevitability), while searching for position and attitude in respect of death. It is important to note that the result of the agreement can be very short-term and more stable, a person very often changes his inner position, sometimes it used to be strongly felt that the participant doubts or, on the contrary, attempts to convince the researcher of rightness of his position.

The concept of *disturbing death events* includes various situations and reminders, which make the death to be real and inevitable. The aforementioned events are characterized by unique ability to invade, to penetrate into our mind and to “flood” it, to disturb it, and to take root in it. It includes both the crisis events, related with death, for example, health-threatening situations, situations of severe experiences, situations of bereavements, situations of witnessing the death, and situations, when the death becomes desirable due to strong internal or physical pain. However, the daily events, related with death, reflections on death, conversations with people, celebrations or anniversaries also

fall into this category. It seems that the situations of death events touch the human life and disturb it differently. What is more, the level of disturbance is not always related with content of death events – it is more related with other concepts, i.e., *condition facilitation* or *affectability*.

The other concept of *striving to control the death* is like specific positions or strategies in respect of reality of death, which are applied, in order to reduce stress and “facilitate the condition”, thus, solving the aforementioned disturbance, which is experienced, when encountering the death events. As certain position is taken, for instance, as it is decided that there is no death, that it is just a temporary moment before eternity, which exists in paradise, the striving for subjective value of life also changes, priorities are reconsidered, the view towards life and values alters. Thus, the features as *death exploitation*, *death as motive*, *death as conscience*, *death mystification* can be distinguished. For example, the concept of *death exploitation* illustrates that turning the position in the way that the one would be able to choose death often reduces internal stress and threat. If the death is useful, if it can relief pain and suffering, maybe it is not so bad and scary. What is more, the theme of suicide emerges in this context as a way to control the quality of life by choosing its termination, even if death is not a desirable outcome. In particular, it is the way, which helps to maintain the feeling that one is able to control the helplessness, when encountering the experience of the finality of life.

### **Negotiating changes in life: II substantive category**

Negotiating changes in life is the second substantive category, the components of which are the following: *constant life change* and *personally valuable changes*. As in case of first substantive category “negotiating reality of death”, this category also includes the phenomenon of “negotiating”. Here, the term of negotiating also reflects not a static, but a dynamical, constantly changing relationship. In this case, a person seems to try to negotiate constantly between the desire to maintain the life unchanged and acceptance of certain internal or external changes. What is more, this category, as the aforementioned “negotiating reality of death”, includes not only conditions, but also consequences: these concepts serve both as certain outcome, which is faced and

experienced by person, and as certain stimuli, which encourage a person searching further.

In fact, experience of the finality of life is often encountered under not so dramatic situations, which are collated with death. Often a clear sense of time limitation, transience, constant change is felt, aging is experienced – it is conceptualized as *constant life change*. Hence, in this transition a person clearly captures the element of finality and goes through it, says goodbye to certain stages of life. The changes, which are significant to person, take place in experience of the finality of life. Thus, the concept *personally valuable changes* includes the components as *finding a new self*, *reconsideration of relationships* and *start of search for spirituality*. Importantly, this concept is closely related with the core category *striving to live more valuably*. The changes that take place in this concept are the changes, which are sought by person, since he sees a meaning and value. *Personally valuable changes* are the tangible changes, which are implemented by man, in order to live more valuably and to reduce the tension that appears, when encountering the inevitability of death. Consequently, the aforementioned concept becomes both a condition and an outcome of experience of the finality of life in theoretical construct.

## DISCUSSION

When discussing the data, it is emphasized that the term *value* is not frequently encountered in the literature on death research, and it is even less stated that it is the essential element, while speaking about encounter with *inevitability of death*, personal mortality and consequently resulting feelings and experiences. However, precisely the value is in the central position in this theory and enables to understand the experienced finality of life better. The term “more valuably” is perfect for reflecting that these changes (sometimes simply adaptation or calming) take place not chaotically and randomly, but in very targeted manner by emphasizing what is valuable to person at that moment. Importantly, the valuable things can be characterized by great opposition. Therefore, the subjective value in this theory is also experienced as from two sides: through attempts to find *satisfaction with life* and through *condition facilitation*. In



addition, research often states that after realizing the death a person seeks to facilitate his condition, in order to feel better, and uses various protective shields, in order to defend himself from encountered experiences (Florian et al., 2002; Hayes et al., 2010). Hence, the theory “striving to live more valuably” emphasizes the fact that taking care about condition is a valuable phenomenon to person and not only denial and inaccurate reflection or distortion of reality. Mikulincer and Florian (2008) stress that precisely additional factors and not only the concentration on defence mechanisms can help to understand the death phenomenon better. It is important to note Tillich’s (1999) idea about the courage to be and human ability to turn back and have a brave look at situation and his life in the face of obligation to die. In some sense, the present research also reveals that despite of threat of death, a person turns to life. It is one more of key and significant elements of this theory, it is the feature of the concept *finding a lively life* to move from death towards life.

According to Moore, Williamson (2003) and Mikulincer, and Florian (2008), people differ not only by intensity of the experienced fear or anxiety, but also by meaning, which is assigned by them to death and concern, experienced and expressed when facing the death in reality. Meaning Management Theory (Wong, 2008) draws attention on the fact that in order to understand the relationship of person with death and mortality, it is not enough to talk about avoidance of death, it is necessary to speak about human wish to have a nice, happy and meaningful life. In case of the present research, it is illustrated by concept of subjective value, which defines that a person seeks to experience a value and significance, in order everything he does would not be empty, meaningless or useless. However, a constant emphasis on the term “subjective” should be stressed. A value as a meaning, which is discovered and is very important to person, is not abstract, but highly individual, since it is impossible to point out a general meaning of human life (Frankl, 1998). Likewise, the theory of the present research highlights the importance of personal *subjectivity*, which reveals that what is subjectively valuable in experience of the finality of life to one person can be incomprehensible to other. It seems like contradicting with statement of representatives of terror management theories, i.e., Solomon, Greenberg, Pyszczynsky (1991), that identification with standards of certain culture helps people to experience the finality of life in an easier manner. Thus,

finding the own values rather than identification with value system of others was meaningful to subjects. It is closely related with the concept of *self-being* that the need of value and the resulting corresponding behaviour is accompanied by strong feeling that it is really me. What is more, it is close to Heidegger's (1992) ideas about authentic life, since he highlights that the nature of death as possibility enables to disclose the structures of authentic being. The concept of *sufficiency* is also characterized by similar relation, when a man no longer seeks the vague ideals of perfection, but looks for clear and specific things, and is able to experience the feeling of sufficiency, while facing both daily matters and more important events of life. It could be related with research of Neimeyer and Chapman (1980-81), where they followed the idea of Sartre that death will be more frightening for those individuals, whose life project is incomplete, because death will have the action of terminating the life and will be incompatible with sufficiency of realization of ideas. Similarly, the present research reveals that *sufficiency* has a meaningful value and is a component of satisfaction with life.

It is important to note that the basic social – psychological process in this theory is *becoming*. It well reflects not completeness, not an irreversible, rigid solution and structure of categories, but a constant movement, a constant negotiation, a constant internal dialogue, which is made by person. Here, Rogers (2005 p.175) might be quoted: “The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction not a destination”. However, in this theory it is important that a person starts his process of striving or *constant negotiation* not only because of getting confused when encountering the finality of life, but also because he starts moving into something, striving for something that is valuable to him. The term *to negotiate* at first seemed too managerial and failing to reveal the psychological picture of a man, however, it is also used in Kubler-Ross' (2001) papers, where she calls the third stage of encounter with death as negotiation. She emphasized the human desire to postpone the verdict of fate by changing the behaviour, lifestyle, habits through negotiation with God (or some other higher power). The present research felt the attempts of person to negotiate, confer, look for some ways out and solutions by making various dialogues with himself, other people, events or life changes, to find a personally suitable position. It is worth mentioning that this research shows that one cannot remain neutral and passive, when facing the theme of encounter with finality

of life, the topic of inevitability of death involves and prevents from being indifferent. This phenomenon has been relatively little described and researched in the literature. Perhaps, the closest variant would be the mortality salience, proposed by authors of terror management theories (Schmeichel et al., 2009). However, their theory more deals with protective functions of self-assessment against mortality salience (Solomon et al., 1991; Herman-Jones et al., 1997; Schmeichel et al., 2009) than attempts to understand this phenomenon. It is evident that future research should examine the phenomenon of *affectability* in a broader manner, in order to define its impact and levels. What is more, it is obvious that affectability is a broader concept, which includes not only disturbing death events, but also aging, as well as events that seem not to be directly related with mortality (birthdays, anniversaries and sometimes even weddings), and requires a deeper analysis.

The theory *striving to live more valuably* is a reaction to man's encounter with the finality of life and its reflection. It somehow reminds the research of Routledge et al. (2011) on nostalgia and meaning of life, which shows that provoking nostalgia in people increases the feeling of meaning of life, which consequently leads to conclusion that the past makes the present meaningful. Thus, following the research and the obtained result, it seems that realization of inevitable future makes the present valuable. According to Frankl (2007, p.124), finality and transience is not only the main feature of human life, but also the basis of meaning of that life.

**Limitations of the research and recommendations for further research.** As all researches have unique limitations, this research did not avoid them. A part of limitations was related with the researched theme, its conceptual confusion, attempts to make the people speak, forcing them to reflect on the possibility of life and the resulting intensive experiences. Other limitations are related with methodological nuances, with classic GT itself and its goal to develop a substantive theory: when the maximum conceptualization was sought and when it was distanced from specific person, place and time. Obviously, the selected method limited and at the same time enabled to research the theme of the finality of life in an original way. It dictated both the number of participants, type and presentation of results, application possibilities. What is more, while carrying out the research and preparing the thesis, the requirement of "full package" was followed

without omitting any significant working procedures, using the necessary research instruments and following the ethical and transparency requirements. However, it was often pity to “sacrifice” the interesting experience of people, significant quotes, to rename it by abstract codes, concepts and categories. But with the help of conceptual categories it was possible to develop and expand the theory itself. In addition, the question how the theory would look like, if other core category was selected, remains open. GT seeks not to create a precise and universal truth, but to develop a theory with meaning both in substantive field, where the research is carried out, and for those, who are concerned in this phenomenon. There is no single method how to examine the data as there is no single model which would explain the complex phenomenon as the finality of life. In this case, the doubts should be blocked and left to future research. What is more, the evaluation of the theory “striving to live more valuably” should be also left for further research, carried out by using other methods of empirical research, for example, by using the structural equation modeling, in order to test the core elements of GT theory and their links (Rosenbaum, 2012). However, we expect that despite the above named limitations, the theory will help psychologists, psychotherapists or other professionals, who face this phenomenon in practice, to understand the structure and change of this phenomenon better. In addition, it will help to draw attention on not only the severe experiences, faced in the background of the finality of life, but also on importance of value, and will promote to go deeper into what is important and valuable in human life.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. Inevitability of death is main concern encountered by person, when experiencing his finality of life, and he attempts to solve it by striving to live more valuably.
2. The core category “striving to live more valuably” is disclosed, which consists of two parts, i.e., “finding a lively life” and “striving for subjective value of life”.
  - a. “Finding a lively life” is characterized by the features as “movement from death towards life” and “experience of vitality”, which is faced through activity, feelings, intensive involvement and being in time.

- b. “Striving for subjective value of life” includes the features as “to be striving” and “subjective value of life”, evidencing through striving to facilitate the condition and searching for satisfaction with life. The latter concept is characterized by subjective value, self-being and sufficiency.
3. Two substantive categories are named: “negotiating reality of death” and “negotiating changes in life”.
  - a. “Negotiating reality of death” includes human attempts to search for new relation with “disturbing death events” and “striving to control the death”.
  - b. “Negotiating changes in life” includes human attempts to search for relation with “constant life change” and ongoing “personally valuable changes”.
4. “Striving to live more valuably” is a dynamic and changing category, which is constantly affected by both substantive categories and the contextual features as “affectability”, “interrelatedness”, “constant negotiation”, and the core category itself affects other concepts.
5. The theory “striving to live more valuably” explains the context, conditions and consequences which are faced by healthy young adults, when experiencing the finality of life through encounter with inevitability of death. There is a person in the centre of aforementioned theoretical structure, who is defined by his individuality, and who gets involved through and affectability and interrelatedness and seeks solution, by balancing between tensions that appear, when negotiating the reality of death and life changes. This situation stimulates a person to move the attention from death towards life and to seek his life value in two ways: by facilitating his condition and searching for satisfaction with life.

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# JAUNŲ SUAUGUSIŲJŲ GYVENIMO BAIGTINUMO PATYRIMO TEORIJA: SIEKIS GYVENTI VERTINGIAU

## REZIUMĖ

**Nagrinėjamos temos aktualumas.** Gyvenimo baigtinumo patyrimas yra sudėtingas, bet aktualus ir labai žmogiškas klausimas. Nors psichologijos moksle susidūrimo su mirtimi ar mirties nerimo tyrimai yra pakankamai seni ir populiarūs, tačiau dažnai supaprastinantys tyrinėjamą reiškinys, jiems trūksta gilesnės analizės ir supratimo (Neimeyer, 1994; 2008). To pasekmė – atsitiktinės, paviršutiniškos, padrikos koreliacijos, kurios nepasiekia žmogiškųjų gelmių ar sieja mus su mirtingumu. Moore ir Williamson (2003), Tomer ir kt. (2008) tai pat akcentuoja daugiaveiksnį mirties reiškinio tyrinėjimą, pabrėždami kultūros, religijų, filosofijų ir to amžiaus visuomeninės pozicijos svarbą bei tarpdisciplininį jos aspektą. Jie taip pat atskleidžia, kad čia reikalingi ilgalaikiai tyrimai, kuriems būtų naudojami novatoriški metodai, o juose pateikiama mirties samprata būtų plati – reikšmė nebūtų susiaurinama (Tomer, 1994; Mikulincer, Florian, 2008; Wong, 2008).

Psichologijos tyrimų literatūroje mirties fenomenas bei žmogaus samprata apie savo mirtingumą apibrėžiama įvairiai, tačiau sąvokos naudojamos gana laisvai – jos tiksliai neatskiriamos ir neapibrėžiamos (Tomer, 1994; Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė, Kočiūnas, 2004; 2013). Jos vartojamos nagrinėjant itin skirtingą žmonių patyrimą, dažnai nesigilinant į tai, apie kokį tiksliai išgyvenimą yra kalbama, kaip išsamiai tai apibūdina žmogaus savijautą ir gyvenimą, kokį poveikį jam daro. Mokslininkų (Mikulincer ir Florian, 2008; Wong 2008; Neimeyer, 2008) pastebėjimais, netinkamas sąvokos naudojimas neleidžia išsamiau tyrinėti ir suprasti reiškinio, stokoja filosofinio pamato.

Šiame tyrime bus remiamasi Heidegger (1992) požiūriu į mirtį, o žmogiškasis gyvenimas traktuojamas kaip būtis-link-mirties. Tokiame kontekste daug tinkamesnė atrodo ne mirties nerimo, o **gyvenimo baigtinumo sąvoka**, kuri nurodo ne į gyvenimo procesą užbaigiantį įvykį, o akcentuoja tai, kas vyksta pačiame gyvenimo procese, kalba apie mirties fenomeną gyvenimo kontekste. Per žvalgybinį tyrimą operacionalizuojant pagrindinę sąvoką, paaiškėjo, kad žmonėms visiškai nesuprantamas yra klausimas apie mirties nerimą. Akivaizdu, jog tai daugiau psichologinė konstrukcija nei realiai



išgyvenamas fenomenas. Sąvokos formuluotė apie gyvenimo baigtinumą ir jo patyrimą tiriamiesiems skambėdavo pakankamai aiškiai ir priimtina, kad jie galėtų atsiskleisti ir dalintis savo unikalia patirtimi.

Tyrinėjant kasdienį susidūrimo su mirtimi reiškinį, rekomenduojama atskirti ir vengti išgyvenimų, kurie gali turėti reikšmingą poveikį pačiam nerimo išgyvenimui, nes tyrimai šioje srityje yra gana priešaringi ir ryšys tarp mirties nerimo, gyvenimo įprasminimo ir traumuojančių įvykių ne visai aiškus ir vienareikšmis (Floyd ir kt. 2005).

Tam, kad būtų išlaikytas tyrinėjamo fenomeno grynumas ir jis nebūtų veikiamas pašalinių faktorių, apribojamas ir žmonių amžius. Tyrime domimasi tik ankstyvos brandos amžiumi, dar kitaip vadinamaisiais jaunais suaugusiais. Šis amžius - tai subrendusių, dažniausiai maksimaliose jėgose esančių suaugusių asmenų periodas, kuriame išgyvenama mažiausiai sveikatos sunkumų (Levinson, 1978). Be to, Russac ir kt. (2007) tyrimai rodo, kad įvairiomis skalėmis tyrinėjant mirties nerimo lygį tokio amžiaus grupėje, nėra ypatingų pikų, todėl ji gali būti laikoma pakankamai homogeniška.

#### **Tyrimo naujumas ir aktualumas.**

Tokiame kontekste logiška ir priimtina atrodo grindžiamosios teorijos naudojama metodologija, kuri leidžia plačiai ir įvairiapusiškai apžvelgti tyrinėjamą reiškinį, pateikiant konkrečiąją jį aiškinančią teoriją, išskirti pagrindines kategorijas ir jų tarpusavio sąsajas. Pasirinktos sąvokos vartojimas dera su tyrimo metodu ir leidžia tyrinėti šį reiškinį, neiškraipant jo esmės ir iš anksto jo nesusiaurinant. Be to, šis metodas leidžia gilintis į tam tikro amžiaus grupę (jaunus suaugusiuosius) bandant suprasti, kaip jie patys patiria ir išgyvena šį patyrimą kasdienybėje. Tikimasi, kad platesnis gyvenimo baigtinumo patyrimo elementų ir proceso tyrinėjimas leis pagilinti šio reiškinio supratimą bei sutvirtinti jo mokslinius pagrindus, nes dabar egzistuojančių žinių mokslinėje literatūroje nepakanka, o gautus rezultatus bus galima pritaikyti konsultuojant žmones, giliau suprantant jų patyrimą bei potencialius pavojus, padedant įveikti susidūrimo su mirtimi išgyvenamus sunkumus.

**Tyrimo tikslas-** atskleisti sveikų jaunų suaugusių žmonių gyvenimo baigtinumo patyrimą bei išplėtoti konkrečiąją teoriją, pagrįstą dalyvių patirtimi.

### **Tyrimo uždaviniai:**

1. Įvardyti ir atskleisti gyvenimo baigtinumo patyrimo pagrindinius elementus ir jų sąsajas:
  - a. Atrasti pagrindinį rūpestį;
  - b. Identifikuoti ir išsamiai aprašyti esminę kategoriją ir jos savybes;
  - c. Įvardyti ir aprašyti papildomas kategorijas ir jų savybes;
  - d. Atskleisti kategorijų tarpusavio sąsajas.
2. Sukurti ir aprašyti konkrečiąją teoriją, paaiškinančią gyvenimo baigtinumo patyrimą.

### **TYRIMO METODAS**

Šio tyrimo metu buvo pasirinktas klasikinės grindžiamosios teorijos (GT) tyrimo metodas (Glaser, 1978; 1998; 2001; 2003; 2009), labiausiai tikęs pasiekti iškeltą tikslą ir uždavinius. Šio tyrimo metodo rezultatas - tai teorinė konstrukcija, konkrečioji teorija, kuri paaiškina ir atskleidžia tyrinėtą reiškinį. Tačiau, norint pasiekti tokį rezultatą, svarbu išvengti išankstinio nusistatymo, hipotezių kėlimo ar tiesiog vienos ar kitos teorijos rėmimo. Be to, būtina pažymėti, kad gauta teorija turi būti konceptuali, o tai reiškia, kad konceptai, kurie yra sukurti, turi būti nepriklausomi nuo *laiko*, *vietos* ir *žmogaus* (Glaser, 2001).

**Tyrimo eiga ir dalyviai.** Šiame tyrime dalyvavo 17, 22- 45 metų abiejų lyčių tiriamųjų, kurie šiuo metu neturi sveikatos sunkumų bei artimiausiu metu nėra patyrę itin sudėtingų fizinės ar psichinės sveikatos problemų, traumuojančių situacijų (įvadinio interviu metu buvo renkama ir patikslinama jų sveikatos istorija). Per papildomą tyrimą buvo pasirinkti dar keturi asmenys, kurie praplėtė tiriamo lauko ribas. Tiriamieji dalyvavo dviejuose giluminiuose interviu per ne trumpesnę kaip vieno mėnesio laikotarpį, kur buvo klausinėjami apie savo gyvenimo baigtinumo patyrimą ir jo išgyvenimą. Laikotarpiu tarp interviu tiriamieji rašė dienoraštį tyrinėjama tema. Pirmo interviu trukmė apie 1h, antrasis trukdavo trumpiau. Tyrimui buvo atrinkti žmonės, kurie geba reflektuoti savo mintis ir jas verbalizuoti bei atitiko tyrimui keliamus reikalavimus bei teorinės atrankos kriterijų. Jie savanoriškai sutiko dalyvauti psichologiniame tyrime ir patvirtino apie sutikimą dalyvauti ir naudoti jų anonimiškus

duomenis moksliniams tikslams. Jie taip pat buvo informuoti ir apie pagalbos galimybes, jei patirtų sunkumų dėl tyrinėjamos temos.

**Tyrimo duomenų analizė.** Atliekant tyrimą pagal klasikinės GT principus, tyrėjas vadovaujasi „pilno paketo“ (Glaser, 1998) principu ir atlieka atitinkamus procesus: 1) problemos identifikavimas; 2) teorinė atranka; 3) duomenų rinkimas; 4) analizė; 5) atmintinių vedimas; 6) teorijos plėtojimas. Šis sisteminis metodas yra ciklinis ir tyrėjas nuolat „vaikšto ratais“ tarp duomenų rinkimo, analizės, konceptualizacijos, atmintinių rašymo ir vėl grįždamas prie duomenų rinkimo ir t.t. Taip ir šio tyrimo metu buvo vadovujamais šiais principais: duomenys renkami ir analizuojami simultaniškai ir, kai interviu duomenys ėmė indikuoti, kad teorinis prisotinimas yra pasiektas, duomenų rinkimas buvo sustabdytas.

Viso tyrimo metu buvo pildomos ir analizuojamos atmintinės, o vėliau jos rūšiuojamos. Atliekant kodavimą buvo vadovujamasi nuolatinio lyginimo metodu: per atvirą kodavimą išskirti įvykiai lyginami tarpusavyje, vėliau – su išskylančiais konceptais, tuomet vėl tarpusavyje ir galiausiai lyginami su susidariusiomis platesnėmis ir abstraktesnėmis kategorijomis. Suformavus pagrindinę kategoriją, buvo pereita prie selektyvaus kodavimo, tačiau esminę kategoriją visą laiką išlaikant dėmesio centre. Teorinio kodavimo metu ir rūšiuojant konceptualias atmintines, ieškoma ryšių tarp pagrindines kategorijos ir konceptų. Pačioje pabaigoje iš surūšiuotų atmintinių formuojama ir užrašoma teorija, kuri šiuo atveju – *siekis gyventi vertingiau*.

**REZULTATAI.** Pirmiausia tiek naratyvų, tiek grafinio paveikslėlio būdu pristatoma sukurta teorija, kuri leidžia geriau suprasti, ką išgyvena jauni suaugusieji patirdami gyvenimo baigtinumą ar kalbėdami šia tema. Vėliau aprašomi jos pagrindiniai elementai: pagrindinė kategorija ir jos esminės dalys, papildomos kategorijos ir kiti konceptai bei jų savybės, kurios yra iliustruojamos ištraukomis tiek iš interviu, tiek iš dienoraščių.

## **IŠVADOS**

1. „Mirties neišvengiamumas“ yra pagrindinis rūpestis, su kuriuo susiduria žmogus, patirdamas savo gyvenimo baigtinumą ir jį bando išspręsti siekdamas gyventi vertingiau.

2. Atskleista esminė kategorija „siekis gyventi vertingiau“, kurią sudaro dvi dalys - tai „gyvo gyvenimo radimas“ ir „subjektyvus gyvenimo vertingumo siekis“.
  - a. „Gyvo gyvenimo radimas“ – pasižymi tokiomis savybėmis kaip „slinktis nuo mirties gyvenimo link“ bei „gyvumo išgyvenimas“, kuris patiriamas per veiklą, jausmus, intensyvią įsitraukimą ir buvimą laike.
  - b. „Subjektyvus gyvenimo vertingumo siekis“ apima tokias savybes kaip „būti siekiančiam“ ir „subjektyvus gyvenimo vertingumas“, pasireiškiantis per siekimą palengvinti būseną ir ieškant pasitenkinimo gyvenimu. Pastarasis konceptas pasižymi subjektyviu vertingumu, savumu ir pakankamumu.
3. Įvardintos dvi papildomos kategorijos: „derėjimasis su mirties realumu“ ir „derėjimasis su gyvenimo pokyčiais“.
  - a. „Derėjimasis su mirties realumu“ apima žmogaus pastangas ieškoti santykio su „trikdančias mirties įvykiais“ ir „mirties kontrolės siekiu“.
  - b. „Derėjimasis su gyvenimo pokyčiais“ apima žmogaus pastangas ieškoti santykio su „nuolatiniu gyvenimo kitimu“ ir vykstančiais „asmeniškai vertingais pokyčiais“.
4. „Siekis gyventi vertingiau“ yra dinamiška ir kintanti kategorija, kuri nuolat yra veikiamą tiek abiejų papildomų kategorijų, tiek kontekstinių savybių, tokių kaip: „paveikumas“, „individualumas“, „visapusiška sąsaja“, „nuolatinės derybos“. Pati esminė kategorija taip pat veikia kitus konceptus.
5. Teorija „siekis gyventi vertingiau“ aiškina kontekstą, sąlygas ir pasekmes, kurias išgyvena sveiki jauni žmonės, išgyvendami gyvenimo baigtinumą per susidūrimą su mirties neišvengiamumu. Šios teorinės struktūros centre yra savo individualumo apibrėžiamas žmogus, kuris per paveikumą ir visapusiškas sąsajas įsitraukia ir siekia išeities, balansuodamas tarp įtampų, kylančių derantis su mirties realumu bei gyvenimo pokyčiais. Tokia situacija skatina žmogų perkelti dėmesį nuo mirties gyvenimo link ir savo gyvenimo vertingumo siekti keliais būdais: lengvinant savo būseną ir ieškant pasitenkinimo gyvenimu.

## **TRUMPA INFORMACIJA APIE DOKTORANTĘ**

Agnė Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė yra klinikinė psichologė ir psichoterapeutė, dirbanti VšĮ „Psichologinių konsultacijų centras“. Nuo 1996 metų Agnė Vilniaus universitete studijavo psichologiją kur gavo bakalauro, o vėliau – klinikinės psichologijos magistro laipsnį. 2001 metais už mokslinį darbą doktorantė apdovanota Miunsterio universiteto premija.

Nuo 2002 metų Agnė Jurgaitytė – Avižienė studijavo doktorantūroje Vilniaus universitete Klinikinės ir organizacinės psichologijos katedroje. Studijų metais ji aktyviai domėjosi kokybiniais tyrimo metodais psichologijoje. Doktorantė dalyvavo tarptautiniuose šiai temai skirtuose mokymuose, kuriuose susipažino su grindžiamąja tyrimų metodologija.

Nuo 2001 Agnė dirbo psichologe konsultacinėje imonėje „Ad infinitum“ bei Respublikinėje Vilniaus psichiatrijos ligoninėje, be to, dėstė Tarptautinėje verslo ir teisės kolegijoje. 2008 metais doktorantei Humanistinės ir Egzistencinės psichologijos institute įgijo egzistensinio terapeuto diplomą. Šiame Institute nuo 2012 metų ji tęsia studijas supervizorių programoje. Agnė yra Lietuvos psichologų sąjungos ir Rytų Europos Egzistencinės terapijos asociacijos narė.

Mokslinių interesų sritys: egzistencinė psichologija, mirties psichologija, kokybiniai tyrimų metodai, grindžiamoji teorija.

## **PUBLIKACIJOS DISERTACIJOS TEMA**

- Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė A. Ką turėtų žinoti psichologas prieš naudodamas grindžiamąją teoriją savo tyrimuose // *Psichologija. Mokslo darbai*. 2012, T.45, p.103-115
- Jurgaitytė – Avižinienė A., Kočiūnas R. Experience of the finality of life: striving to live more valuably // *Problems of psychology in the 21st Century*. 2013, Vol.5, p.23-34

## **BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT POST-GRADUATED STUDENT**

Agnė Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė is clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, working in “Psychological Consultation Centre”. From 1996, Agnė had been studying psychology at Vilnius University, where she received Bachelor’s and later Master’s degree in clinical psychology. The postgraduate student was given the award of University of Munster for scientific work in 2001.

From 2002, Agnė Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė had been engaged in Doctoral studies in Department of Clinical and Organizational Psychology of Vilnius University. While studying, she was actively interested in qualitative research methods in psychology. The postgraduate student took part in international training, dedicated to this theme, where she familiarized with grounded theory methodology of research.

From 2001, Agnė worked as psychologist in consulting company “Ad infinitum” and Republican Vilnius Psychiatric Hospital. In addition, she taught at International School of Law and Business. In 2008, the postgraduate student received the diploma of existential therapist in Institute of Humanistic and Existential Psychology. She has been continuing her studies in the programme of supervisors in this institute since 2012. Importantly, Agnė is a member of Lithuanian Psychological Association and East European Association for Existential Therapy.

Fields of research interests: existential psychology, psychology of death, qualitative research methods, grounded theory.

## **RELEVANT SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS**

- Jurgaitytė-Avižinienė, A. (2012). What psychologists should know before applying grounded theory in the research. *Psychology. Research Papers*, 45, 103-115
- Jurgaitytė – Avižinienė, A., Kočiūnas, R. (2013) Experience of the finality of life: Striving to live more valuably. *Problems of Psychology in The 21st Century*, 5. 23-34