

## Perception of the Term “Good Death” Among Veterans with PTSP

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### Abstract

There is little research questioning what “good death” means with various populations and this knowledge is important especially in the rehabilitation of people with posttraumatic stress. Within the frames of the research on the perception of the term “good death” with veterans with PTSP in the Split-Dalmatia and Šibenik-Knin county, we asked only one question, what does the term “good death” mean for them?

With the answer to this simple question, a few clear categories arise that suggest a few potential points that everyone, especially service providers in health care, should consider when treating an ill veteran.

Veterans meeting death, personal mortality and the death of comrades or separating from them starts a strong process of changing the mind and the attitude on life and death which is reflected primarily in interpersonal relationships. A person becomes more sensitive after a surprise loss of a comrade and even though the loss of a dear person in war conditions is expected, it always surprises the one who survives. A comrade who survives, experiences the death of his comrade as a personal defeat and it represents a burden basically because of the helplessness he feels at that moment.

**Keywords:** Good death; Dying; Veterans; PTSP; Perception of death; Categories of death

### Summary

#### The perception of the term "good death" for veterans with PTSD

Death and the experience of separation on the scale are stressful events and are among the most stressful and burdensome psycho-physical realities of human life because it directly shaken and questions the concepts of the meaning of life and its values.

People who are faced on a daily basis with death or fatal dangers that threaten them personally or the people around them of the people they care for, for example, doctors, soldiers, firefighters and others are exposed to the stress and fear that death brings with it. Likewise, there is also the temptation to become indifferent to it.

In this paper, we shall pay special attention to veterans, and specifically those that went to war from the Split-Dalmatia and Šibenik-Knin County, and their perception of death.

We questioned the manners of facing death which the veterans where most exposed to during the Homeland War, as well as after it. We also questioned the feelings that follow after the sudden loss of fellow soldiers in the war, how to live in constant fear and under constant death threats and how they face the social, emotional and spiritual death in the post-war period. The data and conclusion on

how veterans experience death was based on the anonymous survey where 220 Croatian veterans were to answer only one question-what does good death mean for me?

Before we analyse the answers of the Croatian veterans to that question, let us try to see how man experiences, reflects, imagines and faces death, or (with his own) mortality and dying and to what extent does it reflect on his life.

#### Definition of death and the relation of the modern man towards death

Modern man tends to absolute his scientific and technical achievements, is a sort of narcissus and killer of all forms of discomfort. In his ideas, plans and procedures he often discovers moral relativism, tendency to materialism, technical progressiveness, private religion and other realities of modern society. There is room for everything there but death. Death is maybe the only remaining taboo, a natural and social phenomenon which prevents the complete moral collapse and slows down the general social tendency to disdain traditional values in favour of a dangerous and risky scientific progress which tirelessly is searching mainly for an elixir of eternal youth and eternal life. This is not new for society or for science. Since the existence of man, he has been fighting the feelings of transience, fragility, deterioration with all available means and manners because he is afraid of death and of being forgotten which death implicitly implies and underlines under its wing. Today's man, who can conquer almost anything, death is a contradiction which questions his life. He does not want to hear- memento, homo, quia pulvis es et in pulverem

reverteris, and does not want to deal with it because he has always had one discomfort, one desire, and that is for eternal life. It lives in man eternally and stays with him.

The modern man is "enriched" with various knowledge based on scientific discoveries, has knowledge of death from the biological standpoint, from the cells, organs to the entire body, he has objective indicators that define the moment of biological death and he can cognitively understand it, but he can accept emotional mortality less than ever before, [1]. Even though death has many definitions<sup>1</sup>, where it is differentiated in a religious manner from the medical one, the medical one from the philosophical one and so on, each of them sees death as a way of leaving life, losing life, leaving this world. Other than that, all science agrees that death is the basic integral part of life; it is inevitable, unquestionable and unavoidable. Such a vision of death then defines life which we see as gradual dying. St. Augustin warned man that by living, he is partially dying. This is what life itself and human experience is constantly showing us. Besides this, today more than ever before, live is "spent" on looking for a way to satisfy the deepest human desire, the one towards duration, permanence, eternity and immortality. The modern man is simply haunted by the fact of the inevitability of death and <sup>1</sup>facing his own aging and old age as a result of a life phase.

From a purely anthropological perspective (regardless of religiosity) man sees death as his end, and aging as extinguishing his vital functions. Psychologically, death and dying is seen as something tragic, terrible, implying termination, separation, disintegration of existing relationships, structures and values. Besides this, main is in fear of failure in life, failures and the lack of the development of his potentials and talents [2]. It is an anthropological and psychological problem that is often based on Christianity, especially Christian personalism, which enriches the attitude toward life and death. Man simply takes attitude toward life and death in accordance with his religious belief and according to which he measures the extent and quality of human life. Life has a specific task and mission, and when it is threatened and no visible quality and when it is the explicit meaning of pain and suffering is not found. Christianity or a Christian asks himself a question of whether all evil should be avoided at all costs or can evil be useful; death is the end of everything, or is it a new beginning which then certainly has its value [3]?

Death namely reminds us of the fact that we are limited in time, that we have a certain period of time in order to do something and also to miss something, that something "gets out of our hand".

Some philosophical currents, such as existentialism, in these life components or aging and death (dying), reveal the absurdity and the absurdity of life, and more specifically in death they see nothingness, absolute annulment, final vanishing and irreversible deterioration.

Except in life, science and religion, death and dying are inevitable in art as a source of inspiration, an eternal motive shrouded in mystery and something mystical that opens a space for creativity and interpretation. "That is," says Meša Selimović, "the end of one man, of life, of one mind, one desire, will, effort, love, hate, envy, ambition, a complex mechanism that looked so powerful, and so marvellous in its capability, and suddenly it is all gone, everything has stopped as a broken clock and nothing can ever make it work again" [4].

Death understood and accepted in this way scares man and he tries during his life to suppress the idea of death and basically the entire society, collectively looking, ignores death as an integral part of life and switches to the world of fiction and entertainment, to big screens and pages of daily newspapers. The world of entertainment is turned by death into numbers of dead, injured, killed and are described as scandals or sensations. Not only does this change the perception of death but also of life itself which is then not lived in the same measure it is watched, analyzed or spoken about through media. Modern society which is prone to entertainment confirms Hegel's thought that those who avoid death at all costs have really not even got to have known life. Today people are more inclined to watch another life (and death as well) than to rather face their own mortality and to live their own life.

Other than death forming ideas of life, at one time it was believed that the way someone died revealed how they lived and that death reveals something of the man himself. He is against death, feels fear from it, fights consciously and subconsciously the fact that his life has an end even though death is all around him. That is why the II Vatican Council in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* confirms that precisely when facing death does the mystery of human behaviour reach its peak. We are witnesses to how human behaviour can be paradoxical. Even though his own death terrifies him as well as the death of those dear to him, man tends to manipulate life and playing and gambling with death. Voluntarily he causes situations which are dangerous to life. For example, he practices extreme sports for personal pleasure, honour, pride, adventure, reputation and alike, consumes dangerous substances and exaggerates in that consumption, is careless in traffic and alike. Many everyday bad habits show the human willingness to endanger their life and other lives.

Besides this, under the excuse that he is pressured by requests of justice, some rights of the modern man provoke death.

Let us just remember euthanasia, abortion, capital punishment and other methods which today represent serious social, bioethical, legal, political and other problems.

Contradiction in the attitude to life and death is reflected in the capabilities of suicide that indicate a person's awareness of life, perception of life and opportunities that his life and death is managed in a way that other creatures cannot manage.

All definitions of death, those medical, biological, anthropological, theological and other sciences, have proven to be insufficient because death is not shown as a scientific problem, but a problem of the individual and his awareness of his own mortality and transience, which almost never leads to intellectual satisfaction nor emotional-spiritual calming. *Memento mori* to the modern man does not ring in his ears because he assiduously tries to overrule the echo in his minds and experience. He suppresses the truth on the margins of his life and thinking.

The picture of the state of modern society and its aspirations eventually show that for man it has become easier to belittle life than devise it, it is easier to extinguish it than to deal with the suffering and misery of small daily deaths that man experiences through illness, poverty, separation or loss of loved ones.

<sup>1</sup> Death is a termination, a transfer from one way of life to another; death is an invitation for a fuller life with God; an irreversible halt of all life functions (primarily cerebral); the last thing that happens in our life... those are just some of the more famous definitions or formulas by which we have our attitude towards death.

Attitude towards life and towards death, moreover, reflects our feelings towards others, especially our loved ones, and we can say that the opposite is happening, interpersonal relationships that we nurture affect our lives and attitudes toward death. In others, often man finds the meaning of his life or he builds it with them. In the death of another, the death of our beloved and loved one we see our own death and with the death of the loved one, we "die" as well [5]. "I closed her eyes. Great sadness was in my heart and overflowed in tears (...). What then is what was hurting me inside so much? Undoubtedly the fresh wound due to the abrupt termination of a dear habit of living together" [6]. Death is not the problem of the dying (those in the last stages of life), but also his loved ones who partly die with them.

Therefore, all philosophical reasoning, scientific research, artistic trivialization, family and friends comforting have not given any response or comfort to the eternal question of death, or what it hides, or even worse, what it does not hide. Fear of nothing, nothingness, or fear of punishment, is the fear of atheists and believers fear that increasingly haunts, from what we are more and more scared of. The atheist notion of death, which has a "scientific sense" by which the death frees up space for others, still comes down to dread and anxiety because death has the reputation of the complete degradation of man and his life, which is none other than a waiting room for death, a place where they share one-way tickets into oblivion. Man knows he must die, but there is an emotional brake against extinction, forgetfulness and pain. Jaspers noticed this in borderline situations in which a person is faced with a lethal threat begins searching for the meaning of life and recognizes its value. Such an attitude toward death is much closer to reality and the human experience of understanding death as a tragic event that leads to nothingness and nothingness, as it was interpreted by some philosophers of existentialism like Sartre and Camus. Such an attitude completely devalues life and shows its absurdity.

The psychological barrier against death only a small number of people manage to overcome, mainly with large religious enthusiasm, ambition, hope that after death or earthly life, the Gardens of Eden and eternal life is waiting for them.

As we have seen, death can be the object of science and art, it is the integral and essential part of nature, culture and life since the beginning of time. The issue of death is always active and because of this it demands justice or conscience that often shapes our attitude towards death.

### **The discomfort of dying**

Other than death, there is a long road of accepting aging as a life process during which we intensively feel our soon departure from this world<sup>2</sup>.

The preparation for death is a life-long process but it is usually performed in the last days of life, days which imply either great pain or very old age. And while before death the attitude of it does not concern me can be taken, there is no room for indifference with death. "It is sure that everyone wants to die in a "nice" manner, and not in an "ugly" manner, even though we do not exactly know if death has anything good or beautiful in it. Actually, when we speak of "good" and beautiful" death, we are thinking only of dying" [7]. Modern man

who has not been dying in his home for a long time, with his family, is terrorized with the fear of loneliness, suffering and pain which is destined to experience basically alone, in an unfamiliar hospital ambient, with unfamiliar people. Precisely because of this abandonment in the final stages of life we talk more and more of the discomfort of dying.

The problem of man on his death bed is not death as much because in those moments, it is left outside of experience and science and is something that can only be diagnosed. The dying are haunted by something else. They are worried about the life they are leaving behind. The indication of soon death makes a man start his final battle; the one for survival. His strength for battle is from his nature because "if everything would end with death, the masterpiece of logic and freedom would be cheated, man would discover what he can never enjoy and only he would have among all living creatures the complete understanding of the total failures of his aspirations towards the beautiful, good, justified as well as his basic incapability to reach it" [8]. Many therefore hope that death is just a passage, a passage to another, better, different like while at the same time looking for various ways to stay with life as we know it.

While death leaves room for speculation and hope, the reality of death is quite harsh. Dying has become mechanized, impersonal and institutionalized. More rarely a man dies with dignity, in peace, in an atmosphere of shared grief with his family or in his bed. Such inhuman dying is especially evident in conditions of war. One highly intimate process of conciliation with death, and with dying, is completely dehumanized in the battlefield. There death is justified everywhere day and night and the thought of dying in war conditions (away from family and friends, away from home, exposure to the enemy...) only increases the agony.

### **The attitude of veterans towards death and dying**

Veterans meeting with death and separation power a powerful process of changing thoughts about death and life<sup>2</sup> which is reflected first in interpersonal relationships. On the front line a person becomes more sensitive towards their compatriots and strongly feels their environment. He fears death which can come to him or his comrades at any step, any moment. The loss of a comrade, even if it is expected due to the war conditions, always catches the surviving comrade surprised and unready. Besides this, the veteran that survives experiences the death of his comrade as a personal defeat and it represents a burden and helplessness which he feels at that moment. As it is with other people, for veterans the act of dying and the suffering connected to it cause greater fears than the act of death itself, either personal or by a comrade [9]. Furthermore, the level of self-control is decreased with a great burden of loss and pain because the person must quickly face with the retribution of his own insufficiency.

The psychologist Wittkowski states that emotional weakness positively correlates with the fear of death and dying [10]. For the strength of physical trauma the level of grotesqueness and the absurdity of death is important. The meeting with death of a surviving soldier causes the need for him to connect to that experience and to constantly think of it even through stories, and this concentration could be so strong that we can say it is a vicious death syndrome [11].

<sup>2</sup> Dr. E. Kübler Ross in his book "Discussions with the dying" mentions five phases of dying or five phases of accepting death as an inevitable phase which follows a incurable disease. They are: repudiation and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and finally acceptance.

## Post-war death

Soldiers at a given time leave the atmosphere in which death is a daily threat, or from the battlefield and return to a normal life and routine, which brings a host of new problems. In an extreme situation such as war with superiors needs (physiological needs, the need for security, stability and protection) they have an advantage and suppress all other needs, but after the war other needs come to light and even outweigh them, whether they are of physical or emotional nature.

So today, after 20 years of war, the majority of Croatian war veterans are struggling with existential problems because they fail to realize their rights, to prove their veteran status or meet their new (old) needs [12]. The need for security and the need for respect and recognition are activated as a result of political connotations. Specifically, combat activities that were of general interest, they were socially acceptable, highly valued, supported and encouraged. The soldiers were idealized and in a very short period of time, these same soldiers of the same society became ballast and isolated, marginalized, forgotten, criminalized, impoverished and despised people. Demolition of the dignity of Croatian veterans leads to the same feeling of rejection and loneliness, and lies about the war lead them today to frustration due to violation of human dignity. The situation is getting worse every day if the former veterans face obstacles, administrative or of any other nature that hinder them from accessing their rights.

The inability to satisfy those needs and rights precludes our own existence. In such a situation, man loses the meaning of life as well. Therefore, it is socialization and social shaping of the status of veterans through the media and certain political structure directing their own concepts of value in the direction of a stigma.

## The desperation of PTSP

Former soldiers are often stigmatized as victims of post-traumatic stress disorder, known as PTSP<sup>3</sup>, which is channelled by auto/aggression and psychosomatic diseases, unlike the Vietnam syndrome that was channelled through aggression and mass murder.

The life of the soldier before war, his integration and position in society, his job, education or peaceful family life was abruptly halted and changed in an instant with leaving for the battlefield. In war they are faced with various fears and are under constant physiological pressure and in fear of their own lives and the lives of others. With returning from the battlefield there is a need for social reintegration which is usually blocked by an early, although deserved, retirement. Retirement, just as the inability to achieve that status, often causes desperation. Suddenly, in the post-war period, the veteran is no longer an active social subject but rather a passive object and this causes unpleasantness which is manifested or defined as a social or emotional death. It is recognized as an intensive feeling of loneliness and abandonment. In their loneliness, the veterans return to memoirs which were often shaken due to recounting some other events which were not always accurate or true. In that sense, the veteran also fears for the historical facts but also for preserving his own memories which form his identity and personal integrity as well as health. Data which is often given through Croatian media says that Croatian veterans get ill six times more frequently than citizens who did not have direct

contact with the war events, and that their life expectancy is approximately 10 years shorter than the average life expectancy in Croatia. Despite this alarming information, research on the influence of war trauma on the health is just starting. After 20 years for some of them it is already too late because the necessary measures are not always taken to help the veterans. That is why it is no surprise that we often have the chance of hearing veterans with PTSP saying "It would have been better if I died in the war". Namely, in stressful situations, veterans (as well as all other people) feel how much their life is insecure and know the limitations to their possibilities and life and through regression during the war where he was respected and acknowledged, he tries to make himself very needed by others. Jaspers says that with the recognition of the limitations of human and life possibilities, there is a matter of the world on the other side and it summons us to cross over, meaning transcendence [13]. The reality of death and dying is not only in the unknown future as K. Rahner says but it has shaken the concept of life, the sense and values in recent history and has left the consequences of insecurity and confusion in current times [14]. Instead of a program of rehabilitation and professional orientation which would return the veterans back to daily life, in Croatia and abroad programs have started of proving guilt through general responsibility and attempts for all to be proclaimed as guilty without their guilt even being proven. This questions all of the current life goals. The awareness of hopelessness is confirmed with a threatening silence and amnesia in society. Such pressure from the society has created an unbearable psychological reality which is kept in the mentioned and significant sentence: "It would have been better if I died in the war".

Theologian Heinrich Pompey, emphasizes that a person encounters respect after his death only if dying with courage and sovereignty [9]. Respect for the dignity and value of human casualties in the war in Croatia today, unfortunately, has become numb for a certain part of the citizens. Fellow soldiers who were killed during the war have not earned respect and recognition for their death.

Based on experience with dealing with death, there is the need to consider my own life [15].

It is therefore necessary to take an attitude towards death in order for our life to make sense and also to create a life so that our death would get some sense. This is important for every man who wishes to know the meaning of his life, his activities and his death. If a man does not see sense in his life or sense in the death of his fellow soldiers, his cities, homes, families or countries; if he does not see the sense in that sacrifice or it is laughed at or is devaluated, death is sometimes experienced as the only exit from the current situation.

The date that after the war "suicide was performed by a complete brigade", precisely 1632 veterans with the average age of 38 years<sup>4</sup> we are given, among other things, the following question: what are the attitudes towards death of veterans who have participated in the imposed war events and who are witnesses to dying as an unpredictable even which breaks life; do the views of the veterans express the feeling of fatigue and weariness of life; is suicide the consequence of a life not worth living or is suicide at the end a "good death".

<sup>3</sup> Today in Croatia the most frequent diagnosis is, and 50 000 people have sought medical aid regarding this diagnosis.

<sup>4</sup> Data varies and these are taken from Jutarnje List (2010). Available at: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/svake-godine-suicidpocini-izmedu-100-i-120-branitelja/875391/>

### The goal of the paper

What the meaning of the term "good death" is for veterans with PTSP and how the majority of veterans experience death.

### Hypothesis

With veterans with PTSP, the perception of death from the past has influence on the term of "good death" in the present.

### Subjects and work methods

The subjects were defined as veterans who have participated in the homeland war and who were diagnosed with PTSP. 220 veterans from the Split-Dalmatia and Šibenik-Knin county participated in the survey

Through the association Rika Jadro Solin; the Association of Veterans of the 113 Brigade Šibenik; the veterans with PTSP were given a questionnaire in order to preserve complete privacy.

The questionnaire was created in Google documents, and it was closed and delivered to each veteran electronically with written instructions and oral contacts. On the front page of the research the participants received instructions where they were asked to fulfil the questionnaire honestly and completely. They were informed that the test was anonymous and voluntarily, that information will be used solely for research purposes and they were told of the general and special benefits of the research, and furthermore they were informed of the nature and duration of the proceedings, the confidentiality of the information received and the privacy of participants. Participants were able to refuse testing or at any time withdraw without explanation. The range of duration was about 5 minutes. For each of them there is information stored with the time the questionnaire was filled out.

### Method of work

The questionnaire only had one question and the veterans were to answer it in a descriptive manner.

What does "good death" mean to me?

It is a variable with which we can determine the attitude of life and death or how the veteran faces mortality and dying and to what degree does it reflect on his life. The question is strong and includes the emotional life of the individual and mobilizes all aspects of life in general, as well as the process of dying and death as such.

**Processing data:** The Descriptive Statistical Analysis was used for processing the data.

### Results and Discussions

Code VR	Good death is	No.
0	I do not know	1
1	I do not think of death	24
2	There is no good death	8
3	Sudden and quick death	10
4	A bullet through the head	8
5	Natural death	6

6	Trip to heaven, mystery, holiness	30
7	Death without suffering, peaceful death	36
8	Death is an integral part of life	2
9	Death at a very old age, naturally	32
10	Continuing life	6
11	I love life	12
13	Death close to loved ones	8
14	Die happy, live life happy	8
15	Honourable death	4
16	Death at a young age	2
17	Life full of love and the end full of love	2
18	Success	2
19	Death in the moment of physical pleasure	4
20	Not leaving the family in debt	2
	T O T A L	220

**Table 1:** Classifying answers and defining absolute frequencies.

The obtained answers were classified and absolute frequencies were defined, (Table 1), and after this the answers were regrouped, (Table 2). With descriptive analysis we obtained 6 categories of how veterans see good death (Figure 1).

Code GR	Group of reasons of good death	No.	Covered by the code VR
1	I do not know, I do not think of death, there is no good death	46	0-2
2	Fatalistically	24	3-5
3	Religiously	36	6, 10
4	Emotionally	104	7-9,11,13-15,17
5	Pragmatically	4	18, 20
6	Hedonistically	6	16, 19
	T O T A L	220	

**Table 2:** Regrouping answers to good death.

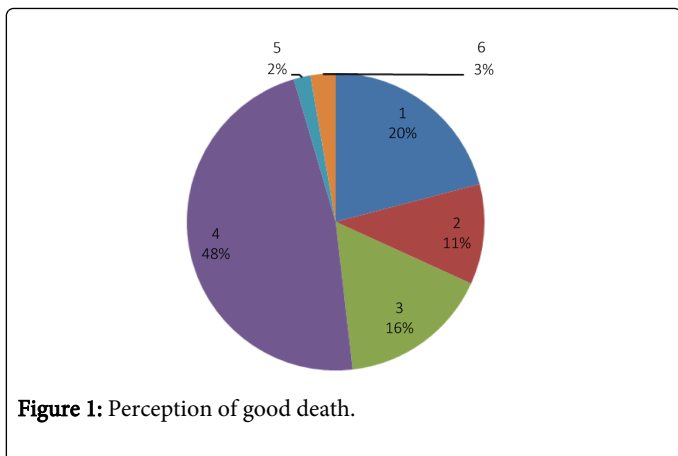


Figure 1: Perception of good death.

### Category of denying death- 20 %

20% of veterans experience death as fate, it is a force that disposes of every life and as such it is magical and unknown. One part of the veterans does not know and does not think about it and does not accept the category of "good death" [16].

Fear of death and the attitude of not accepting it has led to it being ignored. It has become a taboo and was cast out of immediate everyday life [16]. Kübler – Ross says that people who deny death increase our fear of death and our will for destruction, they increase our aggression. Man even kills others only so that he does not have to witness his own death [17].

### Fatalistic category of death- 11 %

Death as a fatalistic category is experienced by 11% of the veterans. Under the view of "good death", veterans imply of death in battle, an accident, and death by a bullet or a sinking ship. This is the response to great stress or the consequence of inadequate adjusting to stress. The tendency towards violent death influences the defence mechanisms. Namely, the desire for life is weakened by emergency situations. Other than that, the experienced events during a war leave a mark on the perception of death in the present. "Fatal death" expresses fear from a cruel life full of sorrow and pain and a part of the veterans sees "fatal death" as a form of good death. Fear of death can in a deeper level symbolize also the fear of the breakdown of their own conscience, while with a violent meeting with death it also provokes denial as a mechanism of defence. The "I" of the surviving veteran is decreased in order to avoid experiencing that amount of pain which is acceptable to the event. Avoiding trauma is usually a way of confronting with a loss that death brings. This avoiding protects from the feeling of helplessness and from emotional pains but also decreases the general capability of emotions. This is a group of veterans that need help in conquering the feeling of death and guilt. Many symptoms connected to traumatic syndrome are connected to the inability to get through the death of a close friend and fellow soldier.

### Religious category of death- 16%

This perception of death sees death as a continuance of life. In this case, the veterans describe death as transitions, a beginning of a new life or a journey to heaven. Hope is directed to another and better world, a world where there is no suffering and pain. This latent dimension contains also principles which direct to a type of a religious

marking that shows some basic elements of Christianity. Veterans who see death from a religious aspect have a greater tendency to place the foundation of the sense of life "in God" and "in the community" and less towards an individualist foundation of the meaning of life. The Bible says that not only is there life after death, but there is an eternal life so grand that it is as "what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart has thought of: this is what God has created for those that love him" [1,6].

Veterans accept death as a part of eternal life and look at with less confusion and fear and with them, death is interweaved with the hope of immortality which gives sense to tragedies and unbearable painful events in their lives. Spirituality is a dimension of the entire human being which has its special meaning in the period of dying and death [18,19].

### Category of emotional perception of death- 48 %

48% of veterans under the term "good death" see death in old age after an expected duration of life surrounded by their loved ones. Furthermore, they want death in the closeness of the family which is interwoven with the postmodern way of dying in hospitals of homes for the elderly and hospitals.

The natural way of dying and death is a complex term which includes: accepting death as a normal life experience, the timeliness of death, the awareness of dying and death, finished preparations and the place of death [20,21].

Dying and death are natural life events and our relationship towards them must be natural and include acceptance, preparation and expecting instead of denying, refusing postponements [22,23]. The emotional perception of death is connected with a long life, the manner of life, its sense and fulfilment. Veterans from this group define death as an end after a long fulfilled life, when man finishes his life, death is simply a natural calmness. Natural death has before it live, the fullness of life and good death for it represents the end point of fulfilling a quality and dignified life where the person through his life can manage his personal values and emotions.

### Category of the pragmatic perception of death- 2%

The pragmatic perception of death with veterans is connected to personal success and care of family members. Death can come after a certain success and if it will not significantly threaten the well-being of the loved ones. Therefore the question of the purpose and sense of death always brings along the question of the purpose and sense of life. Death, since it is not a part of human life shows the finality of time so that the perception of death is fixed to existence and achievements. Death with them does not represent such an end to existence but it is rather helplessness for such a possibility and a success in the achievement. Therefore they see the sense of death in a greater self-realization during life. Veterans who perceive death in a pragmatic manner do not only worry about their own existence, but they are also greatly worried about the safety of their loved ones.

### Category of hedonistic death - 3%

3% of veterans under "good death" include the aspects of physical comfort, pleasant sensations are what the term "good death" means to them. If he is happy and enjoying himself at the moment of death, then it is a good death.

Procedures, rules of behaviour, characteristics of people, the state of things and events are all for perceiving death as not important; those experience "good death" as a joy of life. In the world of blessings and happiness, death is something that does not fit in. It cannot fit into the optimistic vision of progress. The perception of death must be fit into the scheme of pleasure.

## Conclusion

The results of the research show that with most of the veterans, the attitude of "good death" (48%) is projected to life. It is an emotional attitude on death as the finish of life and simply accepting death as a reality.

Veterans with death are connected with a long life, old age, successful children, no illness, healthy rationalizing, dignity, all aspects of a quality life. Death for them does not mean the end of plans and the knowledge that he is given to fate and all connections are lost. Veterans try from their life to take out as much valued experiences as possible. They have the need in time and conclusively to finish something or take something over on themselves and be aware to settle with finalization and the fact things are temporary. A famous psychiatrist who survived the Holocaust, V. Frankl says that the meaning of human life is based on its non-returnable character, so that finality and temporariness is not only a significant marking of human life but it is constitutive for its meaning.

Furthermore, one good part of the perceptions is projected on the denial of death. 20% of veterans wish the decrease, remove, forget or not think of death. They want liberation from death and in that way they establish an extreme exclusion because death does not have a deeper sense and a larger scope. Death simply does not fit into the vision of progress so therefore it is unacceptable.

Furthermore, 16% of veterans aware of the limitations of death wish with the help of religion to more deeply understand the meaning of life, and the thought of death offers them positive stimulation for faith in life after death. They through religious look for answers to death and usually, death for the faithful represents a joyful event. Who sees death in this, sees a new beginning, a journey to immortality.

The fatalistic perception of death brings the fear of death to 11% of veterans. They accept death but not the process of dying. In this perception, they show tension between understanding death as a fulfilment and finalization of life on earth. Here the veterans desire a quick death which they understand as a termination of life, as a senseless realization of helplessness. This is that part of the veterans who form a positive attitude towards suicide. Here support is important which is offered by their social environment because the inner desire for surviving largely depends on the help of the surroundings [11]. The capability of accepting their own inability with facing death would help these people in their passivity.

The obtained results clearly suggest that veterans want to use their life and not miss unique opportunities and that death cannot destroy the meaning of life. In the general sense, the results of the research show that within the population of veterans there is still a dominant "marking of tradition". It seems that in the social theory the set idea on the connection of the social crisis (moral, cultural, economic, etc.) and the appearance of "alternative" forms of belief in the modern Croatian society do not have a more significant empirical foundation. Does this mean that the modern Croatian society in the "transaction period" does not characterize "signs of a crisis"?

Does this mean that the proclaimed social-cultural-economic changes in the past twenty years in the Croatian society have not left a deeper trace in the sense of value? Or is the population of veterans pragmatically "trained" in the "external presentation" and "playing socially desirable roles"? [12]. The answers await further research.

What can be concluded or suggested is that man, veteran and others, only need to raise themselves for death, to look at it without fear, as an integral part of life, as something that should be integrated into life. Always, when death is spoken of, one should not forget that it has one very important characteristic and regardless of the personal readiness of the man before it, he stands looking at it as a secret, curious, with fear. Great effort is put into accepting death but also at the same time great resistance, because what man desires is immortality.

We can only believe in it, and we can testify only on immortality through questions of life and death.

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