

The Existential Death Anxiety Scale

With these theoretical considerations in mind, we sought to construct and validate a measure of *existential death anxiety*. Our aim was to arrive at a concise unidimensional measure, with which we could test thanatocentric theories of religion in multiple cultural contexts. First, we compiled 45 items, many of which were taken directly or adapted from the relevant subscales of previous measures. The 45-item version of the Existential Death Anxiety Scale (EDAS) was first piloted online on 504 American participants (272 females, 228 males, 4 “other”; age range 18 to 74 years; $M = 35.7$). Based on the distributions of the items (e.g., departures from normality), and their loadings in a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses¹, the 45 items were eventually reduced to a 12-item scale that consists of two 6-item subscales (see Table 7)².

The first subscale of the EDAS consists of items that measure a more general fear of death, that is, the fear of the end of life itself. The second subscale is more specifically concerned the extinction of the self or person and, consequently, the cessation of conscious experience. As expected, the

¹ Specifically, items with normal distributions were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis (principal axis factoring; varimax rotation), extracting a single factor (which explained 75% of the variance), and keeping only items that loaded on it with commonalities over .5. A MAP test on the remaining 17 items indicated two factors, whereas Horn’s Parallel Analysis indicated only one. A confirmatory factor analysis indicated that a single factor structure was improbable, and also showed five additional items that could be eliminated to improve model fit.

² As with the SBS, participants respond to the EDAS on a 9-point scale anchored at -4 (Strongly Disagree) and 4 (Strongly Agree).

two subscales were very highly correlated, $r = .905$. This 2×6 factor structure has since also been confirmed in a German sample. The SBS-6, the EDAS has more recently been translated and piloted in Brazil, South Korea, the Philippines, Russia, and Japan (see Table 8). Exploratory factor analyses have been inconclusive, but have generally favored either the 2×6 model (in Japan, South Korea, Russia) or a unidimensional model (in Brazil and the Philippines).

Table 7.

The two-factor Existential Death Anxiety Scale

Factor 1: The cessation of life

The thought of my own death frightens me.

I am troubled by the fact that someday I will no longer be alive.

The finality of death is frightening to me.

My mortality troubles me.

Thinking about being dead fills me with dread.

It upsets me to think that someday I will no longer be in this world.

Factor 2: The extinction of the self

The idea of never experiencing the world again after I die frightens me.

I am scared that death will be the end of "me".

The loss of my consciousness in death scares me.

I am scared that death will be the end of my "self".

I am scared that death will extinguish me as a person.

Never feeling anything again after I die upsets me.

Table 8.

Scale statistics for EDAS, with correlation between factors

	Combined	Factor 1	Factor 2	<i>r</i>
	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α	
Brazil (n = 200)	.971	.953	.945	.912
Philippines (n = 200)	.973	.953	.955	.901
Russia (n = 200)	.966	.940	.953	.844
S. Korea (n = 200)	.970	.939	.959	.881
Japan (n = 225)	.975	.949	.969	.844
