

## Perception of Death in the view of Christians

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**Keywords**—Death, Christians, mourning, euthanasia.

**Abstract**—The social conception of death is distinct in several social groups, as a result of a long historical process, marked by different customs that involve existential, subjective and spiritual dimensions. This article aims to seek to obtain the perception of the Christian community about death, and choices in the face of a terminal illness. Raising issues related to euthanasia, and the moment of death, both of the person himself and that of loved ones. The results obtained show the opinion against euthanasia on the part of Christians, it is clear that they do not consider the possibility of taking the life of a human being in cases of terminal illness. It was found that Christians choose life, be it with almost unbearable suffering, or not.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Death is a natural phenomenon, just as all living beings were born one day, they will also know death, in one way or another. Normally, the time to leave is not chosen, except in cases of suicide or euthanasia. Among the various groups with different opinions on the topic in question, Christians are one of those who have a more fixed and immutable opinion.

For this quantitative and investigative research, a questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect data regarding the perception of Christians about death. This questionnaire was prepared by the researcher and her advisor. This questionnaire was applied to 20 Christians, 10 of them Protestants, and 10 Roman Apostolic Catholics. It was applied to both sexes, aged 18 to 40 years old.

#### THE ELABORATION OF MOURNING THROUGH THE WAY OF RELIGION

Psychoanalysis, a theoretical current in psychology, studies the unconscious of the human being, and explains the mourning process, which is carried out through the reality test, which when repeatedly evidencing that the object no longer exists, demands that the libido detach itself from the lost object, thus having an elaboration of the mourning.

Grief is a slow and painful process, which has as characteristics a deep sadness, removal from any activity that is not linked to thoughts about the lost object, the loss of interest in the external world and the inability to substitute with the adoption of a new object of love (FREUD, 1915).

The grieving process is one of the biggest challenges to the balance of the psyche and that, depending on the type of loss, such as violent, early deaths, loss of a child, among others, the elaboration can become very complex, with great possibilities partial failure of this work, and even serious psychological problems may arise.

Psychoanalysis also brings us to the definition of symbolism as being a parallel between two ideas, one will replace and represent another primary and unknown idea of the conscious mind.

When suffering a loss, the subject must have an elaboration, some people take a short period for this, while others take a longer time, this will depend on the subjectivity of each human being. At first, all this suffering caused by mourning comes to the subject through the real, in a second moment it becomes through the symbolic.

One of the most common and satisfactory forms of mourning is for religion, in this article we deal with Christianity.

A Christian on hearing of the death of a loved one will seek comfort in his faith and beliefs, we easily perceive this when hearing statements such as "He is in a better place" "He is with Christ", thus minimizing the dimension of suffering.

Christians regard death as "profit", as an encounter with Christ, they consider it not as the end of a life but as the beginning of a "new cycle" (the "new heaven and new earth"). Even though death is considered a gain, it is not easy to face. The "eternal return" is the crucial mark, that is, life flows continuously, being punctuated by death, which marks the transformation of life.

We can notice how significant the belief is made in a person's life, when seeing even non-Bible practitioners seeking comfort in Christianity at that time, reflecting on their life and even repenting for their acts considered sins.

#### **EUTHANASIA ON THE VIEW OF CHRISTIANS**

Currently, there are several possibilities in the face of the suffering that occurs during the last moments of a person's life, such as euthanasia, which is the act of providing death without suffering to a terminally ill patient, affected by an incurable disease that produces intolerable pain. For example, however, the idea that we find in Christianity is that the only one worthy of taking a subject to death on this occasion is God.

A human being causing the death of another, as a result of a clinical condition, is considered a homicide by Christians, and not a way to help others. The Christian would find himself disobeying one of the "Ten Commandments", the "Thou shalt not kill".

#### **CHRISTIANS IN RELATION TO PROFESSIONAL AID**

Mourning is characterized as a loss of a significant link between a person and his object, therefore a natural and

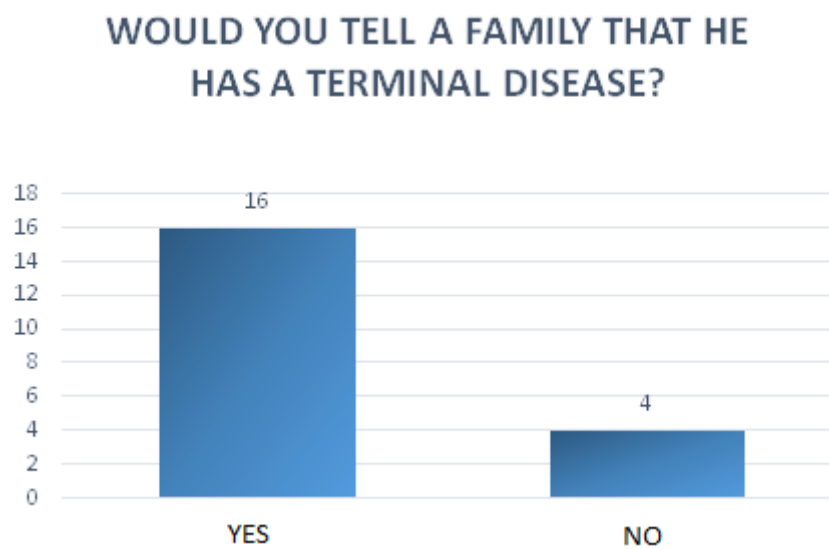
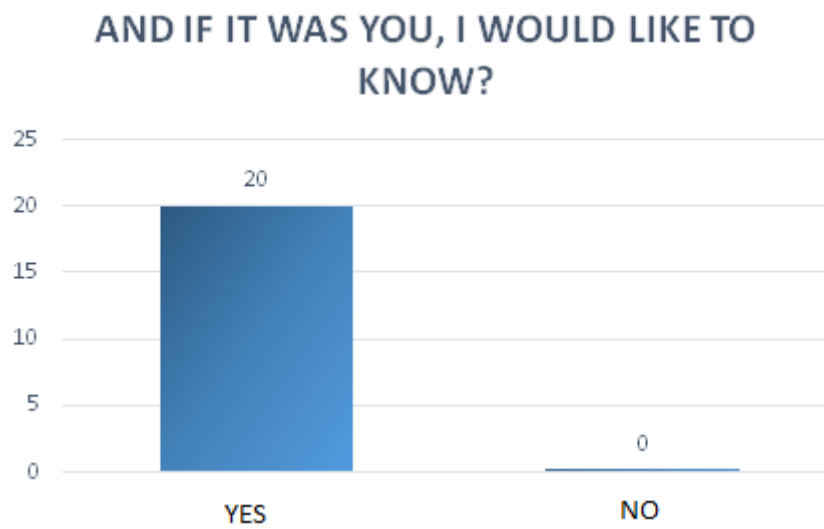
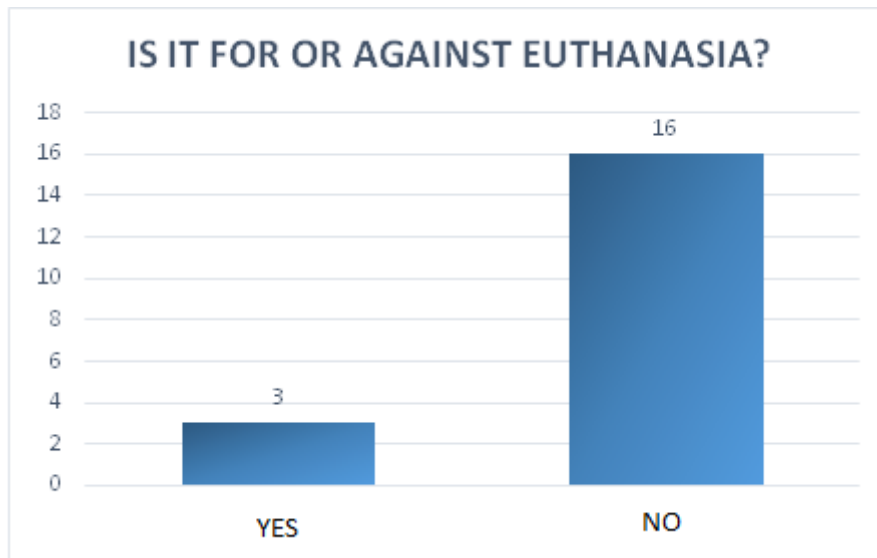
constant mental phenomenon during human development. In this context, as it is a constant event, it ends up directly implying the work of health professionals, becoming a necessary knowledge for adequate protection for those who suffer the loss. One of the professionals with an extremely important role in this context is the psychologist, who will accompany the terminally ill patient, helping to understand their clinical condition. The psychologist will also be working with the subject's relatives in a terminal state, both in the acceptance process and in the case of the patient's death, helping in the elaboration of the mourning of these relatives.

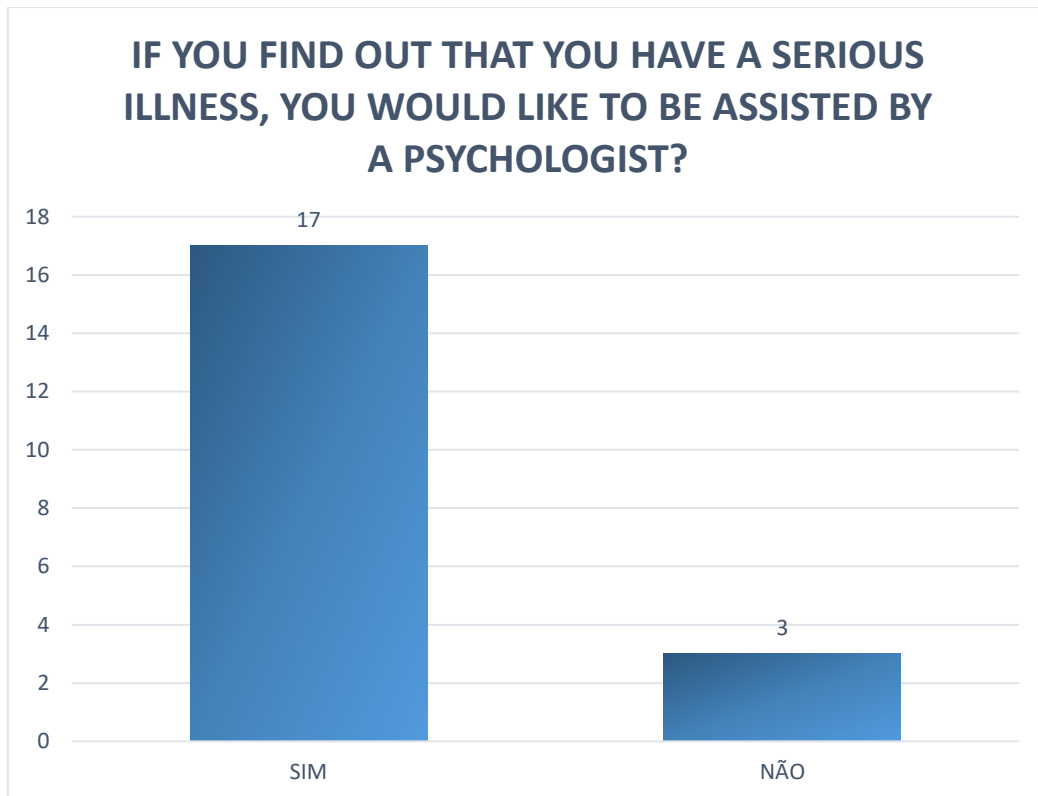
When the psychologist or health professional is adequately trained, there is a greater preparation to deal with death situations, as, for example, in the great catastrophes in which deaths occur, being able to follow up on family members in the recognition of corpses. One of the objectives is to assist as emotional support for family members and in the grieving process. The professional with the best conditions to understand and support families in pain allows them the feeling of protection, as well as providing validation of the mourner's feelings and emotions (Ramírez, 2011; Reverte, García, Penas, & Barahona, 2014).

However, there is still some prejudice in relation to these professionals, including some Christians, who are totally supported by religion and do not think they need professional help, there are those who think that it was God who made him go through mourning, it will give you the strength to face that moment. Currently, fewer people think that way, but they still exist.

## **II. RESEARCH AND RESULTS**

For a better perception of the view of Christians in relation to death, the present field research was carried out. The collected data follows:





The sample showed 85% of respondents are against euthanasia, with only 3 (15%) in favor. Only 4 (20%) of people would not reveal to a family member that they have a terminal illness, however all 20 (100%) would like to be informed if they were in such a situation. All participants,

even those who said they were in favor of euthanasia, would not interrupt their own life or that of a loved one in the event of a terminal illness. Of the subjects submitted to the research, 17 (85%) would like to be assisted by a psychologist in case of a serious illness.

### III. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Talking about death is always taboo. Death is seen as something unpronounceable, an irreparable loss.

In this research, the data collected indicate that 100% of the interviewees would like to know if they were dying, as this would give them a chance to better enjoy their time with their family members.

It is possible to realize that even in the face of the suffering of a loved one, the interviewees mostly agree that they should not postpone their death. Regardless of the doctrines, they agree that man should not take the life of another, because he does not have that right.

The best thing to do is to keep the patient in a condition that is at least comfortable, so that he can spend his last days well.

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