

Living Meaningfully and Facing Mortality: Developing a Measure of “Double Awareness”

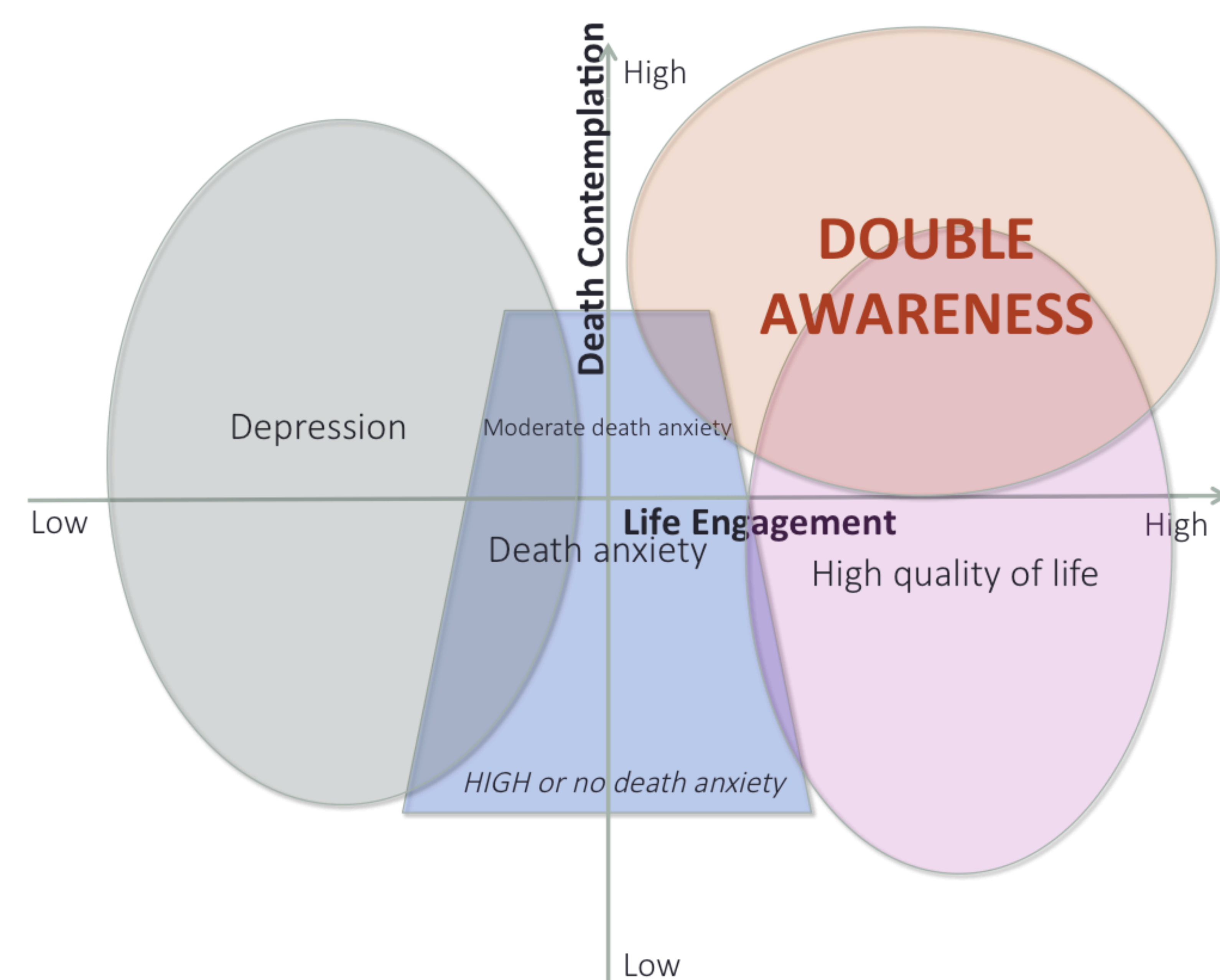
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Background

- Stage IV (or metastatic) cancer is currently incurable and considered terminal.
- Treatment advancements allow many patients to live months to years with their disease.
- Individuals with stage IV cancer face the challenge of living with awareness of their impending death.
- **Double awareness:** a person’s ability to engage meaningfully in their life while also acknowledging and preparing for their death. ¹

Theory

- Double Awareness is made up of two components: **Life Engagement** and **Death Contemplation**.
- The ability to do *both* has been conceptualized as a sign of psychological health.
- Developing a measure of double awareness will allow us to assess its relation to depression, death anxiety, quality of life, and other psychological constructs relevant to end-of-life.



Objectives

Aim 1: Develop and refine a measure of double awareness.

Aim 2: Assess convergent & discriminant validity by examining relationship with depression, death anxiety and quality of life.

Methods

- **Study 1: Item generation & qualitative data analysis**
 - Generate 22 items per subscale
 - Conduct cognitive interviews with stakeholders
 - Refine item pool
- **Study 2: Validation:**
 - Recruit **150** participants* in person or online
 - Administer battery of self-report questionnaires
 - Double Awareness Scale + additional measures
- Planned Analyses:
 - Exploratory Factor Analysis
 - Classical Test theory & Item Response Theory
 - Correlation Matrix across all measures

*Recruitment is ongoing

• Complete data has been collected from 33 patients.

Recruitment

Patients seen in Palliative Care Clinic, n = 163

Already enrolled = 25

Not Eligible, n = 35 (21%)

- Not advanced cancer = 27
- Not English-speaking = 5
- Cognitive impairment = 3

Patients approached, n = 61 (37%)

Eligible, Not Approached, n = 40

Physician decision = 4

- In too much pain/overwhelmed = 7

Patient declined = 21

- “Maybe next time” = 9

Patients enrolled, n = 54

Approached, Declined, n = 7

- Not interested = 3
- Not enough time today = 2
- No email address = 2*

(*paper questionnaires now available)

Completed, n = 33

Pending completion = 14
Screen failure = 3
Died prior to completion = 3

Items

Life Engagement:

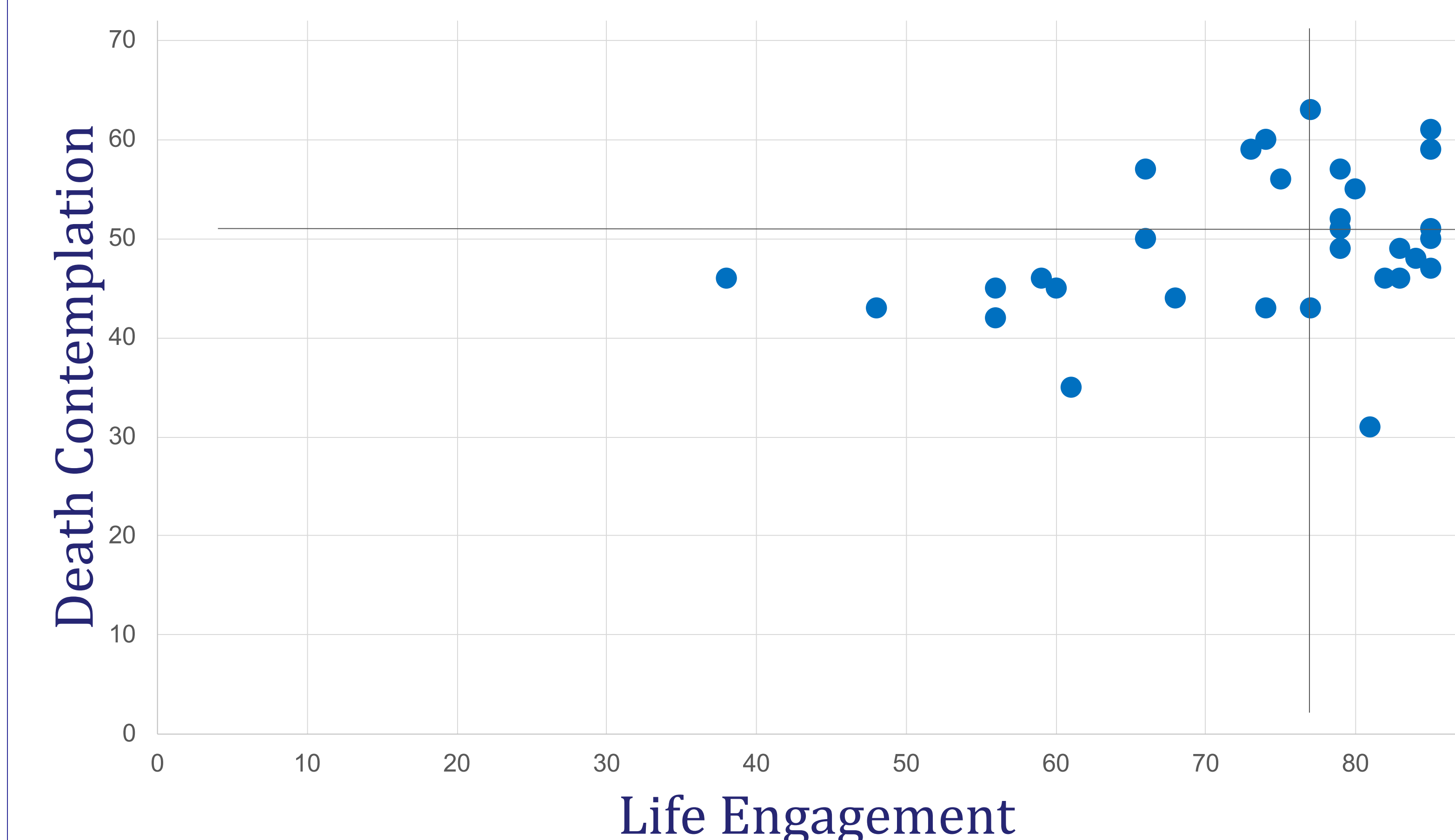
- *I find that I am able to be engaged in things that are important to me.*
- *I try to have as many good experiences as I can with my loved ones.*

Death Contemplation:

- *I am open to having conversations about my death with others.*
- *Thoughts about the end of my life are too upsetting to consider. (R)*

Results

Double Awareness Scores



References

1. Colosimo, K., Nissim, R., Pos, A. E., Hales, S., Zimmermann, C., & Rodin, G. (2018). “Double awareness” in psychotherapy for patients living with advanced cancer. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 28(2), 125–140.
2. Rodin, G., & Zimmermann, C. (2008). Psychoanalytic reflections on mortality: A reconsideration. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis & Dynamic Psychiatry*, 36, 181–196.

Acknowledgements

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