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Abstract

Pakistan has a population of 200 million including 65.3 million children under the age of 14 years. Over 4.6 million children are orphans. The study was designed to investigate the comparison of meaning in life and self-control between orphan and non-orphan. Correlational research design was used. Survey was conducted as a method of data collection by using purpose sampling technique to select sample of study 240 orphans and non-orphans (n=121, n=119). The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006) and The Self-Restraint subscale from the Adolescents' Self-Consciousness Scale (Nie et al., 2014) was utilized to measure participants' self-control ability. The collected data were analyzed on SPSS. Results indicate that there is positive relationship between meaning in life and self-control ability among orphans and non-orphans. Moreover, the findings of the study reveal that meaning in life is a significant positive predictor of self-control. In addition, the level of meaning in life and self-control significantly greater in non-orphans as compared to orphans. It is recommended that counseling should be provided to orphans to enhance the level of self-control ability and meaning in life.

Keywords: Meaning in life, self-control, orphans

1. Introduction

Pakistan has a population of 200 million including 65.3 million children under the age of 14 years. Over 4.6 million children are orphans (Mahmood et al., 2020). There are several reasons for this large population of orphans. One primary reason is that the expense of education, medical facilities and even necessities like food and shelter are often unaffordable as many families have limited financial resources and inadequate living conditions. As a result, families are compelled to admit their children to orphanages where they receive food, shelter, medical facilities and education (Latif et al., 2016). Other common reasons are the death or divorce of parents and when children are born to unwed parents. The existing culture in Pakistan discourages the adoption of orphans as they are considered a financial burden, and an outsider, and thus, orphaned children rely on state or private charity organizations (Lassi et al., 2011). Everyone lives with their own happiness and problems. Sometimes life is beautiful, and sometimes life is bitter. Problems can be experienced by anyone, including teenagers who live in orphanages. The cause of children in orphanages having problems in their lives is the lack of meaning in life. The meaning of life is one indicator of self-control (Nafisah, 2018).

Meaning in life is a broad concept and thought to contain three distinguishable yet related concepts i.e., coherence, purpose, and significance, (Martela & Steger, 2016). Based on the extent to which people experience and seek life meaning, meaning in life (but not the other three analogous concepts) can be divided into two dimensions, namely presence of meaning and search of meaning. Presence of meaning refers to "the degree to which people experience their lives as comprehensible and significant, and feel a sense of purpose or mission in their lives that transcends the mundane concerns of daily life", whereas search for meaning concerns "the dynamic, active effort people expend trying to establish and augment their comprehension of the meaning, significance, and purpose of their lives" (Steger et al., 2008a). Previous studies have found that a lack of life meaning associates with elevated psychological distress, such as emotional problems, suicidal thoughts, and psychosomatic complaints (Brassai et al., 2011; Henry et al., 2014; Nielsen & Hansson, 2007; Simonsson et al., 2008).

Self-control as a potential mediator accounts for the relationship between meaning in life and psychological distress, given that low self-control is seen as a core hallmark of many psychological and psychiatric disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Self-control refers to one's ability to change thoughts, emotions, and behavioral tendencies to bring them in line with values, morals, and to support the pursuit of long-term goals (Tangney et al., 2004). It is thought as an umbrella term that consists of multiple sub-dimensions, such as cognitive control, emotional control, and behavioral control (Tangney et al., 2004). Moreover, scholars also contend that self-control includes both inhibition and initiation (de Ridder et al., 2011). Self-control aids individuals to overcome undesirable thoughts, emotions, and behavior and also facilitate the desirable opposites, thus assisting people to go through daily frustration and difficulties and to maximize adolescent psychosocial adjustment (Finkenauer et al., 2005). Numerous studies have found that high levels of self-control protects against psychological distress among adolescents (Finkenauer et al., 2005; Li et al., 2015; Nie et al., 2014; Situ et al., 2016).

Life meaning is thought to facilitate the acquisition self-regulation (Damon et al., 2003). First, according to MacKenzie and Baumeister (2014), life meaning enables individuals to think about long-terms goals and cultural standards; without meaning, one may behave based on impulsive and instinctual desires. Under the guidance of meaning, one can transcend momentary urges and override the more primitive and impulsive mode of living and thus be more able to regulate his/her own emotion and behavior towards long-term goals and social standards. In other words, life meaning has the capacity of guiding individual to recruit and maintain the exercise of self-control. Second, the cognitive-affective system theory of personality (Mischel & Shoda, 1995) assumes that personality trait (e.g., self-control) is organized in line with three categories of social-cognitive factors (i.e., belief about control, values and goals, and strategies and competencies). A clear and stable life meaning shapes the goals individuals pursue and the approaches they accomplish these goals, which further defines the target of self-control and fuels it (Tamir & Mauss, 2010).

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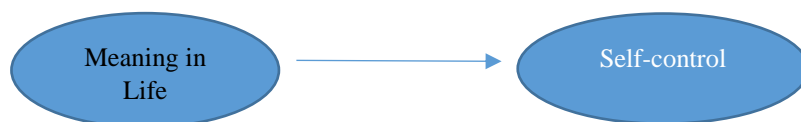
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Research has found that greater life meaning (and related constructs) is related to better (cognitive and emotional) self-control in both adolescent and adult samples (Bowlin & Baer, 2012; Brassai et al., 2013). Life meaning is an overarching value system that guides and motivates non-orphans to exert self-control, and thus, greater experience of presence of meaning should be related to better self-control. Scarcity of studies on meaning in life and self-control with respect to orphans and non-orphans in Pakistan. Therefore, researcher was interested to explore this phenomenon among orphans and as well non-orphans.

2. Conceptual Framework



According to proposed research conceptual framework the meaning in life as the predictor (independent variable) of self-control (dependent variable) between orphans and non-orphans.

2.1. Objectives of the Study

- To explore the relationship between meaning in life and self-control
- To investigate the impact of meaning in life on self-control
- To compare the mean score of meaning in life and self-control between orphans and non-orphans

3. Research Methodology

Nature of the study was quantitative that was accomplished through correlational research design. Data was collected through conducting a survey with the help of questionnaires. As a sample 240 orphans and non-orphans were selected through purposive sampling technique. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ, Steger et al., 2006) was used to assess the extent to which individuals experience their life as meaning (i.e., presence of meaning) and the degree to which people engage in searching life meaning (i.e., search for meaning). It consists of 10 items rated on a 7-point scale (“1 = absolutely untrue”; “7 = absolutely true”), with 5 items assessing presence of meaning and another 5 items assessing search for meaning. A higher score indicates participants perceive their lives as more meaningful or they are more actively seeking meaning in their lives. The Self-Restraint subscale from the Adolescents’ Self-Consciousness Scale (Nie et al., 2014) was utilized to measure participants’ self-control ability. It contains 11 items rated on a 5-point scale (“1 = not like me at all” ; “5 = like me very much”). Summing up all the items (with some items reverse scored) yields a total score of self-control, with a higher score indicating better self- control ability. Data were analyzed on SPSS. Pearson correlation coefficient, linear regression and t-test for independent samples design were performed to analyze the data.

4. Results

Table 1: Relationship between Meaning in Life and Self-control

Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha	M	SD	F	PR
Meaning in Life	.719	37.28	19.010	1	.721**
Self-control	.689	31.80	18.197		1

Correlation is significant (p<0.05).

Table 2: Regression Analysis showing the impact of Meaning in Life on Self-control

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-test	p-value
Constant	53.341	8.132		13.231	.000
Meaning in Life	.431	.391	.721	11.091	.000

Adjusted R² .581, p<0.05.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation, t-value and scores of Meaning in Life between Orphans and Non-orphans

Variable	N	M	Std. Deviation	t-test	Df	p-value
Meaning in Life						
Orphans	121	51.91	29.232			
Non-orphan	119	63.18	31.932	11.310	238	.000

Table 3 shows the statistical significant mean difference of meaning in life and self-control between orphans and non-orphans.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation, t-value and scores of Self-control Orphans and Non-orphans

Variable	MS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test	df	p-value
Self-control							
Orphans		121	49.31	37.029			
Non-orphans		119	53.07	41.931	9.981	238	.000

Table 3 shows the comparison of self-control between orphans and non-orphans. Results suggest that difference is significant.

5. Discussion

There are currently over 4.6 million orphaned children living in Pakistan. When a child loses one or both parents, their life is changed forever. Pakistan has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, sitting at 51.7 percent, according to the International Poverty Index. So, when children become orphans, many have to leave school and enter the workforce or stay at home to help care for the household. Life meaning is an overarching value system that guides and motivates non-orphans to exert self-control, and thus, greater experience of presence of meaning should be related to better self-control. In other words, life meaning has the capacity of guiding individual to recruit and maintain the exercise of self-control. Self-control as a potential mediator accounts for the relationship between meaning in life and psychological distress, given that low self-control is seen as a core hallmark of many psychological and psychiatric disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Findings of the study reveal that there is positive relationship between meaning in life and self-control. Moreover, it suggests that meaningful life is positive predictor of self-control ability among orphans and non-orphans. Results are similar in the shadow of the previous studies such as the meaning of life is one indicator of self-control and SWB. MacKenzie and Baumeister (2014), life meaning enables individuals to think about long-term goals and cultural standards; without meaning, one may behave based on impulsive and instinctual desires. In addition, statistically significant difference was found on the level of meaning in life between orphans and non-orphans. Non-orphans reported greater level of meaning in life as compared to orphans. Furthermore, the level of self-control ability was also shown higher among non-orphans than orphans.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that there is significant positive relationship between meaning in life and self-control ability. Findings of the study reveal that meaning in life is a significant positive predictor of self-control. Moreover, the level of meaning in life and self-control significantly greater in non-orphans as compared to orphans. Findings indicate that presence of meaning is a protective factor against psychological distress among orphans. It is recommended that counseling should be provided to orphans to enhance the level of self-control ability through seeking meaning in life.

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