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Meaningful living and satisfaction with life: A gender based comparison among different departments of university of Calcutta, West Bengal

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to determine the relationship between meaningful living and satisfaction with life of young adolescent boys and girls. Also a gender difference in meaningful living and satisfaction with life scale were assessed in the sample. To fulfil these aims a random sampling technique has been accepted. The respondents were 150 young adulthood aged between 19-22 years old from two departments of University of Calcutta, West Bengal. Two different measures namely: Meaningful living (MLQ) and Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) were used here. The findings of the study showed that there is a significant difference between meaningful living and satisfaction with life among university students by gender. Results of the study also showed that meaningful living and satisfaction with life has a relationship. Family income was also assessed here as another indicator of the study. The findings of the study will be very useful for students.

Keywords: Meaningful living, satisfaction with life, relation, gender

Introduction

College/ University students face a barrage of challenges in their daily life. Aside from doing their home works, projects and extra-curricular activities, they also have responsibilities at home as a son or daughter, brother or sister and as a friend. Thus, it is vital to understand the importance of meaningful living and life satisfaction. Meaning refers to making a sense, order or coherence out of one's existence and having a purpose in which one can strive to fulfil a goal. It gives a sense of purpose or importance to our being in the world. However, if a sense of meaning or purpose in life is missing the development of an identity may be prohibited (Chesick 1996, Frankl, 1966) [4, 11]. Meaning in life is associated with lower incidents of psychological disorder (Mascaro and Rosen 2005, Owens, Streger, White sell & Herrerra 2009) [17, 19] and suicidal ideation even within in the context of depression. Those who feel their lives are meaningful are more optimistic and self-actualized (Compton, 1996) [5], experience more self-esteem (Steger *et al.*, 2006a), and positive affect (King *et al.*, 2006) [14] and less suicidal ideation (Harlow, 1986) [12].

Meaning is not only an intrinsic human motivation, But it is "an important construct in the prevention of illness, the promotion of wellness and successful adaptation to life's changing circumstances" (Reker, 2000, 39) [22].

Meaningful living cannot be defined in general way because it differs for each person and changes each moment. It can cause emotional reactions which allow the person's opportunity and consider whether they want to feel good or bad.

Previous Research Review

Pointed out that meaning in life is an important part of happiness and subjective well-being. We may also say that living a meaningful and purposeful life has been shown to be one of the central factors associated with psychological wellbeing. On the other hand, a lack of meaning in life is associated with a variety of negative outcomes. Hence living a meaningful life is an important features of every human being. In this context, Frankl (1996, 1998) [11] frequently stated that meaning in life has positive effect on the ability to cope with difficult life situations. From the above discussion, we may conclude that meaning in life has been defined in terms of

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coherence, understanding of life, understanding of the world, and purposefulness Recker & wong 1988) [21]. Research has indicated that higher levels of meaning in life are associated with more positive emotions and vitality, increased self-esteem, less depressive symptoms (Steger, Mann, Michels & Cooper, 2009) [27] and lower health behaviour.

Meaningful living also indicates life satisfaction Steger, Oishi, recently found in a sample of undergraduate students that meaningful living was more related to life satisfaction for those who were actively searching for meaning in life. The MLQ (Meaningful living questionnaire) assess meaning in life which is a prominent indicator of psychological well-being and the SWLS (Satisfaction with Life Scale) assess life satisfaction which is a leading measure of subjective wellbeing (Diener, 2000) [6]. However, whereas life satisfaction concerns whether people like their lives or not, the presence of meaning is more specifically concerned about their life matters.

Research points out that there are individual differences regarding the concept life satisfaction. Life satisfaction refers to a judgemental process, in which individuals assess the quality of their lives on the basis of their own unique set of criteria (Shin & Johnson, 1978) [24]. It is to each his own, depending on their value orientations and the criteria for judgement are up to the person (Emmons, 1991) [9]. Hence life satisfaction is defined as a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his chosen criteria" (Shin and Johnson).

Previous Research Review

According to life satisfaction is not a matter of money and material things; it is the result of a person's nature of evaluation of his or her self. It comes from positive self-evaluation of one's life. Life satisfaction is distinct from positive affect and happiness, since the latter are emotional rather than cognitive (Diener, Suh, Lucas and Smith 1999) [7]. It is assuredly related with life expectancy health and longevity. According to Lelkes (2008) [16] good job, better physical and mental health, positive life events, healthy interpersonal relationships, and high income are the significant correlates of high level of life satisfaction. Boyce *et al.* (2010) [3] claimed that person's ranked income position is a key determinant of level of life satisfaction. (Easterlin, 1974; Fery & Stutzer, 2002) [8, 10] concluded that increase in income does not affect the individual's life satisfaction level. Huebner (2000) suggested that like adults, life satisfaction and income

has week relationship in young adult population. Myers & Diener (1995) [18] found that income itself has no significant relationship with life satisfaction, but satisfaction with income is a significant predictor of satisfaction level of life. Different perspectives have different claims about determination of life satisfaction. Revealed that people's life satisfaction is negatively related to depression and anxiety and positively related to self-esteem.

From the above mentioned discussion it is revealed that past research findings have shown a relation between meaningful living and life satisfaction. Hence the aim of the study is to explore whether a relation exists between meaningful living and life satisfaction of young adults. Another aim is to explore that there are any gender difference among young adults regarding meaningful living and life satisfaction. Family income is also taken as a another key to see whether there are any influence of family income regarding meaningful living and life satisfaction among young adolescent boys and girls. The present paper, therefore, has attempted to concentrate on the following parameters of research objectives:

- (1) To assess the relationship between meaningful living and life satisfaction among young adolescent boys and girls.
- (2) To find out if there are any gender difference in meaningful living and life satisfaction among young adolescent boys and girls.
- (3) To find out if there are any influence of family income regarding meaningful living and life satisfaction.

The following hypothesis are set up for study:

- 1. There will be relationship between meaningful living and life satisfaction among young adolescent boys and girls.
- 2. There will be difference between young adolescent boys and girls with respect to meaningful living and life satisfaction.
- 3. There will be difference of influence of family income between meaningful living and life satisfaction among young adolescent boys and girls.

Method

Sample: The sample of the study was selected from two departments of University of Calcutta: (1) History (2) Mass communication. All the students who were present on data collection day were selected as the sample of the study. Department wise break up of sample is presented in the following table:

Table 1: Break-up of the sample of the study in respect of different departments

Serial no.	Name of the Department	Number of Respondents – (n =150)	
		Male	Female
1.	History	49	41
2.	Mass-communication	20	40

Tools: In the Present study the following measures were used

- (1) Meaningful living scale –This scale was developed by Paul T.P. Wrong. It is a five point Likert type scale, consists of five items. Responses categories range from strongly disagree to strongly agree and are scored as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The maximum possible score is 35.
- (2) Satisfaction with Life Scale - This scale was developed by Diener, Emmon. It was designed to measure a single dimension e.g. global life satisfaction. It is a five point Likert type scale, consists of five items. Responses categories range from strongly disagree to strongly agree and are scored as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. This scale

has good internal consistency, with alphas between .79 and .89.

Data analysis and Interpretation

After collecting the data, Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) of young adulthood boys and girls students for meaningful living and life satisfaction were calculated and t- values were also computed to see if there is any significant difference with respect to in young adulthood boys and girls.

Table 2: Correlation Coefficients of meaning living and life satisfaction of young adulthood boys and girls.

Variables	Meaningful living (69)	Life satisfaction (81)
Meaningful living	.75 **	.36*

**0.01level

*0.05 level

This table represents that there is a significant positive correlation between meaningful living and life satisfaction. This result represents that the presence of meaningful living is significantly correlated with life satisfaction those who are actively searching for meaningful living. As in previous research, the experience of meaningful living was positively related to life satisfaction. So the first hypothesis has been accepted.

Table 2: Mean, SD of meaningful living and life satisfaction of

Table 4: Gender wise significant difference between meaningful living and life satisfaction

Variables	Sex	N	Mean Rank	Sum Rank
M. Living	Boys	69	95.04	6558.00
	Girls	81	58.85	4767.00
Life Satis.	Boys	69	77.09	6244.50
	Girls	81	73.63	5080.50

In table- 4 we apply Mann Whitney test to see gender difference between meaningful living and life satisfaction. There is a significant difference in Mean Rank and Sum of rank of meaningful living and life satisfaction. Difference were

young adulthood boys and girls by gender.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
M. Living	Boys	69	42.16	2.34
	Girls	81	36.68	6.10
Life Satis.	Boys	69	41.84	4.86
	Girls	81	35.99	2.86

This table shows Mean and Std. Deviation of meaningful living and life satisfaction. From that table we see that there is a difference of Mean and Std. Deviation among meaningful living and life satisfaction of young adolescent boys and girls.

Table 5: Mean, SD, significant difference of meaningful living, life satisfaction and monthly family income of young adulthood boys and girls by gender.

Variables	Gender	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value
M. Living	Boys	69	42.16	2.34	.966
	Girls	81	36.68	6.10	
Life Satis	Boys	69	41.84	4.86	
	Girls	81	35.99	2.86	
Monthly Family income	Boys	69	1.46	.502	
	Girls	81	1.59	.501	

The above table shows that there is no significant difference between meaningful living and life satisfaction regarding monthly family income of young adolescent boys and girls. Here we create two groups regarding monthly family income. Those persons whose monthly family income are from 20,000 thousand to 50,000 thousand are included in number one (1) group and those persons whose monthly income more than 50,000 are included in number two (2) group. But there is no significant difference between meaningful living and life satisfaction regarding monthly family income.

Results & Discussion

Young people face a lot changes simultaneously in their transactional periods. Most of the psychological, social and physical changes occur in this period. Life demands and social role grow in this period of life. People who are psychologically healthy face this changes very intelligently. Researcher dealing with young adult boys and girls found that meaningful living is positively related with life satisfaction was consistent with prior study of Debats.

The determinates of meaningful living and life satisfaction are highly individualized or personalized. It is completely value orientations. For this reason findings of the study showed that there is a gender difference among young adolescent boys and girls was consistent with the prior study of Oshi, Graessman 1998, Emmons1991 [9].

Findings of the current study showed that no relationship exists between family income, meaningful living and life satisfaction. Frey & Sustz (2002) [10] rejected the idea of

in meaningful living and life satisfaction (t = 4.91, p< 0.05). It appears that boys have higher meaningful life score and life satisfaction score as compared to girls.

existence of significant relationship between life satisfaction and income.

Hence we conclude that meaningful living and life satisfaction are important features of a desirable life. College or University students may be taught the worth of their life’s meaning and as a consequence they become happy. Carrier counselling in college or university may focus in exploring their meaningful living and life satisfaction in terms of carrier exploration and carrier Pathing as well as.

Implication of the study

Meaningful living and life satisfaction have received a tremendous boost from the advancement of Positive Psychology. Young adolescent boys and girls face a barrage of challenges in their life. In this stage if young adolescents who dissatisfied with life are more likely to abuse drugs and engage in violent and risky sexual behaviours. So it is vital to understand the importance of their meaningful living and life satisfaction.

The study is not free from limitation:

- Due to limited time period sample size was small.
- Future study will be done on a more detailed sample selected from different areas of West Bengal.

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