



psychology of social hope to meaningful life and its relationship to depression and psychological anxiety Dr. Hasan Falah Hasan Ali.

Abstract:

The paper was designed to clarify the empirical relationships between the Hope and of life meaning, along with the unique associations of these two constructs with depression and anxiety. This study bring the point that hope can be conceptualized as a component of a larger "life meaning" factor. However, statistically controlling for hope significantly attenuated the correlation between meaning and well-being (either anxiety or depression, depending on the particular analysis). similarly, statistically controlling for meaning significantly attenuated the correlation between hope and well-being. In addition, a significant interaction was found between hope and meaning in their relationship with depression. Among individuals higher in meaning, there is little relationship between hope and depression and among individuals lower in meaning, the relationship between hope and depression is somewhat stronger. Past research indicates that "meaning was not measure hope manifests an inverse relationship with depression and negative affect" (Snyder ,1996: 190). This study brings some evidence that this relationship between hope and depression may be stronger when one's life is perceived as less meaningful. In this study, we speculate that the higher perceived ability to achieve goals that is associated with having higher hope works as a kind of buffer against depression when other components of life meaning not related to hope become lowered. Perhaps people who perceive themselves to be successful at superficial goal achievements when their lives seem meaningless are slightly better off than people who do not. With or without this bricklayer metaphor, hope theory is seen as has offered a productive glimpse into the nature of life meaning. The phenomenon of meaning has both troubled and inspired scholars for thousands of years. In addition, recognizing the significant role that hopeful thinking plays in this phenomenon, someone can gain a still more complete understanding of how people construct meaningful lives.

Keywords: hope and well-being, moral anxiety, depression

علم نفس الأمل الاجتماعي في الحياة ذات المعنى وعلاقته بالاكتئاب والقلق النفسي
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خلاصة

هدف البحث التعرف إلى الاثر التجريبي بين الأمل ومعنى الحياة، بالاكتئاب والقلق. تشير هذه الدراسة إلى أنه يمكن تصور الأمل كعنصر من عناصر عامل "معنى الحياة" الأكبر. ومع ذلك، فإن التحكم إحصائياً في الأمل خفف بشكل كبير من العلاقة بين المعنى والرفاهية (إما القلق أو الاكتئاب، اعتماداً على التحليل المحدد). وبالمثل، فإن التحكم إحصائياً في المعنى خفف بشكل كبير من العلاقة بين الأمل والرفاهية. بالإضافة إلى



ذلك، وجد وجود تفاعل كبير بين الأمل والمعنى في علاقتهم بالاكنتاب. بين الأفراد الأعلى في المعنى، هناك علاقة قليلة بين الأمل والاكنتاب وبين الأفراد الأقل في المعنى، العلاقة بين الأمل والاكنتاب أقوى إلى حد ما.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأمل والرفاهية، القلق المعنوي، الاكنتاب

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we discussed theories of life meaning as effects of meaning on anxiety and depression. There is a kind of commonality among these theories apparent in the directed model of hope (Snyder, 1991: 89). However, it is suggested hope is a point that is common in theories of meaning. Results that were found were similar for the correlations between both hope and depression or even anxiety, when controlling for meaning. However, life meaning is of the most concepts that are elusive in both fields of philosophy and psychology. Philosophers, psychologists, and psychiatrists as attempted to understand its nature which spanned centuries which was full with auspicious. Not lucky to know that despite that world view-bending efforts, more questions have been put. The answer for many theories is to stop asking "What is the meaning of life?" but to ask "What is the nature of meaning?", However, molar variables like meaning are to examine their relationship with more basic, molecular variables can be considered as a better mean to understand and explain abstracts items. In this paper, we examined the relationship between meaning with hope (Ibid: 90). Firstly, we shortly reviewed the history of psychological definitions of meaning; then, we identified an important commonality among these definitions, hopeful, goal, directing cognition, and explained some of their theoretical implications; and finally showed the relations with depression and anxiety.

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HISTORICAL DEFINITIONS OF MEANING

The definition of Life meaning is not one but there are several different definitions and theories of meaning. It is generally says that these theories share two points: (1) life meaning is a global way of assessing or understanding one's life; and (2) believing life is meaningful and is associated with lower levels of negative emotions and lower risk of mental illness. It seems that the many theories of life meaning appear to share little points. There are three important theories of life meaning found in the psychological literature. It is not our goal in this short overview to exactly explain any of these perspectives; though we wish to highlight a less generally acknowledged commonality among these views of life meaning, the importance of personal goals. In addition, we suggest hypotheses regarding this commonality's relationships with hope, a goal-directed cognitive construct



(Snyder, 1991: 125). However, along with summarizing these theories, this paper attempted to translate them into the language of goals with no compromise to our faithfulness to the original ideas. In positive psychology, a meaningful life is a construct does with the purpose, significance, fulfillment, and satisfaction of life when specific theories are different, there are two common points: firstly, a global schema to understand one's life; secondly, the belief that life itself is meaningful. We can define meaning as 'relevance, significance or value' and it is the connection linking two presumably independent entities together; it shows the relation between objects, phenomena, happenings and actions that are a part of one's life. However, a meaningful life links the biological reality of one's life to a symbolic interpretation or meaning. This shows to have lower levels of negative emotions, and to have lower risk of mental illness. (McAdams, 1996:77) Logotherapy emphasizes on finding values and purpose in an someone's life to attain meaningfulness. However, "Value" can be subcategorized more into three major aspects: creative, experiential, and attitudinal. Firstly, creative values are reached through acts of creating or producing something. Secondly, experiential values can be actualized as a person experiences something through sight, touch, smell, or hearing. Thirdly, attitudinal values are reserved for those who cannot have new experiences or create new things. Therefore, those individuals can find meaning through sizing a new attitude that allows "suffering with dignity". Concerning all these types of values, it is because of individual's sense of responsibility that he/she pursues these values and consequently experiences a meaningful life. It is through the realization an individual is the sole being responsible for turning life meaningful which values are actualized and life becomes meaningful. Terror management theory studies meaningfulness and its relationship to culture. An individual's consciousness makes them aware of their own mortality. To deal with the inevitable death, individuals try to leave their marks in some symbolic act of immortality within the society. The structure created through society and culture provides them with a sense of order. Via society we can create a symbolic immortality that can take different forms, fore example, monuments, theatrical productions, children, etc. However, the order of culture lessen death anxiety and allows the one to live up to the societal standards ,so when living up to such ideals; the individual is given self-esteem that counterbalances the mortal anxiety. (Stillman, 2009: 690)

In the hope theory there is an operationalizing for meaningfulness as having more to do with self-control which leads to higher self-esteem. As an individual lives by societal standards of living, he/she can exercises self-control which can go through that self-control in which higher self-esteem is achieved. However, meaning can be found when an individual realizes the individual is capable and able to achieve their



goals through successful management in a good way. Control is "a cognitive model whereby people strive to comprehend the contingencies in their lives so as to attain desired outcomes and avoid undesirable ones".

Psychology suggests that human constructs life stories as a mean to understand life events and impose meaning on life, therefore connecting the individual to the event. In addition, meaningfulness is a subjective evaluation of how well the stories connect to the individual. Thus, meaningfulness is actualized through positive functioning, satisfaction with life, the enjoyment of work, happiness, positive affect and hope. We can translate Meaningfulness into physical health and an overall well-being. (Kruizinga, 2016: 264)

Both a happy life and a meaningful life can be seen as two strongly correlated attitudes. Happiness can be distinguished as more related to biological needs and desires like the absence of pain or unpleasant experiences, however, meaning is more cultural and abstract, relating to overall life satisfaction or eudaimonia. One study has found that difficulty, health, purchasing power, and a focus on the present corresponded more to happiness than meaning, when thinking of the past or the future, struggle, stress, worry, argument, anxiety, generosity, and viewing daily activities like raising children as reflective of someone corresponded more with finding life meaningful. (Vos, 2016: 87)

To feel more connected to others can improve both happiness and meaning, according to the study. But the role someone adopts in the relationships makes an important difference.

As Nolen-Hoeksema says "A meaningful life is associated with positive functioning: life satisfaction, enjoyment of work, happiness, general positive affect, hope and in general a higher level of well-being."

However, psychological adjustment in the case of stressor has been linked with meanings finding if in the form of benefit seeking or making sense of the loss. Concerning meaning, making sense of the loss is more important earlier on in the adjustment process after the loss while perceiving the benefit might be a more long term process which occurs over time with the greatest benefit often experienced later on (Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema & Larson, 1998: 74)

LOGOTHERAPY AND FRANKL

Victor Frankl (1972 - 1992); he was one of the first thinkers who placed meaning at the center of a psychological theory. There was a concept in his theory which is



called the, Logotherapy, which was the concept of the “existential vacuum”. “existential vacuum” means the perception that there is no meaning in the universe. Frankl believed: this is the major collective crisis of this time. However, when a person experiences this existential vacuum, he or she would suffer from anoogenic neurosis. Although noogenic neurosis is not synonymous with depression or anxiety, theoreticians proposed that it could predispose one to these more typical psychogenic states (Dyck, 1987: 85). Frankl (1965, 1966) defined the “values” people actualize within their lives that three classes of such values: firstly creative, secondly experiential, and thirdly attitudinal.

Creative values are actualized through the act of creating or producing something (Frankl, 1965: 77). Someone represent creative values when he or she writes a paper, constructs buildings, or even gives birth. Experiential values, are actualized when an individual makes actions like seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, hearing, or in experiencing something. Therefore, eating a food that he or she loves or visiting a famous monument, reading a novel, are all instantiations. However, attitudinal values are the most obscure ones of Frankl’s categories till now.

Frankl suggested this category in order to explain how persons who no longer are able to create or experience anew can have meaning in their lives. Frankel says that those individuals can find meaning by consciously adopting an attitude that allows them to suffer in life with dignity. However, in (1992) he didn't refer to any goals in his theory, so we can say that this theory can turns into of goals via asserting that people bring meaning into their lives by setting goals which have values. However, through goals people create, experience, and suffer with dignity. So, Frankl used the term responsibility to seize the notion of setting goals actively. Therefore, people live responsibly whenever they know that they have the power to bring meaning alone into their own lives then they pursue goals that help them to do so. Then, if they fail to set and execute goals, they might be faced with noogenic illness and a predisposition for the development of psychogenic symptoms like depression and anxiety. (Greenberg, 1986: 158)

BECKER AND TERROR MANAGEMENT THEORY

Both of the brainchild of Greenberg, Pyszczynski, and Solomon (1986), terror management theory are based on the work of Ernest Becker during the 1960s and 1970s. Becker tried to join all together the work of psychoanalytic, existential, and sociological thinkers, creating a theory of meaning that is inextricably linked with culture and self-esteem (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1991: 98). Becker began with the premise which says that the human brain is so complex and it allows its owner to consider itself and its future. So, consciousness is born. however, humans, having a product of such consciousness, comprehend their mortality and



realize that must ultimately die, a prospect that potentially could engender abject terror. Luckily, human have built a social structure (named culture) which can offer the possibility of symbolic or actual immortality, while simultaneously distracting humans from contemplating their eventual demise.

We are allowed imposing a sense of structure by culture, order, and stability upon the world. For example, if we looked at Christian culture we learn the point that says that God created the world in order to provide Himself with free-willed companions, who, will find immortality by His side in case they behave probably. Therefore you can see that children brought up in this tradition are taught that culturally consonant behavior would lead to salvation and actual immortality. It is the same point to say that secular culture can provides human with the possibility of symbolic immortality in forms of monuments besides works of art, and children. Therefore, culture can reduce death anxiety via offering individuals immortality in exchange for adherence to its standards.(Hutzell, 1988:101) As we know, people live up to these cultural standards, to that extent, they are protected from the terror associated with death. All terror management theorists believed that the psychological mechanism which directly leads to this reduction in terror is self-esteem, that is bolstered when people fulfill cultural standards. therefore, self-esteem is viewed as a type of psychological armor, saving the individual against death anxiety. However, when people would be led to believe they haven't properly fulfilled a culturally valuable role, self-esteem would be reduced, allowing this underlying terror to return in the form of significant anxiety.(Oishi, 1998:1189)

Terror management theorists suggested that self-esteem is bolstered and the individual is protected from death anxiety

whenever that individual:

- (1) Has a relatively organized cultural framework he can by it imbue the world with meaning and derive culturally– consonant goals.
- (2) Meet those goals, which allow the individual to fulfill a valued role in the context of that culture. (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997: 100).

MEANING CONSIDERED AS A CONTROL

Snyder (1997) has proposed, as a reply, to the findings of experiments designed to test the predictions of terror management theory, a more parsimonious explanation



resting on individuals' needs to feel in control of themselves and their environments. Snyder says that, "as people behave so as to 'live up to cultural standards,' . . . they can control themselves to experience higher self-esteem. It is the perceived sense of control, or lack thereof, that precedes the experience of self-esteem" In addition, Snyder defines "control" using a very specific manner, saying that: "as a cognitive model whereby people strive to comprehend the contingencies in their lives so as to attain desired outcomes and avoid undesirable ones" (Snyder, 1991: 48). So meaning in the terror management sense is nothing but a feeling of control. In the language of goals, life meaning comes when people realize they can manage their lives effectively in order to achieve desired goals.

Antonovsky (1979), worked from a perspective similar to the one suggested by Snyder (Snyder, 1997:49), he introduced a personality construct which is the "sense of coherence," which he believes it served as a stress buffer preserving psychological and physical well-being. The sense of coherence consists of three distinct components: (1) comprehensibility, (2) manageability, (3) meaningfulness. Firstly, people should be able to comprehend their environments which means that they must be able to understand how their environments work and they can feel confident that those environments consistently can work in that manner. Secondly, people should believe that they can successfully manage their environments so as to secure desired goals. And thirdly, since people seek to comprehend, manage, and cope with the demands of their environments, they should be confident that they are doing this in goals of meaningful ends. (Antonovsky, 1979: 127)

THEORETICAL COMMONALTIES

In this paper, we have discussed three influential definitions of the meaning-in-life construct and explain these definitions into a common language centered around the pursuit of goals. Those perspectives can offer both differing and conflicting accounts of the ways that the individual finds and maintains a sense of life meaning in. in spite of these differences, in this paper, we attempted to convey that all these theories share an important commonality which is a reliance on the pursuit of personal goals. However, this commonality is consistently obscured, since meaning theorists concentrate on the importance of goal accomplishment in establishing life meaning rarely. With minor explanation, the centrality of goals in all the theories be clear. We can define Frankl's "values" as : "classes of goals that, when achieved, imbue the individual's life with meaning". Becker and the terror management theorists' say that life meaning reflects the perception that one is fulfilling cultural expectations and serving in culturally valuable roles. This can be



interpreted in the language of goals.(Pyszczynski, 1997:20) So, one's culture influences the goals which one chooses to pursue, and one's subsequent achievement or approximation of these goals determines one's sense of meaning in life. Finally, control theorists made a direct use of goals via asserting life meaning is derived from a perception in which one can control the environment in order to achieve one's desires. All those three theories of life meaning, and goals become repositories of meaning by which their achievement brings purpose to one's life. This goal-dependent nature of meaning places Snyder's (Snyder, 1994: 56) hope construct at the core of each of the preceded theories.

A THEORY OF HOPE

In time of creation of hope theory, C. R. Snyder and his colleagues (1991) have showed the seeking of goals in a cognitive reconceptualization of hope. Concerning this, researchers (Snyder, 1994: 23) define goals: "the targets of mental action-sequences which serve as anchor points for purposive behavior". These goals may be extremely large, taking months or even years to achieve, or extremely small, taking only minutes or seconds to accomplish; moreover, they might be too abstract and general or too concrete and specific. Hope, then, is theorized to be the "master" personality variable affecting the pursuit of all such goals. Specifically, Snyder et al. (1991) defines hope as: "a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally-derived sense of successful agency and pathways". (Snyder, 1991: 541) Therefore, hope is composed of two interrelated components of goal-directing thinking: pathways and agency. Pathways can reflect the perceived capacity to produce cognitive routes to someone's goals. It is instantiated in the plans that individuals make to obtain their aspirations. The subjective experience of hope doesn't depend upon the existence of real, concrete pathways to goals, but upon a perception that effective pathways (Snyder, 1999: 151).

The other component of hope theory is, agentic thinking, which is defined as: "the thoughts that people have regarding their ability to begin and continue movement on selected pathways toward those goals" (Ibid: 180). However, mobilizing agentic thoughts that a person is sufficiently motivated to actually initiate and sustain movement along pathways toward desired goals.

However, people can think and act in order to reach their goals. In case either of these cognitive components is lacking, people are unlikely to reach their desires. Hope is associated to positive psychological indicators since it is a part of it and because both of the agency and pathways components of hope theory represent goal-directed thought processes, and goal-directed thinking it appears as a base in



establishing life meaning. However, hopeful thinking is at the core of the meaning construct itself.

THE PRESENT STUDY

In this paper, we examined the relation of hope with life meaning, along with the examining of the relationships of these two constructs to depression and anxiety. This process involved administering three indices of perceived meaning in life, with mentioning of depression and anxiety. Our overarching hypothesis is that hope is a central component of life meaning. However, we explained that hope is an important variable governing goal pursuit, and goal pursuit appears to play a core role in all theories of life meaning. Therefore, meaning is hypothesized to be a wider concept, since no meaning theory reduces simply to goal pursuit. Hope may be conceptualized as a component of life meaning, basic to its ability to predict wellbeing variables. We tested these general assertions using two statistical methods: factor analysis and regression.

CONCLUSION

Hope significantly reduce the force the correlation between meaning and wellbeing. It is the same to say; statistically controlling for meaning significantly reduce the force the correlation between hope and wellbeing. However, a significant interaction was found between hope and meaning in their relationship with depression.

This interaction has been plotted and appears that among individuals who are higher in meaning, we can find little relationship between hope and depression; however, among individuals lower in meaning, the relationship between hope and depression is somewhat stronger.

Past research indicates that in samples in which meaning was not measured, hope manifests an opposite relationship with depression and negative affect (Snyder et al., 1991; 1996). This study offers something saying that this relationship between hope and depression may be stronger when one's life is perceived as less meaningful.

In spite the fact that there is no extant theory exists to show this counterintuitive finding, it can be speculated that the higher perceived ability to achieve goals that is associated with having higher hope works as a type of buffer against depression in the case when other components of life meaning not related to hope become lowered. Individuals who perceive themselves to be successful at superficial goal achievements when their lives seem meaningless are, may be, a little bit better off than those who do not. However, the level of hope doesn't matter, the interaction



indicates that participants with lower meaning as measured by the SOC-S is experienced with higher levels of depression more than participants with higher meaning.

Well, both life meaning and hope are correlated with anxiety. Hope provides some power in accounting for anxiety which is consistent with the future-focused negative expectations that are associated with anxiety. However, we believe that hope helps to fight against anxiety.

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