The Meaning of Life and Its Relationship to the Cognitive Motivation among University Students

Ali Saad Kadhim
College of Art
Mustansiriyah University
Baghdad - Iraq
alisaad198114@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT
The main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between the meaning of life and cognitive motivation by use Methods to achieve the main objective. The participants were 178 students from a public university in Baghdad, Iraq was recruited to respond to two sets of questionnaires namely Meaning in life using (MLQ) developed by Steger (2010) and Cognitive Motivation using (CM) developed by Radwan (2004). The results indicated that the sample generally has a meaning of life. In addition, the overall sample members have cognitive motivation. Regarding the relationship between the meaning of life and cognitive motivation, there is a significant relationship. Implications and limitations of the study are discussed, and suggestions for future research are offered.
Introduction

Iraqis have been exposed to the war for decades, and the situation had put many Iraqis in their own individual life's crises, lack of security, and actual daily exposure to threats such as explosions, murder and kidnapping, which had affected the course of their natural life (Mahdi, 2014). Such a situation left many Iraqis with questions about the meaning and worth of living. Despite life has various meanings for one person to the others, search for the meaning of life is a specific task individual have to achieve (Patterson, 1990).

In other words, individuals who are not aware of the meaning of life would likely to perceive their lives to be quick and meaningless, which might bring them to the point where they would try to escape from their own present life every time they stop working or doing their daily activities (Patterson, 1990). Furthermore, Individuals who failed to identify the meaning of their life may suffer from the existent vacuum of meaninglessness that leads them to neurosis existential, suicidal tendencies, delinquency among juveniles, loss of reason to move on, distress symptoms, and dependency, symptoms of neurotic and psychotic difference, psychological combustion, physical ailments, stress, drug abuse, alcoholism, gluttonous eating habit, and a sense of alienation (Frankl, 1982; Newcomb, 1990; Patterson, 1990; Fujita & Diener, 1992; Taylor, 1992; Kinner, 1994; Debats & et al, 1995; Hafez, 2006; Harlow & Saleh, 2007; Hassan, 2010).

Meaning in life is not just a theoretical or philosophical construct, but it has a bearing on human health and wellbeing (e.g., Jung, as cited in Jaffe, 1970) asserted that absence of meaning is related to psychopathology. Yalom (1980), in an empirical research, confirmed earlier clinical observations that to live without meaning, goals, or values provokes considerable distress (Yalom, 1980).

While pondering about what makes life meaningful, several perspectives in the literature could be found, especially in the literature covering philosophy and existential psychology. In an attempt to formulate a single definition of meaning, one may ask what the essence of meaning is? But a single generic answer to this question is not possible to find. For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment (Frankl, 1978; Glaz, 2015). Frankl speaks of the uniqueness of meanings; a quality not only of a situation but even of life as a whole since life is a string of unique situations. Frankl postulated that man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a “secondary rationalization” of instinctual drives (Frankl, 1978).

Individuals who perceive their life to be low in meaningfulness tend to be isolationists and trapped into certain behavior patterns such as excessive TV watching and video games playing, and it is unlikely for them to have enough positive cognitive motivation to have a meaningful life (Molaso, 2006; Saleh, 2007; Hassan, 2010; Al-Shakery, 2011). Cognitive motivation can be one of the reasons in the discrepancy between the states, for instance,
students that lack the cognitive motivation might have inadequate creativity and poor mental health, that will give them inadequate academic results regardless how hard they study (Mohammed, 2003; Al Shammari, 2009; Hassan, 2010). Additionally, the same reason might affect the students’ academic balance, because they might hate some subjects due to its inaccordance with their needs and goals (Zidane, 1984). On the other hand, if the individuals are able to find the meaning of every aspect of their life, they will perceive their life to be more meaningful, hence they will keep looking for the greater meaning of life by giving others the meaning of life (Hassan, 2010). Therefore, sources the meaning of life appear in the service or the help of others, mutual relations, to live according to the beliefs of limited, expression and creativity through (art, beauty, music, poetry and Composition), respects the material through the possession of the causes of the welfare, orientation existential based on pleasure and have fun, and finally appear in the personal growth as evidenced in the achievement of more knowledge and the development of mental potential through which human realizes the importance of achieving a sense, thus generated has the responsibility and commitment that makes it able to participate in the world and get away from module (Hassan, 2010).

Hypothetically, it can be hypothesized that the meaning of life might possess the power to alter the influence of cognitive motivation. In other words, when the individuals cannot engage in any activity demonstrates the meaning of life might will lead to lack of cognitive motivation. This current study aims to test the aforementioned hypothesis, whether the meaning of life has a significant impact on cognitive motivation.

Finding of this study is significant because it might serve as a foundation to developing programs or further studies on increasing students’ meaning of life value, which in turn, can lead to developing cognitive motivation for the children which might be a building of their future social and academic life. Because the study is conducted in Iraq, the finding might also fill the literature gap in how to reduce the negative influence of lack of meaning of life.

Related Literatures
Theorists such as Maslow and Freud, search of the meaning of life is one of the strongest motivations that keep human to stay alive and striving to be better every moment (Frankl, 1982; Al-Shakery, 2011). According to Maslow’s theory: Finding the meaning is one of the essential tasks of an individual that was derived from inside the individual, and when it satisfies the lower needs (according to Maslow’s pyramid of needs), individuals tend to repeat it until the need is saturated, afterwards, they will move up to the higher level of satisfaction (Frankl, 1982). In other words, the fulfilment of the lower needs will be transformed inside the individuals’ mind into motivation to grow.

The achievement of the individual to the meaning of his life or his goal in life is not always possible, therefore the meaning of life is available in the ideal conditions only, such as a peaceful and conflict-free lives. Although individuals are free to interpret the meaning of
life, their life will be perceived to be more meaningful when they choose the meaning that express their core values (Hafez, 2006). Maslow believes that self-actualization is equivalent to the discovery of the meaning of life of an individuals as people are wriven by the values of existence or eternal truths (truth, beauty, goodness, justice, uniqueness) and the absence of these values creates a particular disease is the major disease types Metapathologises (such as meaninglessness, the existential emptiness, the lack of values) (Maslow, 1982).

As for the concept of Cognitive Motivation, it raises the question of the nature of the theories of motivation and considerable debate among psychologists, so it introduced us psychologists are many theories vary according to their looks of human behavior, and according to the principles of psychological schools which they belong. Therefore, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in Psychological Review (Maslow, 1943; Heylighen, 1992).

Consequently, Maslow emphasized the concept of motivation on the free will of individuals, selected for his actions during the selection process, which are difficult to predict, in addition to giving great importance of personal experience, focusing on the psychological growth of the person and the full employment of its potential. So, determine human behavior is through the struggle of the individual in order to achieve the same, and that the behavior entirely governed by the logic of free will (Melhem, 2001). Therefore Maslow believed that humans remain throughout their lives demanding needs, when one set of needs will be replaced by another new group, where we start needs physiological, any need for food, water, oxygen, sleep, sex, protection from extremism in temperature increase and shortages materialize, and those needs which represent the requirements just to stay alive and are much more needs power groups, or they impose their presence more than the rest of needs, where you must satisfy certain degree before it emits other needs, and if it stays needed one of them without investigation or gratification, they may dominate All the remaining needs (McLachlan, 2011).

And the need to show a sense of protection, and away from danger, tranquillity and security once satisfying and satisfy the physiological needs. Where children want in a specific way routine can rely on in their lives, while adults would like to have stable jobs, and building up savings, various insurances, has read individual religions and points of philosophical look to organize their lives and give them a sense of security, and once you achieve the security needs of the need appears, to love and intimacy where individuals seek to love and to be loved and to belong, and if saturated this need prevail individual need to respect himself and respect for others to him, where people want to feel their worth in society and work and at home. Also want to respect themselves, and then seeks individuals towards themselves and strive to achieve their potential and realize their ideals, And then show the need for knowledge and understanding which refers to the constant desire to understanding and knowledge, and are reflected in the scoping and exploratory activities,
and in the search for more knowledge, and get as much information as possible. oary
Maslow that needs understanding and knowledge is more pronounced when some
individuals others. When this needs to be a strong desire for systematic practice based on
the analysis, organization and research in relations (Jones & Lloyd, 2005; Lee & Sherman,
2015).

Individuals rushing at through their own personal needs, which extends from the needs of
the low-level (needs to stay) to the needs of the high level such as the need to knowledge
and understanding, if a person is capable of forming itself thanks to the effectiveness and
positive possessed and he conscious of itself and is able to develop when the surrounding
conditions are favourable and appropriate (Gilbert, 1997).
The need for knowledge and understanding appear in the early stage (early childhood) and
expressed in a natural curiosity and you do not need to learn and there are several ways in
which the need for knowledge and understanding shown and include the need for analysis
and the need to shorten things to the primary elements and the need for experimentation
and the need for interpretation to build a theory or system meaning lend or give meaning to
bring the individual and the circumstances (Maslow, 1943).
Depending on the hierarchy of Maslow, the student who succeeds to achieve the first needs
of (meaning of life) will lead him to be trying to achieve (cognitive motivatio
through attendance at the study and academic achievement, so this will be a literary perspective in
an attempt to fill the gap in knowledge about whether the meaning of life will make
students possess (high cognitive motivation) have them (achievement an academic high).

Objectives of the Study
The main objective of this study is to investigate the interrelationship between meaning of
life and cognitive motivation among university students. To achieve the main objective,
several research objectives are listed as follows:
1. To identify the level of meaning of life among undergraduate students.
2. To identify the of cognitive motivation among undergraduate students.
3. To identify the relationship between meaning of life and cognitive motivation among
university students.

Null Hypotheses
This study suggests several hypotheses. These hypotheses are going to be tested whether
they can be rejected based on statistical analyses. So, the rationale for using hypotheses in
the current study is that the rejection of a null hypothesis in quantitative research measures
a more extensive range of possibilities compared with the acceptance of that hypothesis
(Prihadi, 2013). Therefore, the current study’s null hypotheses are as follows:
"There is no significant relationship between the meaning of life and cognitive motivation
among undergraduate students."
Methods

Participants
Data were gathered on 178 participants (undergraduate students) from a public university in Baghdad, Iraq.

Procedure
Participants were given a brief explanation on the purpose of the survey and informed consent was obtained. Participants were approached at different locations such as the labs, library, study rooms, foyer and library within the university colleges. The survey covered of two questionnaires. The following two questionnaires of the survey consists of the meaning of life and cognitive motivation.

Instruments
Two instruments were used in this study its Meaning in life using (MLQ) and Cognitive Motivation using (CM).

Meaning of Life
Meaning in life using (MLQ) developed by Steger (2010). This questionnaire contains 10 items. Each item is scored on a 1 to 7 scale, where 1 = that the statement is Absolutely Untrue; 2 = that the statement is Mostly Untrue; 3 = that the statement is Somewhat Untrue; 4 = that the statement is Can't Say True or False; 5 = that the statement Somewhat True; 6 = that the statement Mostly True; and 7 = that the statement Absolutely True.

Cognitive Motivation
Cognitive Motivation using (CM) developed by Radwan (2004). This questionnaire contains 19 items. Each item is scored on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 = that the statement is Strongly Agree; 2 = that the statement is Agree; 3 = that the statement is Undecided; 4 = that the statement is disagree; & 5 = that the statement Strongly Disagree.

Data Analysis
To analyse the data, statistical method of Pearson Product – Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed. The software of SPSS was utilized to analyse and produce the result tables.

Results of Research
To identify the level of the meaning of life among university students has been the arithmetic average account for members of the research sample was (9.45) and standard deviation (4.716), and it turned out that the difference statistically significant by using
samples T-test for one sample at a level of significance (0.05). Table (1). This means that students have the meaning of life.

Table 1
One-Sample Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of Life</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>4.716</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purpose of identifying the level of Motivation Cognitive among university students was the arithmetic average account for members of the research sample was (60.07) and standard deviation (8.438), and it turned out that the difference statistically significant by using test samples t for one sample at a level of significance (0.05). Table (2). This means that students have the Motivation Cognitive.

Table 2
One-Sample Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation Cognitive</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>60.07</td>
<td>8.438</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td>94.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purpose of identifying the correlation between the meaning of life and cognitive motivation among university students used Pearson Product - Moment Correlation Coefficient to identify the correlation, and it turns out that there is a positive correlation between the two variables. Table (3).

Table 3
Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Meaning of Life</th>
<th>Motivation Cognitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of life</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation 1</td>
<td>.191***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation Cognitive</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation .191***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion and conclusions
The results indicated that the sample generally have a meaning of life, and the interpretation of this result on the basis of the adopted theory for (Maslow), that most of the students are trying to overcome difficult situations, and working for others without
expecting a reward, therefore, lay plans for their future and work to achieve them, therefore, then will create their meaning of life.

Moreover, the students were motivated by the values of existence which was born to them the meaning of life, therefore, this result was consistent with the results of Maslow (2006), and Takkinen & Ruoppila (2001).

In addition, the Results indicated that the overall sample members have the cognitive motivation, and the interpretation of this result on the basis of the adopted theory for (Maslow), that the majority of students want to complete their studies immediately after graduation, and are looking for knowledge, and raises their interest in an all-new in the field of knowledge, and discuss their colleagues, as well as it was the circumstances surrounding their favorable and appropriate, and have a minimum needs saturated thus moved to the top of the needs and the knowledge and understanding. This result was consistent with the results of a study (Gibson, 1984; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012).

Regarding the relationship between the meaning of life and cognitive motivation. Results indicated to the presence of significant relationship. The interpretation of the result based on Maslow’s theory that individuals are moving by needs gradually when they shall be satisfied their needs any move from the lower by needs to the higher, and as the above the individuals possessed the meaning of life and as generated after the satisfaction of the lower by needs was for students move to the Supreme needs and represented by cognitive motivation which possessed the individuals who responded above. From this evidenced the existence of a positive relationship between meaning of life and cognitive motivation, if students have moved to the Supreme needs after that drenched the world needs and that I was born to have meaning of life and then Motivation Cognitive move and they Bahball, even if meaning of life was not full it would have been difficult for students to move to needs Supreme satisfy of motivation and knowledge, so that we find meaning of life an effective role to creating cognitive motivation.

References


