

Purpose in Life and Reasons for Living as Mediators of Suicidal Ideation

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Abstract

Positive psychological factors play a vital role in coping with the overwhelming life situation. Any worst happening results from worst ideation or thoughts. Similarly suicide is the final product of the suicidal ideation. Suicidal. There may be a feeling of bleakness and an erroneous assumption that taking one's own life might be the answer. Compared to suicide risk factors, factors that may buffer stressors and protect individuals from suicide have received less attention. Purpose in Life and Reasons for Living are the protective psychological factors which directly affect suicidal ideation. Purpose or meaning in life contributes to the wellbeing and helps protect against depression and consequently indirectly against suicidal ideation. Reasons for living are another protective factor that has been shown to help shield individuals from negative thoughts and actions. It is considered that psychological strengths like purpose in life and reasons for living play big prophylactic role in predicting suicidal ideation.

Keywords: Purpose in Life, Reasons for Living, Suicidal Ideation

Suicidal ideation is the horrible start of ending the love towards oneself, when the pressure either internally or externally increases, then the individual starts to get assailable. According to sociologist Durkheim, E:- 'all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result'. There are times in life especially during adolescence, where things which were important in life start to appear meaningless or hurtful, thus leaving the individual feel broken and

worthless. According to cognitive theory, suicide is thought to be an exit of hopelessness and despair and if a person is full of hopelessness, suicidal risks increases significantly (Minkoff et al., 1973). We have entered the new millennium and as we introspect on issues that matter to us as a part of rapidly changing society, it is imperative that an appraisal be made of the psychosocial needs of the adolescents who are the baton of human chain further into the 21st century. Suicides are taken as remedy or solution for many

individuals to get away from pain and failure. Taking one's own life is rating as the third leading cause of death following accidents and homicides in Adolescents [National center for Health Statistics, 2000]. Since 1950, suicide rate has increased three times in adolescents. It is one side of the coin, ending the flow of breath and beats of heart in body by oneself but there are certain aspects which work as buffering the tension inside and protect the individual from giving up the hope and killing oneself. Every act of construction or destruction starts with an idea, a thought. A thought is the seed which flourishes with the nourishment from within and its environment. Understanding the chain of events which are responsible for the suicidal ideation is therefore vital for psychologists to promote well-being. The positive factors which are responsible in the tolerance against the tension which is generated due to any vulnerable circumstances are least studied till now. Therefore it is required to understand the role of individual strength which helps them to prevent such an atrocious thought even. While studies done on suicidal ideation or attempts are loaded with the risk

factors resulting in suicide, elements that protect an individual from thinking or doing suicide have received less attention. From the positive psychology perspective, it is particularly important to investigate factors that help to protect persons from suicidal action in spite of stressful circumstances that can lead to despair (Wingate et al., 2006). A number of studies suggest that purpose or meaning in life contributes to wellbeing and helps protect against depression and consequently indirectly protects against suicidal ideation. Thus it is important to include such positive psychology variables in studying the suicidal ideation. Gradually meaning in life has caught the attention of psychologists, Frankl's (1959/1976) early work emphasized the importance of finding value in life, and he is widely credited for the work done in this field. Life with a purpose constitutes the meaning for any individual which helps them to meet with hard times of life. Purpose doesn't comprise of big or huge entity, it is small things in a person inner being and of course his/her surroundings. Sufferings are part of life; it is known to all but not accept in the same manner. Thus knowing the reality

of life connects us with our purpose in life. Purpose in life works as a moderator between suicidal ideation and depression (Heisel & Flett, 2004). Purpose in life paves the way of valuing the life and in a more philosophical terms understanding one's existence. Purpose in life is indirectly related to mental pain (Orbach, Mikulincer, Gilboa, & Sirota, 2003) and depression among the entire sub stages of adults (Olesovsky, 2003). Being biological being humans face different attacks from environment, which can lead to critical illness, the situation like these results in the negative hindsight view towards their existence; but in a study that investigated the relationship among several strengths (e.g., illness severity, coping style, optimism, perceived social support, meaning, and spirituality) among HIV-positive patients, only meaning in life and few HIV symptoms were exceptionally related to lower psychological distress (Suzman, 2002). A study was done for 6-month, it was found that the change in meaning in life predicted positive change in mental health (Jacobson, 2002). Further a study was conducted on chronic pain patients and found that patients who had more

meaning in life at preadmission experienced less pain, depression and physical disability at the time of discharge and even a year follow up was done and found that pain patients with less initial meaning suffered more (Park, 2003).

Looking at the relationship of purpose in life to suicide, recently a longitudinal national study of Finnish adults was conducted and it revealed that there are higher chances of suicidal related activities if a person has suffered dissatisfaction at the initial level of the life (Koivumaa-Honkanen et al., 2001). The study was conducted for 20 years following the same set of adults. Highly dissatisfied men with life were 25 times more inclined to commit suicide than men who were satisfied with their life during the first 10 years of the follow-up. The most significant finding is that life satisfaction still predicted suicide after controlling for age, sex, baseline health status, alcohol intake, smoking, and physical activity. Apart from this, this longitudinal study revealed that the scores of life satisfaction were quite stable during a 5-year period in which approximately 61% of participants

remained in the same life satisfaction category.

Similarly, a study was conducted on the psychiatric patients, (Heisel & Flett, 2004) it was found that purpose in life and satisfaction with life in a patient accounted for alteration in suicidal thought above and beyond the variance accounted for by negative psychological factors including neuroticism, depression, and social hopelessness. Further, purpose in life was more protective and effective against suicide than satisfaction with life and mediated the relationship between satisfaction with life and suicide ideation. Moving beyond, the study also reported that purpose in life works as a moderator in the depression–suicidal ideation relationship; specifically, purpose in life played a larger protective role against suicide in patients with higher levels of depression compared with patients with lower levels of depression.

A time in a lifespan when a child realizes who he is and what is his/her role in this world widely affects his cognitive modality. What are the reasons for which one has to live? What identity he/she has in their mind? Effective career choices have to be made,

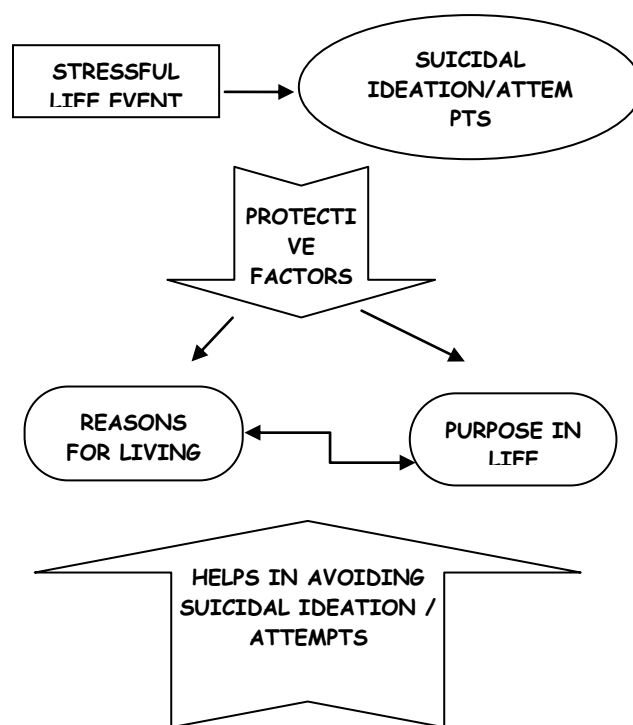
meaningful relationships are to be formed, sustained technological advances are to be tackled, attitudes and roles to be defined. There are many things which work as an inspiration to cope and survive on this earth and this inner inspiration is our reason to live. It can be our love for our life, our family, our wish of doing something fruitful etc. It is a protective factor which shields many negative and threatening thoughts from us.

The reasons a person has for living is another positive factor that has been shown to help individuals fight from suicidal thoughts and actions (Linehan, Goodstein, Nielsen, & Chiles, 1983). If we go through an example a study was conducted on suicidal prone and non-suicidal individuals and its attempt was to enumerate cognitive factors that assist in the dealing with the afflictions of life and it was found that suicide prone individuals were lacking reasons for living (Linehan et al., 1983). Several reasons for living have been ascertained, including attraction to life, fright of suicide, repulsion of death, moral objections to suicide, survival and coping beliefs, and a sense of responsibility to family (Gutierrez et al.,

2000; Linehan et al., 1983). A same study was conducted by Joiner's (2006) interpersonal psychological theory of attempted and completed suicide which also revealed evidence that a sense of belongingness to valued groups or relationships (e.g., family), as well as a sense of personal efficacy, can serve as a protective factor that reduces suicidal risk. Conversely, a thwarted or precluded sense of belongingness, as well as a sense of being a burden on others, not being accepted by the people who are near or familiar, has been a reason to heightened suicide risk (Joiner, Hollar, & Van-Orden, 2006). Studies have produced that, although reasons for living for different ages may vary (Miller, Segal, & Coolidge, 2001) and may even vary for different race (Morrison & Downey, 2000), overall reasons for living demonstrated a protective role in prevention of suicide. The positive factors have proven vital in various studies and have given a view that the level of reasons for living help in understanding psychological strength, hardiness, and suicide prevention in any individual.

Reasons for living with positive cognitions help in avoiding suicides.

Though the reasons may either be positive or negative but all of them help in avoiding suicidal behavior. The current study is based on the positive psychological factors which hinder the negative thoughts and ideation related to suicide. Overall it is estimated more reasons for living and purpose in life, and less depression, will result in less suicidal ideation.



MODEL OF PROTECTION AGAINST SUICIDEAL IDEATION

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