

IMPORTANCE OF THE SCHOOL GRADES AND THEIR RELATION WITH COLLEGE STUDENT'S MEANING OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT: *This research focuses on the importance of school grades and their relation with the meaning of life in university students belonging to the Autonomous University of Campeche. For this, the instruments Purpose in Life Test (PIL) (Crumbaugh, Maholick., 1969) and the Student Sense of Life Questionnaire (Tuz, & et al., 2016) were applied in their scale A and B, part II. Importance of the grades, in a sample constituted by 391 students. The data obtained was analyzed and a correlation was found between the variables, in which, to a lesser degree, the presence of a definite sense of life exists. Obtaining these results is an impulse to continue with investigations of this nature, because it gives a guideline about what happens within the perspective of contemporary youth about what drives them to live day to day.*

KEYWORDS: Meaning Of Life, Grades, University Students, School Performance, Existential Emptiness.

INTRODUCTION

In Mexico the scenario of suicides is not very encouraging. Everything related to suicide in numbers makes reality even more raw, thinking that it is a problem that every day takes more victims. In one year, about one million people die by suicide. Every day there are on average almost 3 thousand people who put an end to their life; at least 20 try to commit suicide for each one that achieves it.

The suicide rate in Mexico showed an upward trend between 2000 and 2013, going from 3.5 to 4.9 suicides per 100 thousand inhabitants, reported the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).

In the State of Campeche each year statistics on suicides have been raised even more. According to the INEGI (2013) 81 deaths were recorded, 71 men and 10 women being participants.

The present work does not talk about suicide, but about what is believed to be before: the loss of the meaning of life. It was not intended to cover all the possible factors that could generate such a situation. On the other hand, this work approached the grades as a factor that could be related to the sense of life of the university students.

Meaning of Life

Since ancient times, men have asked themselves, what is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of existence? Why are we here, and likewise, many others have been striving to respond to this from different conceptions, ranging from philosophy to religion. However, at

that time the questions were not posed as such, rather were presented other formulations that gave an answer to the meaning of life (Grondin, 2012). With the passage of time, the authors have not been limited to conducting various investigations about everything related.

Sense of life

Since ancient times, men have asked themselves, what is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of existence? Why are we here, and likewise, many others have been striving to respond to this from different conceptions, ranging from philosophy to religion. However, at that time the questions were not posed as such, rather were presented other formulations that gave an answer to the meaning of life (Grondin, 2012). With the passage of time, the authors have not been limited to conducting various investigations about everything related.

Sánchez (2005) says that the meaning of life is constituted by a set of objectives that respond to their own existence in the world. But these objectives are not merely of a formal nature, rather, it is a commitment that constitutes self-discovery, since the meaning of life is proper to each individual, only he is able to justify to himself where to go, which increases its meaning. In the same way, a question arises: *do all people have a meaning in life?* to which he responds:

Not every human being has a sense of life, and not all of them even have it at some point in their existence. During the shaping of the meaning of life, there are so many essential factors involved, that only one that does not have the necessary quality is enough for the person to delay in finding himself or simply never being. (Sánchez, 2005).

One of the greatest representatives of the topic of meaning of life is Viktor Frankl, who gives the basis for building the third school of Psychotherapy, "Logotherapy".

The result of this theory focuses on the search for a meaning to human existence. To support it, Frankl conducted a study in France where he showed that 80% of the population accepted that men needed a reason to live, while 61% said that there was something or someone for whom they were willing to give their lives. He also repeated this survey in his Vienna Clinic where the results were similar with a variation of 2%. With this, he concludes that the will to the meaning of life is not a matter of faith, rather there is evidence of this fact. (Frankl, 1991).

Sartre (Quoted by Frankl, 2003), on the other hand, maintained as a thought that men are the ones who invent themselves, conceive their own essence being what they are, or what they should or must be, however, the main author differs from this conception since he considers that the human being does not invent anything, rather he discovers himself. In other words, meaning cannot be given, but must be discovered.

Qualifications

The educational system of our country evaluates each level of education through established criteria, within which the student is assigned a grade (passing or failing) during the school cycle or period, which will be the basis to decide if this can continue in a more advanced level or still need to reinforce the knowledge described in the curriculum.

But what is a qualification?

According to the RAE (2014), the grade is a "score obtained in an exam or any type of test" Complementing the above, it can be said that a grade or school grade is a value judgment that teachers assign to each student according to their school performance. In Mexico, the official

scale of qualifications (SEP, 1997) is numerical and ranges from 5 to 10, where 6.0 is the minimum approving.

According to Hilda Fingermann (2010), in general, this assignment would have to be objective, but given that as human beings we are subject to subjectivity in almost all the activities we perform, there will always be criteria to take into account when evaluating the student and that will depend on the teacher's experience.

Since childhood, it is usual to instill the importance of getting good grades, motivating either with prizes, the possibility of entering a good school or the promise of a good job.

This is how the idea is created that one can become someone important with academic success, and that, on the contrary, school failure could lead to a failure in life. In some way, the qualifications can mark the person for life.

Qualifications and Meaning Of Life

At the end of the 20th century, William Glasser (Ocaña, s.f.), a researcher from the area of clinical psychology, became interested in this topic. He pointed out how common it is to think that there must be something wrong with people who get bad grades, to the point where they can drop out of school with a bad idea of themselves.

Making the student believe that his school failure defines him or her as a person can be dangerous, so it is not unusual to find suicide attempts in minors for this reason.

The fact that a person may be able to attempt against his or her own life for not having obtained a good grade, leads to consider the possibility of the lack of a meaning for his or her existence beyond the academic, of the notes that classify him or her within in this area, because failing in something that will give him or her the impulse to go out into the real world later on could make him or her lower his self-esteem and, consequently, damage any life project.

In June 2016 the research "Sense of Life in Youth" was carried out by professors and interns from the Faculty of Behavioral Sciences of the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico (Hernández, 2016).

In this research, as the title correctly states, the main objective was to identify what gave life meaning to young university students, building and applying a questionnaire of open questions to measure the variable in 250 students of that university.

The answers obtained by the young people were very varied. However, in 19.23% of men and 13.09% of women respectively, it was found that the answers were within the category of professional development, encompassing aspects such as having a career, studying and working.

These are tests that highlight the importance of grades and how schooling is something that is invested so much time, students expect to have results that meet their own expectations.

METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative correlation study, since the relationship between two variables will be

measured (Sense of life - Importance of the qualifications).

For the time employed it is considered of the transversal type. The statistics that will be used in the research are: percentage of frequency, mean, median, mode, standard deviation and range. With a hypothesis test with the use of the Pearson r .

Population and Sample

The population is constituted by university students of the Autonomous University of Campeche, whose level of schooling goes from the first semester to eighth or ninth, according to the degree surveyed.

The sample is of the complex probabilistic type by strata, since the elements of the population are separated by degree and have the same possibility of being selected. The sample amount consists of 391 students, being 118 of Pharmaceutical Chemist Biologist, 11 of Science and Food Technology, 38 of Biology, 166 of Nursing, 27 of History and 31 in Literature.

Instruments

For this investigation, two instruments were applied. One of them, the Purpose In Life test (PIL) (Crumbaugh, 1969), is an attitude scale constructed from the orientation of Logotherapy (Logos, and that consists of the treatment through the granting of meaning to life). It is a system of existential therapy, developed by the psychiatrist Viktor E. Frankl. The scale is intended to measure the basic concept of Frankl known as "existential emptiness".

Similarly, the Student Life Sense Questionnaire was applied in its A and B (SVE) scale (Tuz, et al., 2016), which aims to measure the sense of life existing in students taking into account three variables: place of origin, importance of qualifications and loneliness condition. For research purposes, only the results obtained in the importance section of the qualifications (IC) were considered.

Procedure

Originally, the five campuses that make up the Autonomous University of Campeche were selected to carry out the application of the necessary instruments. Only those who had agreed to provide the necessary statistical data about the students were considered, and the application of questionnaires was developed for approximately one month. Written consents were obtained from each participant before the questionnaires were administered

The results obtained were condensed in a database created in the SPSS statistical software program, which was used to obtain the necessary statistics for the purpose of the investigation.

RESULTS

In general, concerning the meaning of life and taking into account the three categories provided by the PIL test (definition, lack of definition and lack), the data obtained indicated that, of the total sample surveyed, 52% represented the predominant sector with a definite sense of life, 35% were found within the range of undefined sense of life and 13% corresponded to those subjects with a lack of it, that is, in a possible state that Frankl (2004) would define as an existential emptiness.

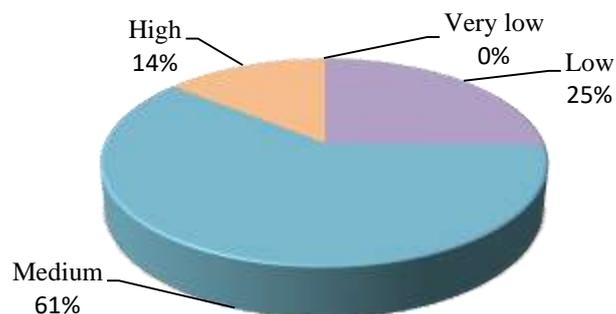
Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the direct data of the PIL test.

	n	Mean	Median	Mode	Standart deviation	Minimu m range	Maximu m range
Direct data PIL test result	39	110.7	113	113	16.821	48	140

Source: own authorship.

The average of the results of this test was equivalent to a score of 110.75, which is located within the category of indefiniton in the meaning of life. With respect to the standard deviation, a deviation of 16,821 was shown, with a minimum range of 48 and a maximum of 140, indicating that most of the tests evaluated were between the average of 110.75 and the maximum range, implying that their median was in the data 113, which indicated a presence of the sense of life as the most common, all the previous data are indicated in table 1, in the upper part.

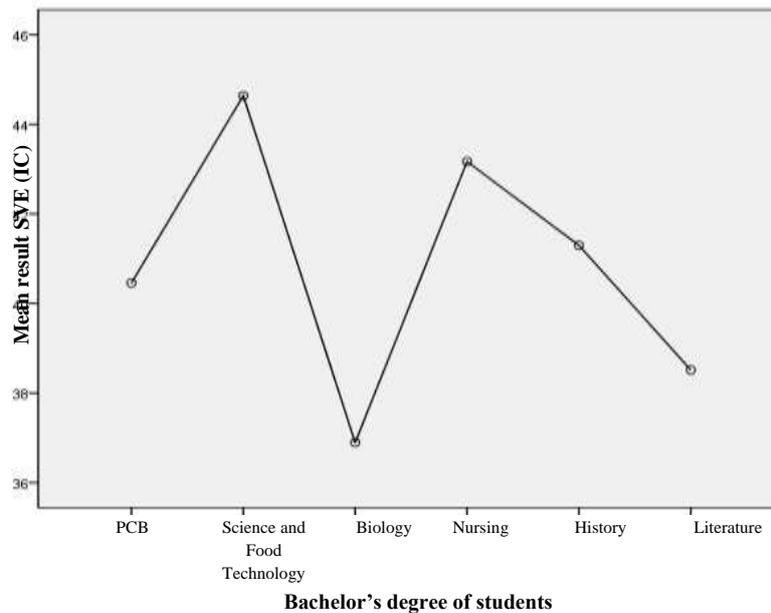
The significant differences found in the meaning of life of the students belonging to the six bachelor degrees evaluated were mainly in the Bachelor of Nursing (with an average of 114.43) and History (with an average of 104.63), by a difference of 9.8 points, indicates that the nursing career has a greater meaning of life.



Graph 1. Distribution of ranges of the Student Life Sense Questionnaire for the general population.

Source: own authorship.

In reference to the importance of the qualifications and through the questionnaire of Sense of Student Life in its scale A and B (part II) that proposed four levels of importance of the same: high, medium, low and very low, it was obtained that the predominance was at the level of medium importance, with 61% of the total students evaluated. Next, 25% was placed in a low level of importance, leaving the remaining 14% at a high level of importance. As it is remarkable, no subjects were found in the last category corresponding to a very low importance of the qualifications (Graph 1).



Graph 2. ANOVA graph. Means of the importance of the qualifications of the students concerning to the degree to which they belong.

Source: own authorship.

The data referring to graph 2 show the results of the means obtained by the six bachelor's degrees in the importance test of the grades.

There is a lower mean that corresponds to Biology with 36.89 and a higher mean of Science and technology of food with 44.64, which means that the six bachelor's degrees are in the category of medium importance to the grades.

The significant differences that can be found are:

- The bachelor's degree in Biology - Science and food technology with an average of 36.89, according to the Science and food technology that obtained an average of 44.64.
- The bachelor's degree in Biology - Nursing with an average of 36.89, according to Nursing that obtained an average of 43.17.
- The bachelor's degree in Literature - Science and food technology with an average of 38.52, related to the Science and food technology that obtained an average of 44.64.
- The bachelor's degree in Literature - Nursing with an average of 38.52, with respect to Nursing that obtained an average of 43.17.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the importance of qualifications.

	n	Mean	Median	Mode	Standart deviation	Minimu m range	Maximu m range
Importance of qualifications	39	41.28	40	43	9.597	20	70

Source: own authorship.

Similarly, it should be mentioned that of all the data analyzed in the section of the importance of qualifications, a mean of 41.28 was obtained, which corresponds to the predominant category of medium importance. A deviation of 9,597 was shown, with a minimum range of 20 and a maximum of 70, where the data were distributed in a balanced manner.

These results do not determine the average of the students, since although the predominance is at a medium level, the means of the qualifications of the six bachelor's degrees ranged from 8,120 (corresponding to the Nursing degree) and 8,548 (corresponding to the degree of History), these qualifications are approved by the study program of the Autonomous University of Campeche.

It was considered important to relate the results of the PIL test and the qualifications of the students. What can be inferred from the amount presented in the column, by relating both variables (-.082), is that as long as there is a higher score in the PIL, showing a definite meaning of life, a semi-annual average is obtained low (not necessarily failing).

It is concluded that although the correlation is not significant among the variables, there is a proportional inverse trend between them.

Finally, the existing correlations between the data obtained from both tests were analyzed, and a result of .327 was found in a Pearson correlation, which means that the higher the result of the PIL (indicating a definite meaning of life), the lower it is the student's concern about his grades. This represents a weak but significant direct correlation.

DISCUSSION

According to the study "Sense of Life in Youth" conducted by Hernández in June 2016, the analyzed subjects showed that what gives meaning to the life of the university students of the UNAM lies mainly in their professional and personal development, highlighting the responses of this nature over other factors (Hernández, 2016).

Although in the results obtained in the present investigation the subjects demonstrated a tendency of medium importance to the grades, it does not determine that there is no concern for their professional performance in the field of action of each of their careers. Complementing the above with the information gathered in the research carried out by the UNAM (2016), it is important to mention that the presence of a decline in the average of their school grades of university students would not mean a total loss of the meaning of their existence, much less the struggle for the scope of future goals.

Therefore, it was concluded that students who show less concern for their school grades are

more likely to have a defined sense of life; and consequently, the research hypothesis that indicated the existence of a relationship between the life meaning of the undergraduate students and their qualifications was confirmed.

However, the main issue of this research (the meaning of life of university students) is considered of great importance to strengthen support programs for students, particularly psychological ones, since at some point the quality of life, the professional and academic development of students may be affected.

Likewise, it is necessary to provide the student with the tools to achieve the assertiveness that allows an effective interpersonal functioning in order to express their values, needs, expectations and concerns in a clear and respectful way, because if that freedom does not exist in their lives, the energy that emanates from within them may be suffocated and they will not be allowed to see clearly all the opportunities that are offered to them, making them doubt the strength of their meaning of life.

Finally, it is equally important to provide teachers, tutors and professionals in the academic or mental health field with tools and instruments that allow them to detect at risk youth and thus prevent possible consequences.

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