

Meaning in Life and Psychological Well-Being among Flood Victims in Pakistan: The Moderating Role of Resilience

***Mazhar Iqbal Bhatti and Asghar Ali Shah**

International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan

The main purpose of the present research is to examine the role of psychological well-being, meaning in life and the moderating role of resilience among the flood victims. Natural disasters or catastrophes are having a high impact and harmful event, rooted in the natural processes of earth and Pakistan has witnessed these floods in 2007 and 2010. A cross sectional survey research design was used for the present study and a sample size of 400 flood victims (natural disasters) of two districts of Punjab Province was selected. Age of the sample ranged from 25 to 55 years. The measurement scale to collect data from the respondents includes; a) Meaning in Life Questionnaire, b) The Ego Resiliency Scale (ER89), and c) Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale. The study findings revealed that resilience was a moderator between psychological well-being and meaning in life among female and male flood victims in the selected districts. The study recommended that treatment plans should be designed, including psychotherapeutic interventions and counseling strategies for victims of flood to rehabilitate effectively through clinical settings by counseling.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, meaning in life, resilience, flood victims, prevention

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mazhar Iqbal Bhatti, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: mazhariqbalmz@yahoo.com

In past few years, Pakistan has faced natural and man-made disasters i.e. the earthquake in 2005; floods in 2007, 2010 and 2013; and extended security issues like flood in Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. United Nation plays an important role and uses recourses in the recovery of the crisis victims related to internally displaced persons (IDP).

United Nation Development Programme has also given important information, scientific approaches and ability to assemble the support for the organization of main institutes, as well as the earthquake damage and floods management protocols. These departments should be actively working for the rehabilitation of disturbed areas which are playing the supportive role to the Flood victims (UNDP, 2010). Emotional disorders and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), decreasing level of life satisfaction and disturbance of emotional performance are having unrelieved results of displacement or disarticulation (Morina & Ford, 2008).

Floods related difficulties and psychological problems have significant negative impact on GDP growth of the economy of the country as well, in fact, that leaves the strongest impact on the economic growth overall (Sardar, Javed, & Amir-ud-Din, 2016). An opinion published by Strengthening Participatory Organization Pakistan (SPO) has indicated an increased risk of natural calamities or disasters such as land sliding, heavy rains and flashy floods in the coming future years in Pakistan (Memon, 2012).

The understanding of meaning in life has been known as significant donor to mental health and well-being (e.g., Ryff & Singer, 1996; Wong & Fry, 1998). In fact, in his typical work, Frankl (1976) argued that meaning in life is a constant; basic need (see also, Heine, MacKay, Proulx & Charles, 2005). The significance of meaning in life is supported by study showing its relationship with numeral mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, optimism, and life satisfaction (Mascaro & Rosen, 2005; Steger & Frazier, 2005; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). The previous researches and literature has normally focused on the

model that meaning in life leads to higher levels of individual well-being. The current study has confirmed that at least one characteristic of well-being, positive effect, enhances the feeling that life is significant (King, Hicks, Krull, & Del Gaiso, 2006). These researches, King et al (2006) originate co-relational facts for a strong relationship among positive effect and the understanding of meaning in life in universal and the experience of meaning in life in a day even calculating for goal-directed action, thought and progress. These consequences pointed out that, as with other theoretical distinctiveness of their lives, people may rely on their frame of minds as in order when they are judging life's meaning.

Though it is very clear that natural disasters (floods) are one of the most important cause of forced displacement, relevant information on such displacement has not been constantly composed and analyzed. Therefore, while the occurrence of recorded natural disasters (flood victims) has been doubled per year and the huge number of inhabitants affected has gradually increased, at present there is no consistent data available to analyze the level to which human mobility may have also larger than before as a result of this tendency of floods (Steger et al., 2009).

Psychological well-being is widespread theory and has been researched in many others fields i.e., psychology, sociology and anthropology etc. In recent years, Psychology has decisive role on reconstructing harm and curative mental illnesses treatment strategies rather than serving people to build up the strengths and to enhance the essential capacities. Wellness can be explained in different ways as well as an individual's psychological, physical and social well-being. Well-being is also explained in different styles in literature but basically it is viewed from intra-personal viewpoint i.e., something that occurs within an individual or a subjective term that means change for different people. Psychological well-being is a significant part of mental health as it showed relationship with characteristics like, self-determination, autonomy, regulation of emotions from within, and self-expression, inner locus of control, and social acceptance.

Resilience is conceived as normal magic to understand dogmatic processes connected with the improvement of human capability (Steger, Mann, Michels, & Cooper, 2009). Garmezy, Masten and Tellegen (1984) argued that resilience is the manifestations of capability in children regardless of the exposure to traumatic event or dealings. Resilience is also defined as facing stress at a time and in a mode that allows self-confidence and social competence to enhance through mastery and suitable responsibility (Rutter, 1985). Bonanno (2004) also considered resilience as the capability of adults in otherwise regular circumstances who are exposed to isolated and potentially highly disturbing actions such as death of a close relatives, a violent or life-threatening circumstances to preserve relatively stable and healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning, as well as the ability for general life experiences and positive emotions. Trauma theorists typically use the terms resilience and recovery interchangeably pooling the two outcomes into a single grouping (King, King, Foy, Keane, & Fairbank, 1999).

Resilience has been postulated as the procedure by which people carry on or even grow under the risk, incorporating inner qualities, for instance, self-assurance or effectiveness and external factors, such as community or social support, that enhances over all handling (Ryff & Singer, 1996). Higher scores on Ego Resiliency Scale (ER89) (Block & Kremen, 1996) indicates high resilience level as moderator among flood victims and vice versa.

Steger, Mann, Michels, and Cooper (2009), illustrate that meaning in life and its dimensions are positively correlated with depression, anxiety and supposed for general health. Ardel (2003) investigated that meaning in life is positively associated with psychological well-being and negatively linked with fear of death and death avoidance behavior. A fine conformity of research (Rathi & Rastogi, 2007; Kennedy, Kanthamani, & Palmer, 1994) is evident that meaning in life was positively associated with general health and psychological well-being among Indian adolescents. Psychological well - being was positively linked with the

connection of the religious services as investigated in a survey with adolescents from America.

Floods and disasters are frightful actions that are ruthless devastating or naturally a shocking. According to American Psychiatric Association (1994), the occurrence of any flood event which effect social, economic, infrastructural and human mental health processes. These traumatic incidents are out of the range of common individual skills, they are obviously disturbing to everybody. Traumatic incident comprise on two elements: It connects real death or severe physical wounds to the individual or to community; it also engages severe horror death of anyone and helplessness. Any flood is thus an overwhelming incident as huge destruction and frightful sight inducing deep feelings of terror, stressful and hopelessness (Myers, 1985).

A disaster (flood) is also a communal event, where survivors share an enormous experience and view the world around them in different and new ways (Erikson, 1995). Disasters are overwhelming events as these test the capability of the communities and individuals to respond and can provisionally lead to huge scale disturbance (Raphael, 1986). All the time humans became victims of natural disasters (floods) and catastrophes (Lystad, 1988). In a study researcher found that 51% females and 60% males experience at least one traumatic event in a life (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995). While these devastating events could have severe impact on an individual, the disaster (flood) is a painful event which influences whole community or a large part of a society. These different traumatic events affect each individual or small group that is living in the society. Floods can overcome the destroy community resources and further threaten individuals' and community's ability to cope up (Ursano, McCaughey, & Fullerton, 1994).

Natural disasters (flood) become the main reason of enormous destruction. The destruction is massive in part of the globe where deficiency, illness and social conflict have already broken the restricted ability to manage with difficulty. Latin

American countries provide best example for the model of such circumstances, (Cohen, 2006) with a recent string of most important earthquakes and floods deadly storms having killed tens thousands individuals and left many times that number homeless and impoverished. The best example can be found in the recent history of Venezuela. The country was overwhelmed in 1999 flooding and mud-slides that killed over 30,000 people (Blanco, Villalobos, & Carrillo, 2006) and has since then experienced a military junta, rioting, a disputed election, and extreme economic hardships.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the moderating role of resilience between meaning in life and psychological well-being among flood victims in district Muzaffar Garh and Rajan Pur of Punjab province

Hypothesis

- Resilience has the moderating role between meaning in life and psychological well-being among flood victims.

Methods

Participants

A cross sectional survey design was used in the present study on a sample size of 400 flood victims of natural disasters of two districts of Punjab Province including: Muzaffar Garh and Rajan Pur. The sample comprised of male and female flood victims and selected through purposive sampling technique and approached personally at their natural settings.

Measures

Meaning in Life Questionnaire was developed by Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006). The scale consisted of ten items. The scale is based on seven-point Likert type scale. The response categories range from 1 absolutely untrue to 7 for absolutely true. The alpha coefficients reported by the authors for MLQ-P and

MLQ-S are .86 and .92 representing good internal consistency respectively.

The Ego Resiliency Scale (ER89). Block and Kremen (1996) developed short inventory scale to assess (trait-based) psychological resilience (the capacity of the individual to effectively adjust to frustrating or stressful life encounters). The ER89 has 14 items and each question requires a response on 4-point scale ranging from 1, with the answer “does not apply at all,” to 4 with the answer “applies very strongly. The authors of the scale reported a Cronbach’s alpha reliability of .76.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was developed by Tennant et al (2007). The scale was translated in Urdu by Batool (2011). The scale consisted of fourteen items. The scale is based on five-point ordinal level of measurement. The response categories ranged from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree. The authors of this scale reported a good Cronbach's alpha score of 0.91.

Procedures

Before administering scales to the respondents, they were informed about the purpose and background of the study. Respondents' consents were taken and they were briefed about all the scales at their localities and flood areas. Descriptive statistics were applied on all study variables. Alpha reliability was computed for all study variables. Multiple regression analysis was applied to test the hypotheses. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data to draw results and conclusion.

Results

Table 1

The Moderating Role of Resilience between Meaning in Life and Psychological Well-Being among Flood Victims (N = 400)

Variables	B	SE	P	R ²	F Change
Model 1				.345	2.41
(Constant)	41.23**	2.17	.01		
MLQ	.07	.04	.12		
Model 2				.362	32.87**
(Constant)	24.58**	3.58	.01		
MLQ	.10*	.04	.05		
Resilience	.42**	.07	.01		
Model 3				.425	18.02**
MLQ	.20*	.05	.00		
Resilience	.46**	.07	.00		
MLQ× Resilience	.96**	.46	.00		

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$; MLQ = Meaning in Life Questionnaire

Table 1 shows moderating role of resilience between meaning in life and psychological well-being among Flood victims. The results indicate that meaning in life has significant positive effect on psychological well-being ($B = .20$, $p = .05$); resilience has significant positive effect on psychological well-being ($B = .46$, $p = .01$); and resilience as a moderator (meaning in life x resilience) has significant positive effect on psychological well-being ($B = .96$, $p = .01$). The value of R^2 is .425 which shows 42.5 % variance explained by the predictors and the interaction term in the outcome variable.

Discussion

Meaning in life has been a focus of psychological philosophy about positive human functioning and mental health since the pioneering thoughts of Frankl (1976) and the existential psychotherapists. Meaning in life is the subjective experience of

meaningfulness in one's life, is typically seen as a different dimension of well-being, more related to what was called psychological or eudemonic well-being than to hedonic or subjective well-being (McGregor & Little, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Supportive theories suggest that meaning in life is a vital ingredient of human psychological development (Ryff & Singer, 1996), research has found associations between meaning in life and a variety of health indices, like lower mortality rate (Boyle, Barnes, Buchman, & Bennett, 2009) and better self-rated health (Steger, Mann, Michels, & Cooper, 2009).

Meaning in life is an important factor that effects on well-being among flood victims (Batool, 2003). Meaning in life is affected by religiosity (George, Larson, Koenig, & McCullough, 2000). As majority of population living in Pakistan are muslims and therefore their concept of meaning in life is affected by Islamic teachings. For Allah's satisfaction, via the Qur'an, all muslims must believe in God, his revelations, his angels, his messengers, and in the "Day of Judgment". The Qur'an describes the purpose of creation as follows: "Blessed be he in whose hand is the kingdom, he is powerful over all things, who created death and life that he might examine which of you is best in deeds, and he is the almighty, the forgiving" (Qur'an 67:1-2). Muslims believe that every good or bad happens from Allah and He created them and they have to go back to Him. That is why meaning in life according to Muslims belief results in good psychological well-being. The Qur'an, however, does not seem to support the 'wrath of God theory'. A little reflection on the Qur'anic passages relating stories of the past Prophets will show that God almighty has never chastised a people unless He had first sent a Messenger to them who would convey onto them the message of truth and warned them of their evil-doings.

Pakistan has seen many floods in recent decade heaving a big magnitude like 2005 earthquake, super floods of 2010, Atta Abad Lake and Giari avalanche 2012 (NDMA, 2011). There have

been not many studies available in Pakistan in this regard. The proposed study will help a great deal in addressing the post disaster psychological problems. The present research will provide the empirical evidences and suggest preventive measures that highlight the personal and social determinants of Psychological well-being, meaning in life and the moderating role of resilience among the flood victims.

Conclusion

The current research findings revealed that resilience played moderating role between the psychological well-being and meaning in life. Resilience adds few factors that can provide future safeguards for well-being investigation. Psychological well-being and resilience is linked and has effects on meaning in life: over time the quality of anyone's life depend on a certain amount of mental fitness or mental well-being.

Future Implications

The current study has taken resilience into consideration as moderator which is protective factor against the various unhealthy effects of floods. Thus, after the growth of positive psychology, resilience can be successfully used for the retrieval of the trauma victims and survivors. Furthermore, similar nature of researches should be conducted at large level to cover the gap in existing body of knowledge.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *How climate-related natural disasters affect mental health*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/climate-change-and-mental-health-connections/affects-on-mental-health>
- Ardelt, M. (2003). Physician-assisted death. In C. D. Bryant (Ed.), *Handbook of death and dying, volume one: The presence of death*, (pp. 424-434). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Batool, N. (2003). *Relationships between belief in personal control and decision making style* (M.Phil thesis, NIP, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad).
- Blanco, T., Villalobos, M., & Carrillo, C. (2006). The psychological support network of the Central University of Venezuela and the Venezuelan Floods of 1999. In G. Reyes & G. A. Jacobs (Eds.), *Handbook of international disaster psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 71-88). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Block, J. & Kremen, A. M. (1996). IQ and ego-resiliency: Conceptual and empirical connections and separateness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 349-361.
- Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience. Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? *American Psychologist*, 59 (1), 20-28.
- Boyle, P. A., Barnes, L. L., Buchman, A. S. & Bennett, D. A. (2009). Purpose in life is associated with mortality among community-dwelling older persons. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 71, 574-579.
- Erikson, K. (1995). Notes on trauma and community. In C. Caruth (Ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in memory* (pp. 183-99). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Frankl, (1976). *Foundations and applications of logotherapy*. New York: New American Library.
- Garnezy, N., Masten, A. S. & Tellegen, A. (1984). The study of stress and competence in children: A building block for developmental psychopathology. *Child Development*, 55, 97-111.
- George, L. K., Larson, D. B., Koenig, H. G., & McCullough, M. E. (2000). Spirituality and health: What we know, what we need to know. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19, 102-116.
- Hartsough, D. M., & Myers, D. G. (1985). Disaster work and mental health: Prevention and control of stress among workers. Eric. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED277919>

- Heine, S. J., MacKay, M., Proulx, T. & Charles, S. (2005). *Death and meaning loss: An alternative account of terror management findings* (Unpublished manuscript, University of British Columbia).
- Kennedy, J. E., Kanthamani, H., & Palmer, J. (1994). Psychic and spiritual experiences, health, well-being, and meaning in life. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 58, 353-383.
- Kessler, R. C., Sonnega, A., Bromet, E., Hughes, M., & Nelson, C. B. (1995). Posttraumatic stress disorder in the national comorbidity survey. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 52(12), 1048-1060.
- King, D. W., King L. A., Foy, D.W., Keane, T.M. & Fairbank, J. A. (2006). Posttraumatic stress disorder in a national sample of female and male Vietnam veterans: Risk factors, war-zone stressors, and resilience-recovery variables. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 108(1), 164-70.
- King, L. A., Hicks, J. A., Krull, J. L., & Del Gaiso, A. K. (2006). Positive affect and the experience of meaning in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 179-196.
- Lystad, M. (Ed.). (1988). *Mental health response to mass emergencies: Theory and practice*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Mascaro, N., & Rosen, D. H. (2005). Existential meaning's role in the enhancement of hope and prevention of depressive symptoms. *Journal of Personality*, 73, 985-1013. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00336.x
- Masten, A. S., Burt, K. B. & Coatsworth, J. D. (2006). Competence and psychopathology in development. In D. Cicchetti & D. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology* (2nd ed, Vol. 3, pp. 696-738). New York: Wiley.
- McGregor, I. & Little, B. R. (1998). Personal projects, happiness, and meaning: On doing well and being yourself. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 494-512.
- NDMA, (2011). *NDMA Annual report, 2010*. Gul Awan printers: Islamabad, Pakistan.

- Raphael, B. (1986). *When disaster strikes: How individuals and communities cope with catastrophe*. Basic Books (AZ).
- Rathi, N., & Rastogi, R. (2007). Meaning in Life and Psychological Well-Being in Pre-Adolescents and Adolescents. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 33(1), 31-38.
- Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity: Protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 147, 598-611.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and wellbeing. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. H. (1996). Psychological well-being meaning, measurement, and implications for psychotherapy research. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 65, 14-23.
- Steger, M. F., & Frazier, P. (2005). Meaning in life: one link in the chain from religiousness to well-Being. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(4), 574-582. doi: org /10. 1037 /0022 -0167. 52. 4.574
- Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. (2006). The meaning in Life Questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53(1), 80-93. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.53.1.80
- Steger, M. F., Mann, J., Michels, P., & Cooper, T. (2009). Meaning in life, anxiety, depression, and general health among smoking cessation patients. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 67, 353-358.
- Tennant, R., Hiller, L., Fishwick, R., Platt, S., Joseph, S., Weich, S, Parkinson, J, Secker, J., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2007). The Warwick-Edinburg Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): Development and UK validation. *Health Qual Life Outcomes*, 5(1), 63.
- Ursano, R. J., McCaughey, B. G., & Fullerton, C. S. (1994). *The structure of human chaos. Individual and community responses to trauma and disaster*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wong, P. T. P., & Fry, P. S. (Eds.). (1998). *The human quest for meaning : A handbook of psychological research and*

clinical applications. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Zika, S., & Chamberlain, K. (1992). On the relation between meaning in life and psychological well-being. *British Journal of Psychology*, 83, 133–145.