

Relationship between Meaning-Making and Coping Strategy of Incarcerated Women at Kisumu Women Prison, Kenya

Adikinyi Anna Osiro¹, Dr. Margaret Disiye², Dr. Catherine Mbagaya¹, Prof. Lucas Othuon¹

¹Department of Educational Psychology, Maseno University, P. O. Box 333, Maseno, Kenya

²Department of Psychology, Maseno University, P. O. Box 333, Maseno, Kenya

Corresponding author: lothuonus2013@gmail.com

Abstract—This study determined the relationship between meaning-making and coping strategies of women incarcerated at Kisumu Women Prison (KWP) in Kenya. A saturated sample of 127 women prisoners aged 18 years and above was used. Instruments for data collection included Personal Meaning Profile-B Questionnaire (Chronbach's $\alpha=.93$) and Brief-COPE Inventory (Chronbach's $\alpha=.94$). Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics and linear regression with meaning-making as the outcome variable and three types of coping strategies as the independent variables. Of the three coping strategies, "emotion-focused strategy" turned out to be the most dominant followed by "problem-focused strategy". Of the three types of meaning-making, "fair treatment" emerged supreme followed by "Intimacy" and then "Relationship". The relationship between meaning-making and two types of coping strategy (Emotion-focused and Problem-focused) were statistically significant [$b=.447$, ($p<.01$); and $b=.140$, ($p<.05$), respectively]. It is concluded that incarcerated women prisoners at KWP use various coping strategies to make meaning while in prison. Counseling Psychologists and those in charge of prisons should aim at helping women incarcerated at KWP to make meaning of their circumstances and to promote the use of effective emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies for prospective mental and behavioral health recovery.

Keywords— Meaning-making, coping strategies, women prisoners, Kisumu.

I. INTRODUCTION

Incarceration of women generally produces various indices of harm that are highly disruptive with significant social and existential outcomes that are likely to impact rehabilitation efforts (Van Ginneken, 2014). Consequently, incarceration of women at Kisumu Women Prison (KWP) in Kenya potentially disrupts their lives, restrict their liberties, challenge their self-identity, and distort their global meaning, diminishing their prospects for mental and behavioral health recovery. Historically, psychiatrist, holocaust survivor and founder of Logotherapy, Viktor Frankl in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, posited that the primary motivation of a person is to discover meaning in life (Frankl, 1962). Of the three basic processes of meaning namely meaning-seeking, meaning-making and meaning-reconstruction, the present study focused on meaning-making. Meaning-making in this context is defined as a process of construing, understanding, or making sense of life events, relationships, and the self (Molden & Dweck, 2006). Frustration of the will to meaning leads to an "existential vacuum" characterized by a sense of

meaninglessness, experienced as boredom, apathy, or indifference (Frankl, 1968). Although the initial shock of incarceration challenges women's assumptive worlds, they still manage to overcome this crisis by finding meaning in the prison experience and end up using it as an opportunity for personal development (Van Ginneken, 2016).

Man is inherently meaning-seeking and meaning-making because we live in a world of meaning (Wong, 2013). Moreover, incarceration is a low control situation not amenable to direct problem-solving and subsequently meaning-making is often the most adaptive. Meaning-making can contribute to the women's effective coping, reduction of stress, and successful implementation of change by regulating their own experience of incarceration (Wong, P., Wong, L. & Scott, 2006).

Although women constitute between two and nine per cent of the total population in most prison systems, the prevalence is highest in the Americas, more than four times that of Africa, and lowest in African countries where the median is 2.5 per 100,000 of the national population (Global Prison Trends, 2015). In Kenya, the population of female offenders has increased from 3.4% in 2013 to 7.4% of the total prison population in 2016 with a majority committing assault, loitering, littering, and hawking (Kenya/World Prison Brief, 2018). Women prisons in Kenya operate under similar rules and regulations in accordance with the Prisons Act-1968 (Kenya Law Reports, 2014). At KWP, women were confined for illicit alcohol brewing and sale, prostitution, child neglect, child trafficking, drug trafficking, economic fraud and homicide (Criminal Justice Systems in Kenya, 2016). In line with international standards, female offenders in Kenya are separated in female only institutions and the department with various partnerships have provided facilities and materials for women's specific hygiene needs and regular supply of water and electricity. Although the offences for which they are confined are considered to be less serious than their male counterparts, the social implications are enormous necessitating the present study.

When a woman is incarcerated, her family will often break up resulting in many children ending up in state care and their husbands in alternative relationships. Livneh (2013) observed that imprisonment term is significant because it is associated

with time, which has been linked to the process of adaptation and coping with trauma.

Incarceration can result in a decrease in self-evaluation and evaluations of work for some prisoners (Neimeyer, 2012). Thus, healthier attitudes correspond to greater program participation and more frequent visitation (Wooldredge, 2013). KWP offers opportunities for developing a variety of vocational skills and this could explain the women's enthusiasm at getting involved in these activities.

When fathers are imprisoned, the mothers usually continue to care for the children, but when a mother is imprisoned, the father often does not continue to care for the children, resulting in large numbers of children being institutionalized or displaced as depicted by the 9% in the present study finding (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008).

In their book, Aday and Krabill (2011) observed that close to a fifth of women prisoners in the United States of America were single parents before imprisonment compared to nine percent of the general population. This observation seems to suggest a weak support system for their children upon incarceration.

Meaning-making is an essential accompaniment of incarceration that protects and enhances incarcerated women's well-being through meaning reconstruction, development of social resources and effective coping strategies. Overall, prisons are for the most part remote, closed environments that vary widely in their administrative and physical structures and operations. This makes broad generalizations about the consequences of imprisonment difficult to formulate (Brown, 2008). Since studies of this nature have not been conducted in any prison in Kenya, the available rehabilitation programs aimed at mitigating meaninglessness have relied entirely on information generated from other settings and this may have implications for successful implementation of interventions. Women prisoners' perception of meaning-making and how it is associated with their coping strategies at KWP is necessary to aid in mitigating meaninglessness and promoting effective coping in this population. The present study sought to determine the relationship between coping strategies and meaning-making among incarcerated women in prison. This arises from the belief that the meaning women prisoners attribute to events affects them more than the events themselves.

A. Meaning-Making by Women Prisoners

Prison is an institution where the totality of an individual's existence is controlled by various external forces that immediately deprive inmates of valuable things like liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy and security from violence (Nedderman, Underwood & Hardy, 2010). The absence of autonomy, social isolation, and self-alienation are examples of how people's sense of meaninglessness is expressed in their social interactions (Monahan, Goldweber, & Cauffman, 2011). The experience of women in prison is part of entrenched trajectories of social disadvantage. They encounter issues that disadvantage them regarding intimacy, relationship and fair treatment. Subsequently, they attach meaning to these social

disadvantages when such harsh realities arise. Even if incarcerated women have positive goals which they want to achieve, doing so is painstaking if they employ ineffective coping mechanisms (Ormita, Reyes, & Perez, 2012). As observed by Wong, P., Wong, L. and Scott (2006), meaning-making contributes to women's effective coping and successful implementation of change by regulating their experience of incarceration. Coping mechanisms involve a cognitive reappraisal process that includes self-reflection and taking control over one's emotions, by examining the emotional response to the stressor. Emotions can be expressed and processed as a prelude to reappraising unchangeable stressors. Therefore, the most effective way to manage the stress is for the individual to change her perspective or appraisal of incarceration. Avoidance can result from a sense that although the situation is indeed stressful, it can never be changed and may actually be the stop-gap measure in overwhelming events. Available evidence indicates that the predominant use of any coping strategy can be debilitating, and therefore people need to be flexible in the deployment of coping strategies for effective coping with the diverse types of situations (Gupta & Bonanno, 2011). Studies on the adaptive value of flexibility implicate appraisals of environmental demands, possible behavioral responses that might be used to meet those demands, and either relative success or failure of the behavioral responses (Bonanno & Burton, 2012). Further, they emphasize the ability to shift away from a behavior that is not clearly working. The meaning-making elements, namely intimacy, relationship and fair treatment used in the present study are discussed below.

Intimacy. Emotional deprivations of prison life – in confluence with the gendered way in which most women serving long term having been abandoned by their loved ones and others having severed abusive relational obligations, incites them to seek out forms of intimacy with fear, due to eroded trust (Vanhooren, Leijssen & Dezutter, 2017). They often experience feelings of despair and depression, and anxiety arising from fear of losing custody of their children while others face the threat of getting divorced.

Research suggests that rehabilitative programs for women need to create a safe environment where women can share intimate details of their lives. Self-imposed social withdrawal and isolation may mean that incarcerated women retreat deeply into themselves, trust virtually no one, and adjust to prison stress by leading isolated lives of quiet desperation (Villines, 2013). Most researches on intimacy among inmates focus on sexual intimacy but the present study was concerned with social bonds held by incarcerated women.

Relationship. Relational theory indicates that the state of women's relationships is often the driving force behind their criminal behavior (Barlow, 2014). Similarly, authors in the field of relational theory have developed three elements in women's development. First, the cultural context which implies the importance of social environments that a woman develops in. Second is the relationships concept which recognizes the importance of connections as the central organizing feature of a woman's development. The pathways to growth indicate the value a woman places on relationships

as a strength that can lead to healthy fostering of identity. The stigmatization often leads women offenders to experience a degradation process in which they suffer feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability that are likely to lead to increased levels of shame in their relationships. Relationship experiences and achievement related activities are included in constructions of the “taxonomy of meaning” and contribute to the global perception of meaning in life (Emmons, 2014). Absence of relationships with their children and the isolation of prison can cause serious hindrances in a woman’s rehabilitation (Barlow, 2014). Moreover, because there are fewer prisons for women, they are often imprisoned far away from their homes and families, causing serious problems in the attempt to preserve strong family ties (Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2007). The loss of autonomy that imprisonment entails is particularly painful, first, because of its impact on relationships with children, second, because it echoes the powerlessness that these women had experienced prior to imprisonment, and third because – paradoxically – most were accustomed to managing their lives relatively autonomously (Crewe, Hulley & Wright, 2017).

Meaning in life declines when people lack interpersonal relationships that bolster their sense of self-worth and this potentially generates feelings of helplessness, loneliness, emptiness and meaninglessness. One aspect of relationships, social support, has been shown to be positively related to meaning in life across the life span (Steger, Kashdan & Oishi, 2008). Both relationship and achievement may provide the women in prison with the illusion that their lives in prison will have a lasting impact on the world, thereby increasing their perception of how meaningful their existence is (Greenberg, 2012). The present study is important because incarceration possibly poses negative relational risks and threatens social networks in the course of incarceration that could have lasting disruption on families.

Fair treatment. Prisoners do not represent a homogenous segment of society because many have lived at the margins of society, are poorly educated and come from socio-economically disadvantaged groups (Van Den Berg, Gatherer, Fraser & Moller, 2011). Lack of attention to the very different and often more complex needs of women have resulted in neglect of their human rights, disregard to international recommendations and many instances of social justice. Van Den Berg, Gatherer, Fraser and Moller (2011) further observed that gender equity in health is “unequal, unfair, ineffective, and inefficient”. Women’s behaviors in prison are generally shaped by disciplinary ‘regimes of femininity’. Therefore, the organization of women’s daily life inside prison reflects the fact that punishment is gendered, ranging from arbitrary beating to reduced diet and solitary confinement. Several specificities in women’s conditions of incarceration include the facts that women require sanitary towels when menstruating, and may have to undergo body searches and vaginal examination may be performed as need arises. However, the legal and criminal justice systems are also changing both globally and locally, with new restorative justice approaches.

B. Coping Strategies of Incarcerated Women Prisoners

Coping entails use of several strategies cognitively and behaviorally in an attempt to manage a stressor (Carver, Scheier & Weintvauhy, 1989). Three types of coping strategies were identified and used in the present study; emotion focused, problem focused and avoidance coping strategies.

Emotion-focused coping strategy. This is comprised of several independent factors that make up action variables involving cognitive reappraisal processes. The present study assessed participants emotional mechanisms namely self-distraction, substance use, use of emotional support, venting, positive reframing, acceptance, religion, and self-blame.

Research findings suggest that emotion-focused coping can help with psychological adjustment. Religion, as emotion-focused coping essentially helps people restore a sense of equilibrium in distressful times and also provides them a meaningful life. Self-distraction in prison is sometimes conceptualized as an accommodative or secondary control coping tactic which involves changing one's goals in order to accept the stressful event and related problems (Allen & Leary, 2010). When confronted with the unavoidable stressor, incarcerated women may distract themselves from the situation, this being a secondary control strategy. Thus, whether distraction is adaptive and effective depends on the situation.

Problem-focused coping strategy. This strategy generally gives the individual a sense of control over their stressor and is considered the most efficient method of handling stress and adversity because it targets and eliminates the source of the stress or aids in learning to manage the stress associated with the source (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Use of instrumental support, also referred to as social support is normally sought for two reasons: information and moral support (Leary, Tate, Adams, Allen & Hancock, 2007). Seeking information is the core of problem-oriented coping in that individuals want to know how to better deal with their stress (Allen & Leary, 2010). Socially, support seeking behavior encompasses a broad array of tactics that involve seeking help, advice, comfort, and support from parents, friends, professionals, spiritual figures, and others.

Avoidance coping strategy. This strategy refers to choosing a behavior based on trying to avoid or escape particular thoughts and feelings (Leary, Tate, Adams, Allen & Hancock, 2007). It is the case that earlier findings have shown that lack of behavioral engagement can lead to meaninglessness (Park, Riley & Snyder, 2012). Avoidance can be understood as denial, as if there is no stressor, and therefore there is no need to change behavior, perception, or emotional response.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Establish perceptions of incarcerated women prisoners about meaning-making.
2. Establish coping strategies used by incarcerated women prisoners.

- Determine the nature of relationship between meaning-making and coping strategy of incarcerated women prisoners.

III. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey and correlational designs were used in the present study. Data were collected in September 2017 over a period of two weeks. All the 127 incarcerated women who were over 18 years of age and confined at Kisumu Women Prison for various offences were sampled for the study.

Permits to conduct research were obtained from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), Ministry of Education (Kisumu County Director of Education) and Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government (Kisumu County Commissioner).

Participants were contacted through appropriate Kisumu Women Prison protocols and clear, signed consent documents which addressed issues pertaining to autonomy and veracity was obtained. Serialized codes alongside the admission numbers of the prisoners were used to identify each participant to conceal their true identity and protect information obtained from them. Participants' privacy and anonymity were upheld, and, limits of confidentiality explicitly discussed.

Two instruments were used for data collection. These were *Personal Meaning Profile-B Questionnaire* for measuring Meaning-making and *Brief-COPE Inventory* for measuring coping strategies. Adikinyi (2014) found that the *Personal Meaning Profile-B Questionnaire* had Chronbach's $\alpha=.93$ and the *Brief-COPE Inventory* had Chronbach's $\alpha=.94$ indicating that the instruments were reliable. The tools were administered by the researchers, assisted by two Prison Welfare Officers for security reasons.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Participants' Perceptions about Meaning-Making.

The first objective was to establish perceptions of incarcerated women prisoners at KWP on meaning-making. Their responses are presented in Table 1. The overall mean score for meaning-making was 3.30 (SD=0.76) which is above the neutral score of 3. This indicates that overall, they tended to agree that meaning-making was important for them while in prison. The highest mean score was for "Fair treatment" ($M=3.60, SD=0.68$). This was followed by "Intimacy" ($M=3.27, SD=0.91$), while "Relationship" had the lowest mean score ($M=3.04, SD=0.70$). Similar to the overall outcome, the mean scores for the three types of meaning-making were greater than the neutral score of 3. Thus, the perception of incarcerated women prisoners for each type of meaning-making was generally high.

The finding that being treated fairly emerged the most important type of meaning-making among incarcerated women in prison is consistent with the observation by Van Den Berg, Gatherer, Fraser and Moller (2011). They observed that lack of attention to the very different and often more complex needs of women prisoners have resulted in neglect of their human rights. It may be the case that gender equity in health at KWP was "unequal, unfair, ineffective, and

inefficient". Women's conditions of incarceration include the fact that they have more diverse needs than men. Although the legal and criminal justice systems are changing worldwide, with new restorative justice approaches, it seems incarcerated women in KWP still suffer gender-related injustices.

TABLE 1: Types of Meaning-making

Types of Meaning-making	Frequency of responses [n (%)]					Mean	SD*
	Not at all	Just a little	Moderate	Slightly above moderate	A great deal		
Relationship	1(1)	36(28)	52(41)	37(29)	1(1)	3.04	0.70
Intimacy	1(1)	33(26)	37(29)	55(43)	1(1)	3.27	0.91
Fair treatment	2(2)	7(5)	16(13)	98(77)	4(3)	3.60	0.68

*SD=Standard Deviation

Note: Overall mean for Meaning-making=3.03 (SD=0.76).

The finding concurs with that of Macdonald, Wong and Gingras (2011) who noted that fair treatment is an important source of meaning, highlighting society's responsibility to promote justice, fairness, and equal opportunities. Further, this result also holds true compared to previous findings that adaptation and fair treatment among other mechanisms are related to meaning-making and coping (see Van Tongeren & Klebe, 2009). Monahan, Goldweber, and Cauffman (2011) described how people's feelings of meaninglessness are expressed socially through a lack of independence, social isolation, and self-alienation. Women are an extremely vulnerable group with complex needs and are often incarcerated further away from their families, impeding visits, and other crucial contacts (Silvia, 2014). Consequently, they experience imprisonment as part of entrenched trajectories of social disadvantage. In support of these sentiments, the more women at KWP felt a sense of fair treatment, the more they made meaning of their experience of incarceration.

Penal Reform International has fundamental principles set out in international law related to the treatment of prisoners (Bureau of justice statistics, 2015). However, lack of attention to the very different and often more complex needs of women have resulted in neglect of their human rights, disregard to international recommendations and many instances of social justice. Most African women prisoners do not benefit from legal representation and can barely understand, owing to language barriers, the trial procedure conducted in a language other than vernacular (Van Den Berg, Gatherer, Fraser, & Moller, 2011).

KWP has tended to emphasize more on alternatives to custodial sentences to support offenders who have committed non-violent or minor offenses. An example is the use of restorative justice approaches such as annual open days, when incarcerated women are joined by their families, and are allowed to socialize within the prison confines (Criminal Justice Systems in Kenya, 2016). However, such alternative approaches have proved to be inadequate.

The findings replicate prevailing models of psychotherapy for women in correctional facilities and further echoes correctional scholars' observations that most of these women engage in co-dependent relationships that facilitate their behavior. Women's identity, self-worth, and sense of

empowerment are defined by the quality of relationships they have with others (Van Voorhis, Wells & Scheer, 2008). However, prison conditions severely limit their ability to recognize and achieve healthy, mutually empowering, relationships. Findings of the present study confirm that despite being dislocated from their families and social support network, it is apparent that these women value relationships formed with fellow inmates and the efforts made at forming such associations tend to augment their meaning-making process. The result further reinforces relational theory elements in women's development: the cultural context which implies the importance of social environments that a woman develops in; the relationships concept which recognizes the importance of connections as the central organizing feature of a woman's development; and, the pathways to growth which indicates that the value a woman places on relationships is a strength and can lead to healthy fostering of identity (Barlow, 2014). Thus, relationship stands out as a significant factor in determining presence of meaning-making.

The loss of autonomy that imprisonment entails is particularly painful, first, because of its impact on relationships with children, second, because it echoes the powerlessness that these women had experienced prior to imprisonment (Crewe, Hulley, & Wright, 2017). Meaning in life declines when people lack interpersonal relationships that bolster their sense of self-worth and this potentially generates feelings of helplessness, loneliness, emptiness and meaninglessness.

A lack of social support factors into women's relational concerns to the extent that they end up opting for intimate relationships with fellow inmates. Social isolation threatens the human motivation of the need to belong, a fundamental basic component of meaning in life (Richard & David, 2012). The results of the present study emphasize previous findings intimating that interpersonal relationships, intimacy and fair treatment are known to bolster people's sense of self-worth and lack of these will potentially generate feelings of helplessness, loneliness, emptiness and meaninglessness (Carlton & Segrave, 2011; Nedderman, Underwood & Hardy, 2010; Schlegel, Hicks, King & Arndt, 2012). Incarcerated women cope with their despair primarily through the social and emotional support, and a search for new meaning in life (Vanhooren, Leijssen & Dezutter, 2017). Emotional deprivations of prison life and apparent abandonment by their loved ones as evidenced by poor visitation trends can incite incarcerated women to seek out forms of intimacy with fear.

Women in prison experience feelings of despair, depression, and anxiety arising over fear of losing custody of their children while others face the threat of getting divorced. Lack of intimacy with their children in particular can lead to psycho-physiological disruptions. It is the case that close ties to families during incarceration are crucial for maintaining connections in the community (Villines, 2013). Family contacts and support from relatives can also enhance emotional survival and boost the incarcerated woman's self-esteem. Because most prisoners suffer stigma and rejection from family and society, it is imperative that offenders develop personal meaning that will transform the prison

experience into optimal growth through effective coping (Liebman, Burnette, Raimondi, Nichols-Hadeed, Merle, & Cerulli, 2010).

B. Coping Strategies used by Women Incarcerated at KWP

The second objective was to establish the coping strategies of women incarcerated at Kenya Women Prison. Each scale was looked at separately for the first order items to establish the strength and spread of each item in relation to the other variables and the result presented in Table 2.

Results in the Table show that women incarcerated at KWP predominantly fell under Emotion-Focused category. This was followed by Problem-Focused category and then Avoidance Coping category, in that order. This finding suggests that although it remains important to offer such prisoners interventions that are emotion-focused. Problem-focused and avoidance coping, those who offer such support should target their emotional aspects much more than is presently the case.

Under Emotion-Focused category, women in KWP predominantly used religion to cope with incarceration ($M=3.84, SD=0.427$). This was followed by self-distraction ($M=3.51, SD=0.792$) and use of emotional support ($M=3.11, SD=0.882$), in that order. As would be expected, the least used strategy in the Emotion-Focused category was substance use ($M=1.03, SD=0.273$). Similarly, as would be expected, Religion was the only strategy that was used by all women incarcerated at KWP. Therefore, those who offer support for emotion should make use of religious activities much more than is presently the case.

Under Problem-Focused category, Use of Instrumental Support was the most common strategy ($M=3.15, SD=0.907$). This was followed by Planning ($M=2.83, SD=0.732$) and then Active Coping ($M=2.35, SD=0.770$), in that order.

TABLE 2: Descriptive statistics for Coping Strategies

Category/Strategy	Frequency of responses N (%)				Mean	SD*
	1	2	3	4		
Emotion- focused						
Self-distraction	4(3)	12(10)	23(18)	88(69)	3.51	0.792
Use of emotional support	6(5)	15(12)	42(33)	64(50)	3.11	0.882
Religion	-	1(1)	12(9)	114(90)	3.84	0.427
Self-blame	19(15)	15(12)	37(29)	56(44)	2.87	1.108
Venting	27(21)	20(16)	47(37)	33(26)	2.54	1.076
Acceptance	3(2)	32(25)	41(32)	51(40)	2.87	0.858
Positive reframing	13(10)	38(30)	53(42)	23(18)	2.45	0.841
Substance use	124(97)	2(2)	-	1(1)	1.03	0.273
Problem-focused						
Active coping	6(5)	57(45)	48(38)	16(12)	2.35	0.770
Use of instrumental support	7(6)	13(10)	43(34)	64(50)	3.15	0.907
Planning	2(2)	25(19)	62(49)	38(30)	2.83	0.732
Avoidance coping						
Behavioral disengagement	14(11)	58(46)	36(28)	19(15)	2.31	0.842
Denial	67(53)	10(8)	31(24)	19(15)	1.89	1.096
Humour	56(44.1)	13(10.3)	25(20)	33(26)	2.16	1.203

*SD=Standard Deviation

¹1=I haven't been doing this at all; 2=I've been doing this a little bit

3=I've been doing this a medium amount; 4=I've been doing this a lot

Under Avoidance Coping category, Behavioral Disengagement emerged as the most commonly applied strategy ($M=2.31, SD=0.842$) followed by Humour ($M=2.16, SD=1.203$). The strategy that was applied the least in this category was Denial ($M=1.89, SD=1.096$).

In the present study, women who used problem-focused coping sought instrumental support much more than active coping and planning. This is consistent with the findings of Park (2010) that low control situations are not amenable to direct problem-solving and subsequently meaning making is often the most adaptive. However, the present study findings revealed that despite incarceration being a low control situation for inmates, problem-focused strategy was functional for women incarcerated at KWP. On avoidance-coping, also referred to as maladaptive coping, the study findings showed that specifically, behavioral disengagement was seldom used by women incarcerated at KWP. This echoes findings from a previous study by Park, Riley and Snyder (2012) that lack of behavioral engagement can lead to meaninglessness.

Self-distraction in KWP prison involves using behaviors that help the women to distract themselves from the stress of incarceration such as watching television, exercising, reading, attending basic education classes, or engaging in sporting activities, among other activities. Distraction can at times be conceptualized as an accommodative or secondary control coping tactic which involves changing one's goals in order to accept the stressful event and related problems (Allen & Leary, 2010). In contrast, secondary control involves modifying one's behavior and responses in relation to the environment, while primary control entails manipulating the environment directly. Thus, whether distraction is adaptive and effective depends on the situation. To the extent that the situation cannot be changed, distraction may help the incarcerated women to take their mind off the pain, worries, or other difficult circumstances that are associated with this situation and this helps them to cope effectively. Women at KWP used instrumental support, planning and active coping in the course of incarceration. Use of instrumental support encompasses a broad array of tactics that involve seeking help, advice, comfort, and support from parents, friends, professionals and spiritual figures (Allen & Leary, 2010). Previous studies (e.g., Negy, Woods & Carlson, 2014) have also shown that larger coping repertoires are associated with higher adjustment scores. In the present study, high mean scores were evident for most problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies, except for substance use.

C. Relationship Between Meaning-Making and Coping Strategies

The third objective of the present study was to determine the relationship between meaning-making as the dependent variable and coping strategies as the predictor variable. The coping strategies, namely emotion focused, problem focused, and avoidance coping were used in a regression model to predict meaning-making. A model summary table was generated and this is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Regression model summary table

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.641 ^a	.411	.396	.271

^a Predictors: (Constant), Emotion-focused, problem-focused, avoidance coping

The model summary showed that the regression model was a good fit for the data. The R value represented the multiple correlation and the derived value of 0.641 indicating a high degree of correlation, hence a good level of prediction. The R² value of .411 indicated how much of the total variation in meaning-making could be explained by avoidance, emotion-focused and problem-focused coping. Thus, approximately 41.1% of the variance in meaning-making was explained by emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping and avoidance coping strategies. Subsequently, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test whether the predictors, taken together, have any explanatory power. Put differently, the ANOVA table in regression was used to test whether the entire model explains significantly more variance in the outcome than a model with no predictors. The result is presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4: Regression output for predicting meaning-making

Model	Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.302	3	2.101	28.568	.000 ^b
Residual	9.045	123	.074		
Total	15.347	126			

Dependent variable: Meaning-making

b. Predictors: (Constant) Emotion-focused, problem-focused, avoidance coping

The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 123) = 28.568$ ($p = .000$), indicating that the predictors (emotion-focused coping, problem-focused coping and avoidance coping strategies) jointly explained a significant proportion of variance in the outcome variable (Meaning-making) at $\alpha=.05$ level.

Table 5 contains regression coefficients for predicting meaning-making from avoidance coping, emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping are entered into the equation simultaneously using the method "ENTER" in SPSS. Only two variables turned out to be significant predictors of meaning-making among incarcerated women in prison; emotion-focused coping with $b=.447$ ($p=.000$) and problem-focused coping with $b=.140$ ($p=.016$). This means that for a unit increase in emotion focused coping, there was a corresponding 0.447 increase in meaning-making, while a unit increase in problem-focused coping corresponded to a 0.140 increase in meaning-making.

TABLE 5: Regression results for meaning-making (Y) on coping strategies (X)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.555	.181		8.570.000	
Avoidance coping	.005	.036	.009	.127	.899
Emotion-focused coping	.447	.078	.492	5.756	.000
Problem-focused coping	.140	.058	.211	2.431	.016

Dependent variable: Meaning-making

V. CONCLUSION

Majority of women incarcerated at KWP were in the productive and reproductive age bracket (18-50 years) with low educational attainment. The majority were mothers separated from their children and family, and lacked supportive social networks. This makes imprisonment term a critical demographic characteristic for the meaning-making process.

Findings indicated that meaning-making among women prisoners was essential for maintaining their psychological health. Issues connected with relationship, intimacy and fair treatment matters of incarcerated women are important as this would enhance their meaning-making. Conversely, absence or diminished relationship, intimacy and fair treatment would lower their levels of meaning-making.

Effective emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies represent adaptive coping mechanisms which predict meaning-making. By offering interventions that elicit positive change in incarcerated women's person-environment situation, their lives in prison would be more fulfilling.

Findings of the current study provide stakeholders (Counseling Psychologists, Religious Mentors, Social workers and Welfare Officers) with a framework in their collaborative work with greater understanding of the potential role of meaning-making in relation to coping strategies in incarcerated women's mental health and behavioral recovery - whether or not they expected to be released from prison.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the present study:

- i. Counseling Psychologists should in the initial phase of therapy assist incarcerated women to clarify their global meaning or assumptions about the world by initiating an early assessment of social resources of meaning-making.
- ii. Counseling Psychologists should help incarcerated women to find ways of implementing new ways of relating with others, creating intimacy and receiving fair treatment within the prison environment.
- iii. Social workers should help incarcerated women to examine the degree to which their behavior is being influenced by social conditioning and examine the price they are paying for the decisions they have made. Social workers may help incarcerated women to develop new social support networks, negotiate other systems in which their children are involved and navigate child welfare, and better relationships with family and friends. Focus should be on ways to promote social support, consistent prison visitation, increased basic adult education and vocational or work-related skills.
- iv. Probation officers should support women at KWP to learn how to change their external environment where the offence for which they are incarcerated occurred. They need to be challenged to look within themselves and recognize their own contribution to

their plight. This would help them to discover new courses of action that will lead to existential change in their situation.

- v. An interdisciplinary approach involving all stakeholders at all levels of the policy-making chain (politicians, prison management, health advocates and prison staff) should create awareness to motivate and sustain efforts at meaning-making, coping and well-being of women undergoing incarceration.

VII. SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Longitudinal studies should be conducted to determine the incremental value of meaning-making process in incarcerated women at KWP.

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