



Sports and Meaning of Life: How is The Process to Achieve Meaning of Life Athletes With Physical Disabilities?

Yahya Eko Nopiyanto^{1*}, Rita Shintia², Dian Pujianto³

^{1,3} Physical Education, University of Bengkulu, Indonesia

² Counseling, University of Bengkulu, Indonesia

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Abstract

The process of achieving the meaning of life is not easy for every individual because it is not only related to pleasant life experiences but also tragic or traumatic life experiences. Failure to find and fulfill the meaning of life usually leads to an appreciation of life without meaning, emptiness, feeling that you have no purpose in life, and feeling that your life is meaningless. One of the individuals who have difficulty in the process of finding the meaning of life is an athlete with a physical disability at the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) Bengkulu Province. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed regarding the process of achieving meaningfulness in the lives of athletes with physical disabilities at the Bengkulu Province NPC. This research was conducted with qualitative research methods. Respondents in this study consisted of 5 quadriplegic athletes, consisting of 5 male athletes. Collecting research data using interviews. The results of the study stated that each respondent went through 5 stages to achieve the meaning of life, namely the stages of suffering, self-acceptance, the discovery of the meaning of life, realization of meaning, and meaningful life. In the first stage, each respondent experienced suffering because they were looked down upon or bullied by the people around them. In the second stage, each respondent begins to accept himself with resignation, patience, and sincerity in living life. In the third stage, each respondent successfully went through the process of finding meaning with the support of parents and family. In the fourth stage, each respondent is committed to the life goals that have been set. In the fifth stage, each respondent lives a meaningful life by pursuing a profession as an athlete. So it can be concluded that the process of achieving the meaning of life for athletes with disabilities is through sports.



*Corresponding email :
yahyaekonopiyanto@unib.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

The process of meaningful life must be carried out by everyone to find the importance of life so that one can find happiness in life (Naraswari & Syafiq, 2018). The meaning of life shows that things are important, valuable, and believed to be true and can be used as life goals to be achieved and fulfilled (Puspasari & Alfian, 2012). However, the process of searching for the meaning of life is not easy for every individual because it is not only related to pleasant life experiences but also tragic or traumatic life experiences (Hayyu et al., 2015). Failure to find and fulfill the meaning of life usually leads to an appreciation of life without meaning, emptiness, feeling that you have no purpose in life, and feeling that your life is meaningless (Mazaya & Supradewi, 2011).

One of the individuals who have difficulty in the process of finding the meaning of life is an athlete with a physical disability (Sundell et al., 2019). Athletes with physical disabilities are a term to refer to athletes who have physical disabilities consisting of visually impaired, physically disabled, deaf, and speech impaired (Peers et al., 2014). In the initial process of searching for the meaning of life, athletes with physical disabilities experience difficulties and often experience psychological disorders such as anxiety, failure, despair, pessimism, and even tend to try to commit suicide (Nafi et al., 2020). However, athletes with physical disabilities who manage to find meaning in their lives will be able to maintain their life goals and remain actively involved in the sport they are engaged in (Goraczko et al., 2021). The search for the meaning of life will help each individual to always look for opportunities and challenges in life and arouse the desire to understand

and be able to manage the experiences that occur in life (Hammer et al., 2020).

Based on this opinion, it can be seen that an understanding of experience will contribute to the process of searching for the meaning of life for athletes with physical disabilities. Therefore, finding the meaning of life is important for athletes with physical disabilities. Previous relevant research has been carried out by (Marwaziah, 2020) which discusses the meaning of life for athletes with physical disabilities, not congenital. However, in this study, only three research subjects were used and did not comprehensively reveal how the sport that athletes engage in can help in finding the meaning of life. Similar research was also conducted by (Danielle, 2020) which examined the description of the meaning of life for athletes with physical disabilities who work as wheelchair basketball athletes. In this study, only four research subjects were used and did not comprehensively reveal how the sport of basketball practiced by athletes can help in finding the meaning of life.

Based on previous research, the author intends to research the process of achieving the meaning of life in athletes with physical disabilities at the National Paralympic Committee (NPC) Bengkulu Province. The novelty offered by the author is to discuss comprehensively how sports that are occupied by athletes can help the process of achieving meaning in life for athletes with physical disabilities at the Bengkulu Province NPC. The specific objective to be achieved through this research is to describe the process of the stages that have been passed in finding the meaning of life in athletes with physical disabilities to achieve a meaningful life. While the urgency or priority of this research is to produce valid and comprehensive data for policy making for the Bengkulu Government and the Youth and Sports Office in

providing for the needs of athletes with physical disabilities to improve their welfare of life.

METHODS

The research method used is descriptive qualitative, namely a study that examines the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or various materials and emphasizes holistic descriptions and explains in detail activities or situations (Anggito & Setiawan, 2013). So this study will comprehensively discuss the process of achieving the meaning of life in athletes with non-congenital physical disabilities, and the views of athletes with physical disabilities who are members of the Bengkulu Province NPC. This research was conducted in Bengkulu City from June to November 2022. The research subject is someone who is chosen by the researcher as a source who can provide information and is selected purposely to obtain research information (Nopiyanto & Pujianto, 2021). Subject criteria set in this study include 1) athletes with physical disabilities who have won medals in national championships and are members of the Bengkulu Province NPC, 2) athletes in athletic sports, and 3) willing to be research subjects. Based on these criteria, the athletes who were used as subjects in this study were 5 athletic male athletes. The techniques and instruments of data collection in this study used interviews. Interviews were conducted on research subjects to explore research data comprehensively. interviews conducted focused on the experience or aspects of the subject's life. The interview used in this study is semi-structured, which means that the questions in the interview are open, but there are still limitations to the theme and flow of the conversation. This interview has guidelines that are used as a reference so that the discussion can focus on asking in-depth questions about the subject's life

in a comprehensive and in-depth manner. The data analysis technique used in this study is a qualitative analysis using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

RESULT

This study was conducted on 5 athletic athletes who are members of the Bengkulu Province NPC. The results of interviews from the process of achieving the meaning of the athlete's life are narrated as follows:

1. Interview Results (respondent AR)

Stage of suffering

At this stage, AR admits that he was born as a person with a physical disability, namely quadriplegic. He admitted that he did not know what caused him to be born physically disabled. From this incident, he admitted that he was sad because many people underestimated him or underestimated him.

Stage of self-acceptance

From this incident, AR admitted that he was resigned to the circumstances that God had given him. Until one day he was able to accept the situation that occurred, namely when AR saw that there were still many people out there who had limitations but were still passionate about living life. In going through all the suffering in this life, AR admits that he gets support from his family, especially from his parents.

The process of finding the meaning of life

Until now AR claims to be able to establish good relationships with family and people around him. In interpreting life, AR admits that life is only temporary so as much as possible it is useful for others. At this time AR's goal in life is to become an athlete who excels in athletics.

In dealing with the various obstacles that exist in life, AR explains that he has discussions with coaches or parents. AR admits that in living this life, parents are the main support.

The process of realizing meaning, and the process of living a meaningful life

In this life process, AR explained that the way to stay committed to achieving the meaning of life and the purpose of life is to keep practicing in the sport that I am engaged in. Apart from being an athlete, AR also lives a positive life for self-development by helping the disabled community. In the process of a meaningful life, AR chooses athletics as a means to live a meaningful life.

Meaningful life stage

AR confessed that before joining the NPC I felt like a failure because I lived with many physical limitations. However, after joining the NPC I felt that my life had become meaningful because I was able to achieve achievements in the sports that I was involved in, moreover being able to give medals in the championships I participated in. In living life to be meaningful, AR reveals that even though I am currently a person with a disability, I must continue to excel in the field of sports that I am engaged in so that I feel useful in this life. Currently, AR considers that God has given me limitations, but on the other hand, God has also given me advantages in the form of opportunities for me to become an accomplished athlete.

2. Interview Results (respondent US)

Stages of suffering

The respondent US explained that the current physical disability is present since birth. Currently, he is blind, so he does not know for sure the chronology of his becoming blind. The US admitted that all the events that happened to him were accepted with sincerity.

Stage of self-acceptance

From this incident, the US admitted that he accepted all that God had given him. Parents who always encourage is a factor that makes the US able to accept all the events that happened to him. In his daily activities, the US admits that he spends a lot of time with blind children.

The process of finding the meaning of life

Relationships with people are very good. In interpreting this life, AS explains that it must be lived and be grateful for. The goal of US life today is to get back into training as an athletic athlete. So far, US admits that there are no obstacles in his life because he has the support of his parents, family, and coaches.

The process of realizing meaning, and the process of living a meaningful life

In the process of realizing meaning, the US remains committed to achieving the meaning of life and the purpose of life by practicing diligently. Currently, the US admits that he is focused on living his life as an athletic athlete. US admitted that he was able to join the NPC thanks to an invitation from the coach. At first, the US did not feel that he had sports talent in athletics, but because of an invitation from his coach, he finally practiced diligently until now.

Meaningful life stage

The US explains that not everyone can live what he does. This belief is a motivation for the US in living life. AS further stated that he had learned a lesson from all the events he had experienced. The most felt lesson is being able to go out in various regions throughout Indonesia to take part in sports championships.

3. Interview Results (respondent DS)

Stage of suffering

The cause of disability experienced by DS is congenital. DS said

he did not know for sure the chronology of the events when he was born in a quadriplegic state. From this incident, DS said that he was a person who lacked confidence.

Stage of self-acceptance

After the incident, DS admitted that he felt a lot of limitations to develop himself. The factor that made DS accept what happened was thanks to the motivation of his parents. The way DS does to get through all his activities is to keep practicing, praying, and trying.

The process of finding the meaning of life

DS's relationship with the people closest to him is going well. DS interprets this life with gratitude. DS's current goal in life is to become an accomplished athlete. In overcoming obstacles or problems in life, DS admits that he gets help from his closest relatives. DS revealed that parents are the main supporters in carrying out daily activities.

The process of realizing meaning, and the process of living a meaningful life

The way that DS does to remain committed to achieving the meaning of life and the purpose of life is to live life with confidence. In addition to being an athlete, DS also undergoes other positive activities for self-development. DS received information from his relatives that the Bengkulu Province NPC is a forum for athletes with disabilities. DS said that being an athlete was a dream from childhood. Currently, DS is pursuing athletics.

The meaningful life stage

DS admitted that before joining the athletic athlete at NPC Bengkulu he felt that he was not confident in his abilities, but after joining he felt that there was an ability that could be channeled for an achievement. To motivate himself DS claimed to see his idol. The lesson that DS feels as an athlete with disabilities is that even though he has shortcomings, don't

forget to be grateful.

4. Interview Results (respondent A)

Stage of suffering

Respondent A revealed that he is quadriplegic or disabled legs. The chronology of the incident is that when he was a toddler, DS had an accident when he fell asleep with his legs folded and fell at a height of 1 m from the bed, because of that, his legs bent out which made it difficult for me to walk. From this incident, A felt inferior in his situation.

Self-acceptance stage

Respondent A feels inferior because he is different from other normal people. However, with the support of his parents, respondent A can accept the shortcomings that exist in him. Respondent A's way to get through all of that until he can return to his activities is to assess that there are still many out there who are lacking more than him.

The process of finding the meaning of life

With its limitations, respondent A claims to have a good relationship with the people closest to him. Respondent A interprets this life by starting to feel open to starting the hopes to be achieved for the future. The life goal of respondent A is to be a motivator for people with disabilities. The way to overcome the obstacles that respondent A did was to share with his closest relatives. Those who support respondent A in carrying out daily activities are parents.

The process of realizing meaning, and the process of living a meaningful life

The way respondent A stays committed to achieving the meaning of life and the purpose of life is to be enthusiastic, grateful, and do new things. In addition to being an athlete, respondent A also undergoes other positive activities for self-development. Respondent A admitted that being an athlete was his dream since childhood. Currently,

respondent A is pursuing athletics.

The meaningful life stage

The changes that occurred and were felt before and after joining the Bengkulu Province NPC were previously respondent A was not confident in his talents, after being active and diligent in practicing, finally, respondent A received a lot of experience from the NPC. In motivating himself, respondent A views that the lack is not a barrier to success. The wisdom felt by respondent A is that whatever difficulties we face, we can train because we will get used to it, therefore we only feel proud of ourselves for the achievements and enthusiasm that she has been fighting for all this time in his life.

5. Interview Results (respondent AP)

Stage of suffering

Respondent AP revealed that he was quadriplegic since birth, and he did not know how he was born a quadriplegic. When he finds out that he is quadriplegic, he is worried about living this life.

Acceptance stage

In living this life, AP confesses to a positive way of thinking. The factor that makes AP accept his situation is because of the support from the people around him. The way AP accepts his imperfect physical condition is by thinking positively and often sharing with other disabled athletes who are like himself and joining with athletes with disabilities.

The process of finding the meaning of life

In the process of finding the meaning of life, AP respondents claimed to have a good relationship with the people closest to them. AP interprets this life with a lot of gratitude and enthusiasm in living life. AP's current goal in life is to get closer to God and often practice with athletes with disabilities so that I can grow my achievements again. The way

AP overcomes obstacles or problems in life is by sharing with those closest to me who can motivate me. AP admitted that family and friends are supporters in carrying out daily activities.

The process of realizing meaning, and the process of living a meaningful life

The way that AP does to remain committed to achieving the meaning of life and the purpose of life is by practicing often and not forgetting to worship. In addition to being an AP athlete, he also undergoes other positive activities for self-development, namely by teaching in an educational institution. AP claimed to have received information from friends about the NPC as a forum for athletes with disabilities. Becoming an athlete has been a dream since childhood. Currently AP is pursuing athletics, and he feels he has talent in sports.

The meaningful life stage

The changes that AP felt after joining the Bengkulu Province NPC were feeling confident and making me very motivated and excited. AP motivates himself to live life with positive thinking and a lot of gratitude. The lesson from all the incidents experienced by AP is that they are more grateful and worshiped because many friends with disabilities do not have the same skills as AP.

DISCUSSION

The meaning of life is a concept that is owned by a person to be able to interpret his life through several things that are considered valuable, important, and have a special value for a person so that it is worthy of being a goal in his life (Mony, Kardo, & Adison, 2021). The meaning of life cannot be found easily by everyone without the exception of people with physical disabilities (Prince, 2017). People with physical disabilities have to go through various difficult processes in finding meaning in life (Lee, Park, &

Recchia, 2017). It is not surprising that they have to go through a process of suffering in life such as feeling inferior, pessimistic in living life, getting discriminated against, having difficulty getting a job or public facilities, being kept away from the community, feeling ashamed, feeling a burden to the family (Richardson et al., 2017).

In the process of achieving the meaning of life, persons with disabilities are also faced with a process of self-acceptance. The processes that must be passed by a person to be able to accept himself, namely a person must be able to know himself, refrain from past habit patterns, change emotions from an event that occurs, enjoy whatever is happening in his life, and they can let go of everything. From the results of the study, it is known that someone who can understand himself will have a level of self-confidence in dealing with life (Piran, Yuliwar, & Ka'arayeno, 2017).

Self-acceptance will help a person in the process of finding the meaning of life. When a person has been able to accept himself as a whole, it will facilitate the realization of the meaning of life. At the meaning realization stage, the individual has changed his attitude and is committed to himself to become a better person (Soni, 2020). This encourages individuals to carry out positive activities to develop their potential. This willingness to develop this potential shows that the individual is willing to try to fulfill and realize the meaning of his life and achieve life goals through directed activities. The life stage means that the individual will feel a change in attitude to become more directed, clear, and purposeful so that life is lived meaningfully (Dewanto & Retnowati, 2015).

The process of achieving the meaning of life is carried out by physical disabilities in different ways. One of them

is to carry out the process of achieving the meaning of life through the field of sports. Having a profession as an athlete with a physical disability is known to be a means of proving to the public that a person with a physical disability has skills that can make him or her excel, and can be accepted to live during society (Mustamin, Abidin, & Abidin, 2021). The sports achievements of athletes with physical disabilities are not only aimed at increasing self-esteem but also aiming to inspire and promote health and equal rights for persons with disabilities (Blauwet & Willick, 2012).

When a person experiences boredom in his life, it will cause a lot of pressure that results in the disruption of mental health conditions, but some people with high hopes have succeeded in using this incident as momentum to grow into better people (Long & Gallagher, 2017). Athletes with disabilities are known not only to adapt to their conditions but they are also found to grow with the adversity that befell them (Stutts & Stanaland, 2016). People with disabilities who become athletes allow themselves to achieve very high body capabilities that are obtained from the intensity of the exercise they do and tend to easily make peace with existing stressors related to their body condition (Fagher et al., 2017). Athletes with disabilities are also reported to tend to have high levels of resilience and self-efficacy compared to athletes with normal bodies (Martin, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Every athlete experiences the process of achieving the meaning of life differently, but every athlete has something in common in the stage of achieving the meaning of life, namely, through the sport they are currently engaged in. The researcher realizes that

the information presented in this study still has limitations. Therefore, it is recommended for further researchers to be able to examine the process of achieving meaningfulness in the lives of athletes from various sports and various types of disabilities.

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