

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how secondary students in Macau perceive the meaning of life and to understand from where they derive the meaning of life. All these have implications for the implementation of life education. 1141 students in six local secondary schools were researched; some of them were in junior secondary and others were in senior secondary forms. Questionnaires were adopted, focusing on “the Purpose in Life Test” and “Questionnaire for the Sources of Meaning in Life”. After the questionnaires were completed and analyzed, eight students with high or low perception of the meaning of life were invited to interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed in terms of frequency distribution, Mean, Standard Deviation, One-way ANOVA and t-test. The qualitative data from the in-depth interviews were also analyzed. Conclusions drawn from the research are:

1. The perception of the meaning of life of secondary students in Macau is at mid low, and when compared with findings from the West, local students' awareness of the meaning of life is also low.
2. When variables such as 'gender', 'level of form', 'whole family' and 'single-parent family' were examined, it was found that there was no correlation between any of them and perception of the meaning of life.
3. There were discrepancies in perception of the meaning of life as there were differences in 'religious faith', 'attainment results', 'interpersonal relationships', 'economic background of the family', and 'family climate'.
4. Boys and girls showed significant difference in 'goal in life' and 'positive attitude towards life'.
5. Students at different form levels showed significant difference in 'positive attitudes towards life'.

6. Students with different religious faiths showed significant difference in 'enthusiasm for life' and 'goal in life'.
7. Students with different attainment results and interpersonal relationships showed significant differences in 'enthusiasm for life', 'goal in life', 'independence', 'positive attitude towards life', and 'future expectation'.
8. Students from different economic backgrounds and family climate showed significant differences in 'enthusiasm for life', 'goal in life', 'independence', and 'positive attitude towards life'.
9. Students from 'whole family' or 'single-parent family' showed no differences in the five dimensions of their sense...
10. The findings show the ranking of the source of meaning of life of Macau's secondary students is: relationships, health, leisure, growth, attainment, activities, what one acquires', 'knowledge seeking', 'work', 'service', 'belief', 'the way one looks', etc. and the ranking order differ according to differences in form level and gender.

In light of the research findings, the following recommendations are made for further studies and, for student counseling by teachers or curriculum design of life education:

1. The exploration of the meaning of life should be integrated in the school curriculum.
2. Schools should put more emphasis on those courses related with interpersonal relationships.
3. Subjects related with religious education should be strengthened.
4. Students should be encouraged to read more books related to life education, and schools should provide such books for student at times.

5. Students should be encouraged to explore the meaning of life.
6. Home-school cooperation and communication should be increased.
7. Teachers should be encouraged to show more care and concern to disadvantaged students.
8. Life education, when implemented, should really cater for students' needs.