



EMPOWERING ADOLESCENTS IN ORPHANAGES: UNVEILING LIFE MEANING THROUGH IKIGAI TRAINING

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Abstract

The challenges faced by adolescents growing up in orphanages have provided valuable life lessons and shaped their identities across physical, psychological, spiritual, and social dimensions. However, many orphaned teenagers experience a sense of meaninglessness due to the loss of hope for developing into quality individuals. This issue poses risks to their daily living necessities. Therefore, the provision of a tool, such as IKIGAI training, is essential to facilitate orphaned adolescents in finding meaning in life. The aim of this research is to assess the effectiveness of IKIGAI training in discovering life meaning among adolescents in the Salatiga orphanage. The research employs a quantitative experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest design. Ten participants from the Salatiga orphanage were involved using purposive sampling. The study includes an IKIGAI training module and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) to measure pretest and posttest values of life meaning. Data analysis involves the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test. The results demonstrate that IKIGAI training effectively assists orphaned adolescents in finding meaning in life (Z value of 2.848 and significance of 0.000; $p < 0.05$). This indicates that the discovery of life's meaning is crucial for adolescents, contributing to a sense of worth, creative life values, learning from past experiences, and planning future life goals a significance attributed to the application of IKIGAI in daily life..

Keywords: IKIGAI Training; Meaning of Life; Orphanage Adolescents

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Introduction

During adolescence, individuals undergo numerous life changes, making the role of the family crucial in life's journey (Rahaditya & Dariyo, 2018). However, not all children have an ideal family situation in reality (Andrean & Akmal, 2019). Family functions can be disrupted due to death, parental divorce, and poverty, leaving a child to navigate life without the support of a family. This circumstance often leads to residing in orphanages, serving as substitute family institutions for abandoned and orphaned children (Shafiq, Haider, & Ijaz, 2020; Shulga, Savchenko, & Filinkova, 2016). Growing up in an orphanage can result in individuals feeling the loss of a significant part of their formative years due to the absence of hope in becoming quality individuals (Boadu, Osei-Tutu, & Osafo, 2020). The lives of adolescents in orphanages inevitably face obstacles and difficulties (Mohammadzadeh, Awang, Ismail, & Shahar, 2019).

According to data from the Ministry of Social Affairs, there are 500,000 to 600,000 children living in orphanages, with 90% of these foster children having parents with low economic status (Ronald, 2018). Among them, 73.3% of adolescents have difficulty

accepting their circumstances and themselves, 53.3% struggle to form close relationships with others in the orphanage, 53.3% feel they have nothing to develop within themselves, and 60% lack a clear direction in life (Saputri & Mulawarman, 2022).

The obtained data suggests that not all adolescents living in orphanages experience a consistently positive life. The lack of holistic support during their time in orphanages appears to have a negative impact, notably resulting in high levels of depression (Mansoer, Putri, & Sulaiman, 2019). The inability to grasp the meaning of life may lead to difficulties for orphaned adolescents in finding their life purpose. Moreover, a loss of life meaning can leave orphaned adolescents without a clear direction or purpose in life, uncertain about what steps to take (Bhatt, Apidechkul, Srichan, & Bhatt, 2020). According to Mazaya and Supradewi (2011), the lives of adolescents in orphanages are not exempt from obstacles and difficulties. Thus, the formation and search for life meaning become essential, serving as the focal point of human personality dynamics.

The concept of meaning in life was initially introduced by Viktor Emil Frankl as a manifestation of his life journey during World War II, subsequently further developed by Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler. Meaning in life encompasses various aspects, allowing individuals to direct their life goals toward a sense of purpose (Steger et al., 2006). It constitutes the most fundamental desire for humans (Demirbaş-Çelik & Keklik, 2019). One feels that life is meaningful when they achieve their life goals (Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2020; Darewych, 2013). Consequently, frustration and emptiness ensue when one struggles or fails to find meaning in life (Shafiq et al., 2020). Individuals who fail to ascribe meaning to life indicate a lack of awareness that all life experiences have broader developmental potential (Effendi & Haryati, 2022).

Adolescents in orphanages, residing in favorable environments, support positive future orientations and meaningful lives (Dumaris & Rahayu, 2019). When meaning in life is fulfilled, individuals experience a meaningful existence, ultimately leading to a sense of happiness. With the presence of meaning in life, individuals feel wanted, loved, valued, and accepted, fostering holistic self-appreciation (Darewych, 2013; Wilchek-Aviad & Ne'eman-Haviv, 2016).

One way to assist adolescents in achieving meaning in life is through the concept of IKIGAI, originating from Japan, literally composed of the words "iki" meaning life and "gai" meaning reason. IKIGAI is a term used to describe the joy and meaning of life (García & Miralles, 2017). There are five pillars forming the foundation for developing IKIGAI: start with small things, free oneself, achieve harmony and continuity, find joy in small things, and be present in the current time and place (García & Miralles, 2017). Understanding these five pillars allows individuals to address the four elements of IKIGAI: passion, vocation, mission, and profession (García & Miralles, 2017).

Implementing the IKIGAI process may not be as complex as imagined; it can stem from simple things (Mogi, 2018). By applying the five pillars and identifying the four elements of IKIGAI, individuals can discover happiness and meaning in their lives (Mogi, 2018). The key lies in being happy and finding meaning in life every day.

IKIGAI training can serve as a platform for orphaned adolescents to discover meaning in life. The IKIGAI program offers various benefits, such as enhancing the life motivation of orphaned adolescents, helping them better understand themselves, comprehend the meaning of life, set life priorities, and aid in designing long-term goals (García & Miralles, 2017). This aligns with Mitsuhashi's (2018) assertion that understanding IKIGAI allows individuals to confidently prioritize aspects of life. The IKIGAI concept promotes a more independent and beneficial life, both for oneself and the environment (Irukawa, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to enhance the meaning in the lives of adolescents residing in orphanages, with the hypothesis that IKIGAI training is effective in discovering meaning in the lives of orphaned adolescents.

Method

The research methodology employed is quantitative, utilizing a one-group pretest-posttest experimental design to assess the effectiveness of the IKIGAI training in fostering the discovery of meaning in life, particularly among adolescents residing in orphanages. The one-group pretest-posttest design involves administering an initial test (pretest) before the intervention and conducting a follow-up test (posttest) after the intervention (Knapp, 2016). The utilization of the one-group pretest-posttest design (Table 1) is justified by its use of a single group as both the control and experimental group.

Table 1. An Experimental Research Design

Pretest	Intervention	Posttest
O ₁	X	O ₂

Source: Knapp (2016)

The study involved a participant pool of 10 adolescents residing in the Salatiga orphanage, selected through purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria comprised adolescents aged 15-18 years who had been residing in the orphanage since birth and lacked a nuclear family. The research methodology employed training sessions utilizing the IKIGAI module and a meaning in life scale for pretest and posttest measurements. The IKIGAI module, structured by the researcher based on the four IKIGAI elements from García and Miralles (2017), encompassing passion (what you love), mission (what the world needs), vocation (what you can be paid for), and profession (what you are good at). The IKIGAI module underwent initial validation by expert judgment (psychology and language experts) and was piloted with 20 adolescents residing in Salatiga orphanages before being administered to the research participants. The pilot results indicated an acceptable assessment, rendering it suitable for application in the specific research context.

To assess the meaning in the lives of orphaned adolescents, the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) by Steger et al. (2006) was employed, covering the aspects of presence of meaning and search for meaning. The meaning in life scale was then adjusted by the researcher based on participant characteristics and validated through expert judgment (psychology and language experts). The scale comprised 10 statement items with four response options on a Likert scale: Not at all Suitable (NS), Not Suitable (NSu), Suitable (Su), and Very Suitable (VSu). Subsequently, the 10 items were piloted with 20 adolescents residing in Salatiga orphanages, resulting in all items meeting the criteria ($p > 0.30$) with total item correlations ranging from 0.341 to 0.775 and a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.890 (high reliability). The selected items were then utilized as measurements for the pretest and posttest of meaning in life.

The IKIGAI training to foster the discovery of meaning in the lives of adolescents residing in orphanages was conducted from September to December 2022. An overview of the research implementation stages is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. The Implementation Steps of IKIGAI Trainings

Steps	Activities
Pretest	Initial measurement of life meaning before receiving IKIGAI training.
Intervention	Providing IKIGAI training for four weeks based on the four elements of IKIGAI, which include: Passion - what you love, Mission - what the world needs, Vocation - what you can be paid for, and Profession - what you are good at.
Posttest	Final measurement of life meaning after receiving IKIGAI training.
Evaluation	Evaluation and follow-up of the IKIGAI training research on the discovery of life meaning.

The data analysis employed in this research is the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank test is utilized to compare the median values of a variable between two sets of paired data (Ohyver, Moniaga, Sungkawa, Subagyo, & Chandra, 2019). All research data were tested using the SPSS software, version 21 for Windows.

Result and Discussion

The results of descriptive statistical analysis in Figure 1 reveal a pretest mean value of 39.1, which is smaller than the posttest mean of 52.2. This indicates a difference in the meaning of life among adolescents residing in orphanages before and after participating in the IKIGAI training.

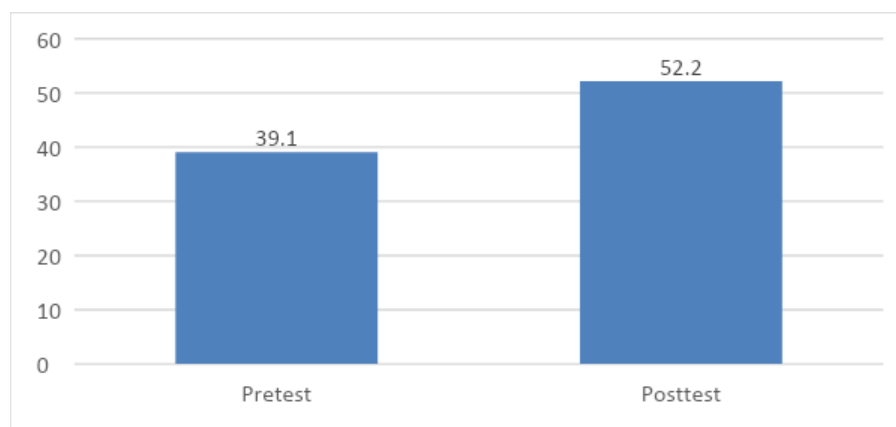


Figure 1. Mean Pretest and Posttest

Based on the ranking results in Table 3, it is evident that all research participants experienced an improvement in the meaning of life from the pretest to the posttest scores. The average increase amounts to 5.50. The observed enhancement in the meaning of life among adolescents residing in orphanages can be attributed to the IKIGAI program, signifying its significance as a primary and crucial intervention to be implemented in the daily lives of those in orphanage settings.

Table 3. Test Rank

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest - Pretest	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	0.00	0.00
	Positive Ranks	10 ^b	0.50	55.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	10		

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon statistical test in Table 4, a Z value of 2.848 was obtained with a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the research hypothesis is accepted, signifying the effectiveness of the IKIGAI program in assisting adolescents in orphanages to discover meaning in life.

Table 4. Wilcoxon Hypothesis Test

	Posttest - Pretest
Z	-2.848 ^a
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

Through the IKIGAI training, adolescents residing in orphanages in Salatiga can comprehend and discover the meaning of life. They can find meaning in life, enabling them to set goals, understand themselves by recognizing their potential, strengths, and weaknesses, and adopt positive actions by engaging in beneficial activities. Additionally, adolescents become responsible individuals, committed to their actions, and find a fitting purpose in life (Shulga et al., 2016).

The IKIGAI training in discovering meaning in life is supported by Kumano's (2012) perspective that well-being is one of the reasons for living. Individuals with a sense of purpose and meaning in life tend to have higher well-being than those lacking such a perspective (Krok, 2018). The application of IKIGAI appears to assist individuals in finding meaning in life (Tsuzishita & Wakui, 2021). Other research by Mori et al. (2017) asserts that IKIGAI not only reflects the psychological factors of an individual but also signifies their motivation to live, as IKIGAI is described with joy, well-being, and an awareness of the values present in life.

Through IKIGAI training, orphaned adolescents can better understand themselves and their surrounding environment by discovering the four elements of IKIGAI. They learn about the meaning of their lives through an understanding of passion as something enjoyable, mission as something needed by the surrounding environment, vocation as something generating income for survival, and profession as something becoming a mastered skill (García & Miralles, 2017). Through these four elements of IKIGAI, orphaned adolescents can perceive their lives as meaningful, as they are capable of giving purpose to themselves and others.

In the first element related to passion in IKIGAI, it involves something the individual enjoys, and engaging in it brings happiness. The second element, mission, refers to something needed by the surrounding environment. Orphaned adolescents can actively participate in their environment, gaining insight into what is required by their surroundings. The third element, vocation, entails an individual's involvement in a job that allows them to find meaning in life. This aligns with the creative value, emphasizing how orphaned adolescents take responsibility for their tasks and diligently fulfill their obligations, ultimately finding significance in their lives. The fourth element, profession, implies that individuals feel adept in a specific field. To achieve meaning in life, one must

also apply experiential values by dedicating oneself to a particular activity, serving as a contributing factor in attaining such fulfillment (Palupi, 2021).

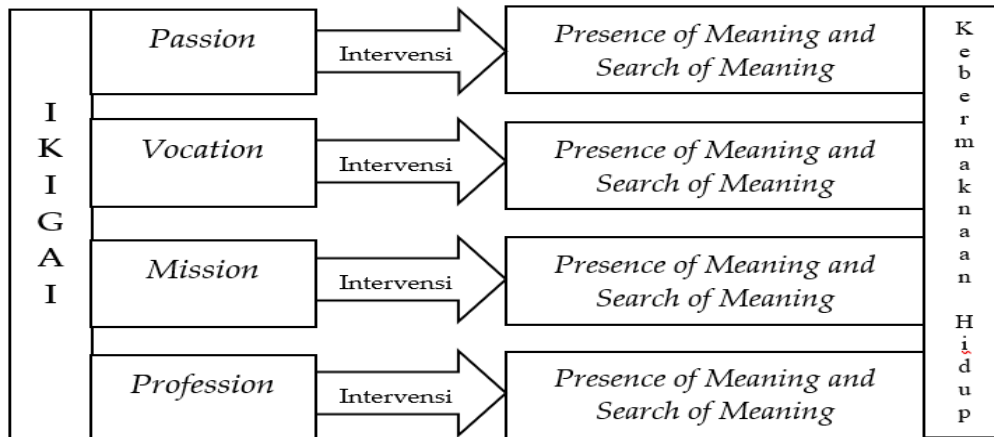


Figure 2. The Connection between IKIGAI Elements and Aspects of Life Meaning.

In the pursuit of finding meaning in life, individuals need to exhibit behaviors indicative of a search for meaning, driven by the motivation to discover purpose across various life domains such as relationships, religious beliefs, health, comfort, and personal growth (Fridayanti, 2013). Furthermore, individuals must demonstrate the presence of meaning, signifying an awareness of the meaning in their lives. Each person possesses a unique sense of purpose, distinct from others, and this can evolve over time (Costin & Vigoles, 2020). When an individual discovers the meaning of their life, they gain an understanding of how to navigate life's challenges and maximize their unique potential through a life that is meaningful, simple, and accepting of every situation, even in times of suffering (Matulesy & Keraf, 2011).

In the aspect of the search for meaning, an individual manifests an intrinsic drive or motivation to find meaning in life. This drive is a characteristic inherent in humans, known as the will to meaning or the desire to make sense. Actively seeking meaning in one's life generates a sense of meaning irrespective of the circumstances (Palupi, 2021; Yek et al., 2017). For adolescents in orphanages, positive relationships with peers in school, the orphanage, and the surrounding environment, religious activities linked to religiosity, and personal growth-related activities serve as sources for adolescents to seek meaning in their lives. The internal desire of adolescents becomes crucial in finding meaning in life. Discovering meaning in life assists orphaned adolescents in understanding their uniqueness and identifying their life goals (Steger et al., 2008).

In terms of the presence of meaning, an individual has already comprehended the meaning of their life. This understanding enhances one's ability to think and act positively, unlocking personal potential for an improved quality of life (Newman, Nezelek, & Thrash, 2018). Someone who understands the presence of meaning tends to experience better physical and emotional well-being (Yek et al., 2017; Steger et al., 2008). The understanding of the meaning of life exhibits a positive relationship with the search for meaning. An individual actively seeking meaning implies an evolving comprehension of life's significance (Kim & Lee, 2013). Adolescents in orphanages are already beginning to grasp the meaning of their lives. Despite facing obstacles that impact their understanding of life's meaning, they exhibit self-motivation to discover meaning in life.

Adolescents are starting to comprehend the meaning in their lives by acknowledging that each individual has unique and diverse life goals (Malin, Reilly, Quinn, & Moran, 2014). With an understanding of their potential, significant aspects of their lives, and the

pursuit of something that brings meaning, adolescents align themselves with Bastaman's (2007) emphasis on the necessity for personal effort to determine what is best for oneself to enhance the quality of life. This understanding emerges through group activities and sharing during the training process. Orphaned adolescents express a desire to find meaning in life despite facing limitations.

Through the implementation of IKIGAI training, orphaned adolescents can outline short-term and long-term career plans and complete the IKIGAI diagram. Therefore, they gain a deeper understanding of their potential, enabling them to find meaning in life. According to Agustina, Aisyah, and Lestari (2021), knowing one's potential allows individuals to recognize their reality and understand the roles they need to play to achieve future life goals. By discovering meaning in life, orphaned adolescents learn to accept and appreciate themselves based on their beliefs and values (Woodgate et al., 2017).

This research has demonstrated positive outcomes from the IKIGAI program concerning the life meaning of adolescents in orphanages. However, the study still faces limitations during program implementation. The training sessions were conducted in the late afternoon to evening, a period when participants were already engaged in other activities, such as school from morning to afternoon. This circumstance affected the participants' focus during the training. The researchers did not anticipate the participants' conditions during the training, leading to an impact on the decreased self-resilience resulting from the intervention.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research establishes that IKIGAI training successfully aids orphaned adolescents in discovering the meaning of life, encompassing the recognition of their potential, strengths, weaknesses, and the determination of life goals. Furthermore, IKIGAI training instills a sense of worth, fosters a value for life creativity, enables learning from past experiences, and instills positive expectations for the future among adolescents residing in orphanages.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that future research designs similar IKIGAI training programs while carefully considering the timing of implementation to avoid adverse effects on the physical and psychological well-being of participants. Additionally, future research endeavors are encouraged to broaden their scope to different age groups, providing insights into how individuals discover meaning in life based on age categories through the IKIGAI program.

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Author Contributions Statement

Each author played their designated roles and made comprehensive contributions to this research.

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