

MARCIN WNUK, JERZY T. MARCINKOWSKI

Poczucie sensu życia członków wspólnoty Uzależnionych od Seksu i Miłości a ich aktywność religijno-duchowa oraz poziom odczuwanego szczęścia – badania pilotażowe

Streszczenie

Wstęp. Uzależnienie od seksu i miłości jest istotnym problemem społecznym, dotyczącym zwłaszcza osób, które mają skłonność do różnego rodzaju uzależnień. Podobnie jak inne formy uzależnień, uzależnienie od seksu i miłości odnosi się do wszystkich dziedzin życia, co w efekcie prowadzi do pogorszenia jego jakości. Istotnym czynnikiem mogącym mieć wpływ na odzyskanie i poprawienie jakości życia uzależnionych od seksu i miłości wydaje się rozwój religii/ sfery duchowej.

Cel. Celem przeprowadzonego projektu badawczego było zbadanie czy poczucie sensu życia jest związane z pewnymi aspektami religijności/duchowości oraz szczęściem operacjonalizowanym za pomocą globalnych wskaźników w postaci pragnienia życia, pasji życia, poczucia szczęścia z perspektywy kilku ostatnich dni, ogólnej oceny życia, poczucia beznadziejności oraz aktualnej i przewidywanej satysfakcji z życia.

Materiał i metody. Osobami badanymi było 30 uczestników spotkań grup Anonimowych Uzależnionych od Seksu i Miłości. Zastosowano następujące narzędzia badawcze: Skalę Sensu Życia (HHI), Drabinkę Cantrila, Skalę Beznadziejności Becka (BHS), jednopytaniowe skale dotyczące pragnienia życia, pasji życia i poczucia szczęścia z perspektywy ostatnich dni życia, ogólnej oceny życia oraz częstotliwości modlitwy i częstotliwości pobytu na mszy świętej.

Wyniki. Zanotowano istnienie związków pomiędzy poczuciem sensu życia i prawie wszystkimi ogólnymi wskaźnikami szczęścia włączając pasję życia, ogólną ocenę życia, aktualną i przewidywaną satysfakcją z życia, jak również poczucie beznadziejności. Częstotliwość modlitwy oraz siła wiary religijnej były negatywnymi predyktorami poczucia beznadziejności. Poczucie sensu życia pośredniczyło pomiędzy częstotliwością przeżyć duchowych a poczuciem beznadziejności.

Wnioski. Poczucie sensu życia jest ważnym czynnikiem kształtującym poczucie szczęścia uzależnionych od seksu. Wśród Anonimowych Uzależnionych od Seksu i Miłości doświadczenia duchowe są źródłem poczucia sensu życia.

Słowa kluczowe: ruch samopomocy, Anonimowi Uzależnieni od Seksu i Miłości, poczucie sensu życia, religijność/duchowość, szczęście.

The meaning of life in members of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, their religious/spiritual activity and the level of happiness: pilot study

Abstract

Introduction. Sex and love addiction is a significant social problem regarding especially individuals having a tendency to various types of addictions. Like other forms of addiction, sex and love addiction is related to all areas of life, which leads to worsening of the quality of life. The development of the religious/spiritual sphere seems to be a relevant factor for sex and love addicts to recover and improve their quality of life.

Aim. The aim of this study was to examine whether the feeling of the sense of life is related to some aspects of religiosity/spirituality and happiness operationalized with global indicators such as the desire to live, passion of life, sense of happiness within the last few days, overall life evaluation, sense of hopelessness as well as the present and anticipated life satisfaction.

Materials and methods. The sample comprised 30 participants of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA) fellowships. The following tools were used: the Purpose in Life Test (PIL), Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ), Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES), Cantril's Ladder, Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS), one-item scales concerning the desire to live, passion of life and sense of happiness within the last few days, overall evaluation of life and the frequency of prayer and frequency of Mass attendance.

Results. Relationships were observed between the feeling of the sense of life and almost all global measures of happiness, including passion of life, overall life evaluation, the present and anticipated life satisfaction, as well as the sense of hopelessness. The frequency of prayer and strength of religious faith were negative predictors of the sense of hopelessness. The meaning of life mediated between the frequency of spiritual experiences and the sense of hopelessness.

Conclusions. The meaning of life is an important factor shaping sex addicts' sense of happiness. The SLAA members' spiritual experiences are the source of the sense of the meaning of life.

Key words: self-help groups, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA), meaning of life, religiosity/spirituality, happiness.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual addiction is a sexual disorder characterized by excessive preoccupation with eroticism and intensified sexual activity. Another medical term used to describe excessive sexual needs reflected in the sphere of thoughts, behaviours and emotions is hypersexuality, or sexual compulsivity, otherwise known as Don Juanism. In manuals used for diagnosing psychological disorders sexual addiction is either not classified at all – as in the case of DSM-IV classification – or it is regarded as excessive sexual drive, other disturbances in propensities (impulses) or indefinite disturbance in habits and propensities – as in the case of ICD-10 classification [1].

It seems that in case of any addiction, regardless of its subject, the pathomechanism is the same. In case of sexual addiction its most relevant element is a successive increase in sexual activity at the expense of other everyday activities as well as problems with effective social role performance. The consequence of the presented state of affairs is absolutization of sex-related values reflecting in thoughts and sexual activity, which become obsessive-compulsive in character.

Moreover, some parallels can be found as far as biochemical processes in addicts are concerned, regardless of the type of addiction. Endogenous opiates acting on the 'reward system' situated in the brain are released both during sexual arousal and while taking psychoactive substances [1].

It seems that a natural consequence of the presented state of affairs is the fact that in the treatment of sex addicts the therapeutic forms and methods applied are analogous to those used in other types of addictions. Individuals who have problems with excessive sexual activity may seek help in addiction treatment centres, addiction therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists, or self-help groups for sex addicts, who recover thanks to individual members' internal resources without the aid of professionals, Church, State, or any other organizations or institutions.

The Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA) fellowship was founded by alcohol-addicted members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), who, thanks to their own deep introspection in the course of their recovery process, diagnosed in themselves a problem with sexual hyperactivity [2]. According to the results of the study published by Carnes [3] carried out among sex-addicted patients in one of the hospitals in Minnesota, 42% of them were also addicted to alcohol and 38% were diagnosed with eating disorders.

SLAA was founded in Boston, USA, in 1976. In Poland the activity of the first SLAA group was initiated in Warsaw in 1993. The original name, Erotomaniacs Anonymous, after a few years was changed into Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous [4].

There are a lot of analogies in functioning of Alcoholics Anonymous, which initiated the self-help movement in 1935, and Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. Except for the difference in the fundamental problem they cope with and their objective, the same rules apply in both fellowships. They are based on the rules published by AA in 1946 known as the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions [5]. They are the result of experiences of self-help groups. They regulate relationships between the self-help movement and the so-

cial, economic and political reality postulating freedom and independence from it. Alcohol-addicted individuals' autobiographical sketches can be found in 'The Big Book'; similarly, SLAA members published their experiences in a book entitled 'Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous'.

A relevant factor in recovery of members of self-help groups is the implementation of the spiritual 12-step program. SLAA members believe that the spiritual development is the key to recovery and further happy life. The tips on how to accomplish this goal are found in the 12-step program. The main ones are: acknowledgement of one's helplessness towards sexual addiction, which has dominated the addict's life; entrusting God with their will and life; moral inventory; confession of sins; atonement; desire for a close relationship with God through prayer and meditation, and preaching good news to other addicts [2].

The central value emphasized by the 12-step program is God. One of the fundamental psychological functions of religiosity/spirituality is to help individuals discover the meaning of life [6]. In the study by Chlewicki where respondents were supposed to order the motives for faith according to their importance, 84% chose the answer that religion brings meaning to human life; 64% responded that the world without God would be obscure; and for 47% religion was the factor bringing the strength to live [7]. In the study by Mađrzycki [8] love and friendship were values most often chosen by students as the source of the meaning of life. God was placed second, followed by good, lack of loneliness, belief in life beyond the grave, magnificence of the world as well as hope for a better life and possibility to achieve happiness. Several studies carried out in various populations with the use of different measures of well-being and religiosity confirmed that religiosity is the source of the meaning of life influencing through the medium of this variable the quality of life and well-being [9].

The results of studies carried out among alcohol addicts supported by self-help groups confirmed the mediating role of discovering the meaning of life between religious/spiritual aspects of life and well-being. Among AA members religious ways of coping with stress turned out to be unrelated to the psychological well-being. The meaning of life mediated between the intrinsic religious motivation, the strength of religious beliefs, positive religious ways of coping with stress, the frequency of spiritual experiences, and life satisfaction; as well as between the frequency of spiritual experiences and the negative affect. This means that the greater the faith and the frequency of spiritual experiences in AA members, and the more often they seek help from God in difficult situations when religion is the most important value in their lives, the greater their sense of the meaning of life is. In turn, thanks to finding the meaning of life, their life satisfaction is higher. Also, thanks to the more frequent spiritual experiences they discover the meaning of their lives more easily, which leads to reduce frequency of negative emotions [9].

In Galanter's model [10] the meaning of life, beside spirituality, plays an essential role in recovery and the quality of life in addicted individuals. According to Frankl, happiness is the result of finding meaning in the existing events and situations [11]. The studies carried out

confirm the essential role of the meaning of life, whose source is involvement in self-help groups for the level of happiness and sense of hopelessness in AA members [12]. Among the representatives of this sample, religiosity influences the level of their life satisfaction through the medium of the meaning of life [9]. The meaning of life is also conducive to high level of the positive affect in AA members [9].

Happiness is an ambiguous notion, which results in many definitions and concepts of this phenomenon [13]. Historically, two main directions in research on happiness can be distinguished that are derived from the hedonistic and eudaimonistic philosophy [14,15]. The hedonistic concept of happiness refers to pleasure as the primary motivator of human actions. According to this concept, happiness is maximization of pleasant experiences, not necessarily of bodily nature, at the same time minimization of unpleasant experiences and those evoking sadness [16]. According to the followers of this concept, happiness is the result of a meaningful life filled with valuable goals achieved by fulfilling the individual's potential [14]. In psychology, happiness is perceived either as an emotional phenomenon reflecting relationships between the intensity of the positive and negative affect [17], or is viewed from the cognitive perspective as evaluation of satisfaction of life as a whole [18] or evaluation of satisfaction of its particular areas [19]. Diener's model of subjective well-being unites the above-mentioned approaches to happiness into a whole [20]. In the reference paper the term 'happiness' is used interchangeably with the notion of the quality of life and well-being [21]. Happiness is a multi-facets notion. According to Czapinski's 'onion' theory of happiness, it is subjective and has a multi-layer structure. Its most stable and firm element, which is most resistant to the influence of external factors, is desire and passion of life. The middle layer in the structure of happiness is satisfaction of one's life as a whole; and the outermost layer and therefore mostly exposed to external factors is evaluation associated with feelings concerning particular areas of life [22].

Scientific hypotheses

The following scientific hypotheses have been distinguished:

1. The strength of religious faith, frequency of spiritual experiences, frequency of prayer and frequency of Mass attendance are positively correlated with the meaning of life among SLLA members.
2. Among SLLA members particular indicators of religiosity are not directly related to the measures of happiness, and the variable mediating in these relationships is the meaning of life.
3. Among SLLA members the meaning of life is related both to positive and negative indicators of happiness, namely the desire to live, passion of life, evaluation of happiness done from the perspective of the last few days, evaluation of one's life so far, the present and anticipated life satisfaction and the sense of hopelessness.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The sample comprised 30 participants of SLAA groups. All those, who were randomly given questionnaires, gave their oral consent to participate in the study. They might not have been diagnosed with the use of one standard, having been referred to self-help groups by psychologists and therapists, addiction treatment centres, or owing to information from various types of brochures or the Internet as well as thanks to suggestions made by family members, friends, or colleagues. The questionnaires distributed by a psychologist were filled in at home and then returned before the beginning of another SLAA meeting.

The mean age of the respondents was 33.6 years ($SD=8.68$). Twenty seven percent (27%) of the respondents were women, 73% – men. The respondents' mean length of participation in self-help groups was 23.22 months ($SN=18.94$), which is almost two years.

The following tools were used: the Purpose in Life Test (PIL), Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSORFQ), two one-item scales to measure the frequency of prayer and frequency of Mass attendance, the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES), Cantril's Ladder, Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS), a scale for measuring the desire to live, a scale for the passion of life, a scale of the sense of happiness within the last few days, a scale for evaluation of one's life so far.

Every respondent was regarded as a judge of their own life from the perspective of their own value system, which they conform to and apply [19]. In the assessment of the level of happiness, Seneca's point of view was employed, according to which 'a man is as unhappy as he has convinced himself he is' [13]. Happiness was perceived from the cognitive perspective. The following positive measures of happiness were used: evaluation of the desire to live and evaluation of passion of life, evaluation of satisfaction of life as a whole done from two time perspectives (the present and the past), evaluation of one's life so far, and evaluation of happiness done from the perspective of the last few days. The only negative measure of happiness was the Beck Hopelessness Scale.

The Purpose in Life Test (PIL) comprises twenty items concerning the need for the meaning of life. Every question is answered by circling a field on the continuum between 1 and 7, where 7 means maximum intensity of a feeling associated with the meaning of life, and 1 – minimal. The score is calculated by summing the answers to all the questions. The higher the score, the better the need for the meaning of life has been satisfied; the lower the score, the bigger the existential frustration. Possible scores range between 20 and 140 points [23]. The reliability of this tool measured with the Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.82; with the Spearman-Brown formula it was 0.90 [24]. For the Polish version of the scale, with the use of the test-retest method after a half-a-year interval, the reliability from 0.64 to 0.70 was obtained, depending on the population being examined [25].

The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSORFQ) consists of 10 items concerning religious beliefs, which are independent of the respondents' religious denomination. The factor analysis confirmed that the questions used constitute one dimension, which can be defined

as the strength of religious beliefs [26]. The reliability of this scale is $\alpha=0.94-0.96$ [27,28]. In the present study the reliability of this scale was $\alpha=0.96$.

The Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES) consists of 16 items. The respondents give their answers on a 6-degree scale, from 1: *never or hardly ever* to 6: *many times daily*. The higher the respondents' score, the deeper their spirituality. This tool has satisfying psychometric properties. Its reliability, depending on the population, ranges between $\alpha=0.86-0.95$ [29]. In the present study the reliability of this scale was $\alpha=0.96$.

On the scale of frequency of Mass attendance and frequency of prayer the respondents marked how often they pray and attend Mass.

Another scale consists of one item. Here the respondents assess their overall life satisfaction on the scale from 0 to 10. In Czapinski's 'onion' program after two-month postponement the reliability of 0.76 was obtained [30]. In another study the reliability was 0.65 on retesting after two years [31].

The Beck Hopelessness Scale refers directly to the third element of the Beck's cognitive triad, namely negative and pessimistic evaluation of the future [32]. This tool consists of twenty statements, to which the respondents are supposed to give either positive or negative answers, depending on whether they agree with the presented statements. The higher the respondents' score, the greater their sense of hopelessness. The reliability of the whole scale, depending on the population examined and the method used, ranges from 0.65 to 0.93 [33-35].

The scale of the desire to live consists of one item and the respondents mark one of the values placed on the continuum from 0 to 9, where 0 means total lack of desire to live (answer: *I do not want to live*), and 9 the strongest possible desire to live (answer: *I want to live very much*).

Passion of life is a one-item scale. The respondents choose one from three alternative answers (*boring, ordinary, fascinating*).

On the scale of the sense of happiness within the last few days the respondents assess their happiness in the last few days by circling one of four answers: *not very happy, quite happy, happy, very happy*.

The scale of evaluation of the whole life comprises one item, where the respondent is supposed to mark whether their life so far has been *awful, unhappy, rather unhappy, neither good nor bad, quite happy, happy or great*.

RESULTS

To calculate the scores a statistical package SPSS version 12.0 was used. The obtained correlation coefficients have been presented in Table 1. The meaning of life correlated with only one of four indicators of religiosity/spirituality, namely spiritual experiences. This relationship was of positive character and moderate strength. The sense of the meaning of life was related to five measures of happiness from among seven. No relationship was observed between the meaning of life and the desire to live or evaluation of happiness done from the perspective of the last few days. Cor-

relations between the meaning of life and the evaluation of the life so far, the present and anticipated life satisfaction, as well as the sense of hopelessness were of moderate strength, and the only difference between them was that the first three were positive, and the last one was negative. There was a strong positive relationship observed between the meaning of life and passion of life. All the measures of religiosity/spirituality were closely related to each other except for the relationship between the frequency of prayer and frequency of Mass attendance. Age was not related to the sense of the meaning of life. Except for the negative correlation between age and frequency of prayer, no other relationships were observed between this variable and other measures of religiosity/spirituality or all the indicators of happiness used.

The length of participation in the self-help groups was moderately negatively correlated with all the indicators of religiosity used and with two positive indicators of happiness, namely, the desire to live and anticipated life satisfaction. Also, there was positive relationship of moderate strength between the length of participation in self-help groups and the sense of hopelessness.

In order to check whether the religious/spiritual indicators used are directly related to the sense of hopelessness, the linear regression analysis was used. In order for a given variable to be considered the medium in the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, it has to be correlated with both. Additionally, the dependent variable has to be correlated with the independent variable. Having introduced all the three above-mentioned elements into the regression equation, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables has to be reduced to the statistically non-significant level, the mediating variable remaining at the same time the predictor of the dependent variable [36].

All the above-mentioned conditions were fulfilled only in regard to the relationship between the frequency of spiritual experiences, the meaning of life and the sense of hopelessness. The frequency of spiritual experiences, the meaning of life and the sense of hopelessness were introduced simultaneously into the regression equation. In order to check whether the obtained relationships between the strength of religious faith, frequency of prayer and the length of participation in self-help groups and the sense of hopelessness are not a seeming correlation, these variables were introduced additionally into the regression equation. It turned out that the relationship between the frequency of spiritual experiences and the sense of hopelessness from the statistically significant level obtained at the earlier stage of analysis (see Table 1) was reduced to the statistically non-significant level ($\beta=-0.192$; $p=0.333$), like the relationship between strength of religious faith and the sense of hopelessness ($\beta=-0.425$; $p=0.084$) and the length of participation in self-help groups and the sense of hopelessness ($\beta=-0.200$; $p=0.193$), whereas the meaning of life still remained the predictor of the sense of hopelessness ($\beta=-0.616$; $p<0.01$), like the frequency of prayer ($\beta=-0.484$; $p<0.01$). Both these variables explained 68.7% of the variance of the sense of hopelessness ($\beta=-0.853$; $F=17.63$; $p<0.01$).

TABLE 1. Correlation matrix ($n=30$).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Meaning of life													
2. Frequency of prayer	0.25												
3. Frequency of mass attendance	0.21	0.59**											
4. Strength of religious faith	0.35	0.87**	0.71**										
5. Frequency of spiritual experiences	0.53**	0.72**	0.68**	0.83**									
6. Desire to live	0.38	0.21	0.07	0.14	0.21								
7. Passion of life	0.72**	0.12	0.06	0.17	0.12	0.30							
8. Evaluation of happiness within the last few days	0.39	-0.17	-0.18	-0.09	0.04	0.20	0.30						
9. Evaluation of life so far	0.65**	-0.07	0.14	-0.15	-0.01	0.21	0.29	0.19					
10. Present life satisfaction	0.42*	0.41**	-0.13	-0.01	-0.07	0.54**	0.25	0.27	0.33				
11. Anticipated life satisfaction	0.56**	0.49**	0.13	0.33	0.29	0.62**	0.30	0.38	0.33	0.58**			
12. Sense of hopelessness	-0.69**	-0.58**	-0.31	-0.47*	-0.49**	-0.52**	-0.37	-0.35	-0.19	-0.35	-0.78**		
13. Age	0.17	-0.40*	-0.14	-0.25	-0.17	-0.14	-0.03	0.33	0.15	-0.07	-0.15	0.29	
14. Length of participation in SLAA	-0.28	-0.51*	-0.42*	-0.44*	-0.55**	-0.46*	-0.03	-0.08	0.04	-0.28	-0.46*	0.56**	0.31

* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$

DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis, which claimed the positive correlation between indicators of religiosity/spirituality used and the meaning of life, was partly confirmed. It turned out that neither the strength of religious faith nor the frequency of prayer, nor the frequency of Mass attendance of SLAA members is related to their sense of the meaning of life. On the other hand, the frequency of spiritual experiences of the representatives of this community is positively correlated with the meaning of life, and the strength of this relationship is moderate. The obtained results are inconsistent to the results of the studies carried out so far among different populations, where the strength of religious faith positively correlated with the sense of the meaning of life [37-39], like the frequency of prayer [9,40,41]. Unlike the results obtained among AA members, the strength of religious faith and religious practice such as prayer and Mass attendance of sex addicts were not related to their sense of the meaning of life [12]. Similarly to students, the frequency of Mass attendance among sex addicts was not related to their sense of the meaning of life [37]. This means that in some individuals, as in the case of SLAA members, only some aspects of religious/spiritual life play an important role in the process of discovering the meaning of life, whereas in others, such as AA members, the whole religious/spiritual sphere influences the shaping of the sense of the meaning of life.

Despite the fact that the study was of a cross-sectional, and not of a longitudinal design, based on the previous results of studies carried out among AA members [9,12] and

the assumption that one of the key functions of religiosity/spirituality is support in discovering the meaning of life, the direction of the relationship between both variables may be assumed. Religiosity seems to be one – but not the only one – source of the meaning of life. Apart from it, other values of secular character such as love, friendship can be the source of the meaning of life [42,43]. For SLAA members other addicts can also be such a value. The second step of the 12-step program mentions a ‘higher power’, which for many addicts is a self-help group perceived as a set of particular individuals. It seems that this situation takes place in case of SLAA members. The philosophy disseminated by self-help groups emphasizes the crucial role of spiritual development in recovery. It appears that spiritual experiences allow sex addicts to discover the meaning of their lives. In the reference papers it is the spiritual and not the religious character of fellowships based on the implementation of the 12-step program that is emphasized, which in this context means that their members can develop spiritually within a given religious denomination or outside the religious context on the basis of secular values [44]. The approach where spirituality as a term of a broader meaning than religiosity is the reflection of the above-mentioned view [45,46]. This is connected with secularisation of the notion of spirituality, which originally derived from the religious context [47] and at a certain moment was extracted from it, losing its religious connotations. In the light of the presented facts lack of relationship between Mass attendance and the meaning of

life seems to be justified, with simultaneous moderate correlation between the frequency of spiritual experiences and the last variable. The relationship between the strength of religious faith and the meaning of life placed at the borderline of statistical significance. The measure used to verify the strength of religiosity has universal character and can be used towards individuals of various religious denominations. On the other hand, its religious and not spiritual connotations are reflected in the questions used, which are focused around God as the only value, whereas the tool for measuring the frequency of spiritual experiences comprises additional reference to oneself, other people and the natural environment. In accordance with the existing theories of spirituality these are the basic elements that constitute it [48,49]. The correlation between the results of both measures was very strong (see Table1), which proves that both tools measured the same construct, which can be defined as the activity of the religious/spiritual sphere. It is worth emphasizing that participation in self-help groups was negatively related to all religious/spiritual measures. This means that – against expectations – the longer sex and love addicts participate in self-help groups, the less religious they are. Participation in self-help groups is associated with the implementation of the 12-step program, which is spiritual in character containing reference to God and a ‘higher power’. It might be assumed that participants of meetings of self-help groups support each other in coping with their ailment by hindering their religious/spiritual development. Religion is very critical of their disorder regarding it as immorality and promiscuity. This may cause intensified remorse in addicts, especially at the initial stages of recovery. Hindering the religious/spiritual activity and the distance towards this area of life may be a factor that reduces remorse, resentment and hostility towards oneself. The length of participation in self-help groups was negatively correlated with the desire to live and anticipated life satisfaction, and positively related to the sense of hopelessness. This means that the longer sex and love addicts participate in self-help groups, the less their desire to live is, the bigger the sense of hopelessness and the less the anticipated life satisfaction being an indicator of hope and optimism. The obtained results do not necessarily prove the negative role of participation in self-help groups. On the basis of other members’ experiences the participants of SLAA meetings in the course of time realize the holistic character of their disorder, which influences all areas of life, its negative consequences and great difficulties and obstacles in the recovery process. In addition, persons who suffer relapses – which in sex and love addicts happens very often ending in quitting the therapy and discontinuation of sexual abstinence – are proof of enormous impact of the addiction. Great rotation among members of self-help groups and their return to addiction, whose consequence is lack of individuals with a longer sexual abstinence, makes sex and love addicts doubt that they may recover; they do not want to live and feel rather pessimistic about their future.

The second hypothesis was partially confirmed. The sense of the meaning of life turned out to be a variable mediating between the frequency of spiritual experiences and the sense of hopelessness, which means that sex and love addicts thanks to spiritual experiences are able to find the meaning

of life, which in turn reduces their sense of hopelessness. The only negative indicator of happiness directly related to the measures of religiosity/spirituality was the sense of hopelessness. It turned out that the frequency of prayer and the strength of religious faith were negatively related to the sense of hopelessness. Except for the correlation between the frequency of prayer and anticipated life satisfaction particular indicators of religiosity/spirituality were not related to any positive measure of happiness (see Table1). The obtained relationship proves that more frequent prayer practice in sex addicts aids them in looking into the future more optimistically and in expecting higher life satisfaction. Both religiosity/spirituality and happiness are multidimensional and multi-facets constructs. Conclusions concerning relationships between them have to state which aspect of these both constructs is taken into consideration, and whether it is negative or positive. In the reported studies all the indicators of religiosity used were positive, like the measures of happiness; with the only difference that in the other case additionally one negative measure was used, namely, the sense of hopelessness.

As far as the frequency of prayer turned out to play an important role both for anticipated life satisfaction and for the sense of hopelessness, other indicators of religiosity/spirituality except for Mass attendance, were correlated only with the sense of hopelessness. On the basis of these results it might be claimed with a certain amount of probability that among SLAA members most aspects of their religious/spiritual life play a positive role for the sense of hopelessness as the negative indicator of happiness, and only prayer, is related additionally to a positive measure of happiness - anticipated life satisfaction. The results of studies carried out so far have proved that lack of disturbances is one thing, and experiencing positive states associated with the sense of happiness is another; thus happiness can be considered both from the perspective of lack of deficiencies or pathology, and with regard to positive experiences [50].

The third hypothesis was confirmed to a significant extent. Except for the relationships between the meaning of life and the desire to live and happiness evaluated from the perspective of the last few days placing slightly below the statistically significant level, all the other indicators of happiness were at least moderately correlated with the meaning of life. It turned out that finding the meaning of life is accompanied by high level of passion of life, low level of the sense of hopelessness, positive life evaluation, and high actual and anticipated life satisfaction. This means that finding the meaning of life plays an essential role in a vast majority of the assessed aspects of happiness in AA members.

The obtained results are consistent with the results obtained among other populations so far, indicating the fundamental role of the meaning of life in shaping the sense of happiness [51-56]. They are identical with the results obtained among AA members, indicating that among addicted individuals – regardless of the fact whether the subject of addiction is a psychoactive substance or excessive sexual excitability – the meaning of life is a crucial factor for happiness and well-being. According to Frankl, the sense of happiness is a consequences of finding the meaning of life [11]. In his view, finding the meaning of life is *sine qua*

non of happiness, whereas according to Baumeister finding the meaning of life is a necessary but at the same time insufficient condition of happiness. The studies carried out proved the fundamental role of finding the meaning of life for happiness and well-being of sex addicts supported by Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. It seems to be especially important for therapeutic actions undertaken by psychologists and therapists, which should be aimed at shaping the ability to discover the meaning of life not only on the basis of sex-addicted patients' spiritual experiences. According to Baumeister [57] life can be filled with meaning thanks to satisfying four basic needs, namely the need for purpose, the need for value, the need for a sense of efficacy and the need for self-worth. Those who are not able to satisfy one or more of the above-mentioned needs, find their lives meaningless. It seems that it is around these four needs that therapeutic work should be focused, based on the four main areas where seeking and discovering the meaning of life takes place, such as transcendence/generativity religiosity/spirituality, interpersonal relationships/intimacies and achievements/work [59].

The main drawback and limitation of this study is a small sample. It is mainly due to the sceptical attitude to scientific research of members of self-help groups. Furthermore, the fact should be taken into account that there are few SLAA groups in Poland, and attendance is poor at most of their meetings. The social awareness concerning sexual addiction is very poor, and the problem still remains a taboo subject.

The present study was cross-sectional, due to which the relationships between the variables used cannot be presented in the cause and effect order. Carrying out a longitudinal study among this population with the use of additional variables could help to discover other sources of the meaning of life in this community and confirm the crucial role of the meaning of life for the sense of happiness in sex-addicted individuals.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The sense of the meaning of life is an important factor shaping the sense of happiness in sex-addicted individuals supported by Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous.
2. Prayer aids SLAA members in looking more optimistically into the future.
3. More frequent prayer and stronger faith in God are related to a reduced sense of hopelessness among SLAA members.
4. Among SLAA members spiritual experiences are the source of the meaning of life having an indirect influence on their reduced sense of hopelessness.

REFERENCES

1. Woronowicz BT. Uzależnienia. Geneza, terapia i powrót do zdrowia. Poznań: Media i Rodzina; 2009.
2. Anonimowi Uzależnieni od Seksu i Miłości. Wspólnota Augustyńska SLAA.
3. Carnes P. Od nałogu do miłości. Jak uwolnić się od uzależnienia od seksu i odnaleźć prawdziwe uczucie. Poznań: Media Rodzina; 2001.
4. www.slaa.pl
5. Dwanaście Kroków i Dwanaście Tradycji. Warszawa: Fundacja Biura Służby Krajowej Anonimowych Alkoholików w Polsce; 1986.
6. Chlewiński Z. Rola religii w funkcjonowaniu osobowości. W: Chlewiński Z (red.) Psychologia religii. Lublin: TN KUL; 1982.
7. Chlewiński Z. Z badań obrazu religii w świadomości społecznej. Więź. 1980;2:13-31.
8. Mądrzycki T. Osobowość jako system tworzący i realizujący plany. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego; 2002.
9. Wnuk M. Weryfikacja modelu ze zmiennymi pośredniczącymi pomiędzy religijnością i dobrostanem psychicznym Anonimowych Alkoholików. Alkohol i Narkom. 2010;23:73-85.
10. Galanter M. Spirituality and recovery in 12-step programs: An empirical model. J Subst Abuse Treat. 2007;33:265-72.
11. Frankl V. Paradoxy szczęścia. Życie i Myśl. 1977;1:33-45.
12. Wnuk M. Zaangażowanie w ruch samopomocy a poczucie jakości życia osób uzależnionych od alkoholu. Mediacyjna rola poczucia życia. Alkohol i Narkom. 2006;19:357-68.
13. Tatarkiewicz W. O szczęściu. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe; 1979.
14. Ryan RM, Deci EL. On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic research. Annu Rev Psychol. 2001;52:141-66.
15. Duckworth AE, Steen TA, Seligman MEP. Positive psychology in clinical practice. Ann Rev Clin Psychol. 2005;1:629-51.
16. Veenhoven R. Hedonism and happiness. J Happiness Stud. 2003;4:437-57.
17. Bradburn NM. The Structure of Psychological Well-being. Chicago: Aldine; 1969.
18. Andrews FM, Withey SB. Social Indicators of Well-being: America's Perception of Quality of Life. New York: Plenum; 1976.
19. Campbell AC, Converse PE, Rodgers WL. The Quality of American Life. New York: The Russell Sage Foundation; 1976.
20. Diener E, Suh EM, Lucas RE, Smith HL. Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. Psychol Bull. 1999;125:276-302.
21. Wnuk M. Nadzieja jako pozytywny korelat szczęścia wśród Anonimowych Uzależnionych od Seksu i Miłości. Seksuologia Polska 2008;6:51-6.
22. Czapiński J. Psychologia szczęścia: przegląd badań teorii cebulowej. Warszawa-Poznań: Akademios; 1992.
23. Cekiera Cz. Toksykomania. Narkomania. Lekomania. Alkoholizm. Nikotynizm. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwa Naukowe; 1985.
24. Crumbaugh JC, Maholic LT. An experimental study an existentialism, the psychometric approach to Frankl's concept of noogenic neurosis. J Clin Psychol. 1964;20:200-7.
25. Siek S. Wybrane metody badania osobowości. Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej; 1993.
26. Lewis CA, Shevlin M, McGuckin C, Navratil M. The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire: confirmatory factor analysis. Pastoral Psychol. 2001;49:379-84.
27. Plante TG, Boccaccini MT. Reliability and Validity of the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire. Pastoral Psychol. 1997;45:429-37.
28. Plante TG, Boccaccini MT. The Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire. Pastoral Psychol. 1997;45:375-87.
29. Loustalot F, Wyatt SB, Boss B, May W, McDyess T. Psychometric Examination of the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale. J Cult Divers. 2006;13:162-7.
30. Czapiński J. Psychologia pozytywna. Nauka o szczęściu, zdrowiu, sile i cnotach człowieka. Warszawa: PWN; 2004.
31. Kivett E, Palmore E. Change in Life Satisfaction: A Longitudinal Study of Persons Aged 46-70. J Gerontol. 1977;32:311-16.
32. Stach R. Uzależnienie od alkoholu a depresja. Możliwość stosowania psychoterapii poznawczej w leczeniu uzależnienia. Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński; 1991.
33. Beck AT, Weissman A, Lester D, Trexler L. The measurement of pessimism: the Hopelessness Scale. J Consult Clin Psychol. 1974;42:861-5.
34. Holden RR, Fekken GC. Test - retest reliability of the Hopelessness Scale and its items in university population. J Clin Psychol. 1988;44:40-3.
35. Durham TW. Norms, reliability, and items analysis of the Hopelessness Scale in general psychiatric, forensic psychiatric, and college populations. J Clin Psychol. 1982;38:597-600.
36. Baron RM., Kenny DA. The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. J Pers Soc Psychol. 1986; 51:1173-82.

37. Wnuk M. Porównanie egzystencjalnych oraz religijno-duchowych aspektów funkcjonowania studentów i osób uzależnionych od alkoholu. *Roczniki Psychologiczne*. 2008;11:175-89.
38. Sherman AC, Plante TG, Simonton S, Adams DC, Burris K, Harbison C. Assessing religious faith in medical patients: Cross-validation of the Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire. *Pastoral Psychol*. 1999;48:129-40.
39. Plante TG, Yancey S, Sherman AC, Guertin M. The association between strength of religious faith and psychological functioning. *Pastoral Psychol*. 2000;48:405-12.
40. Francis LJ, Burton L. The influence of personal prayer on purpose in life among catholic adolescents. *J Beliefs and Values*. 1994;15:6-9.
41. Francis LJ, Evans TE. The relationship between personal prayer and purpose in life among churchgoing and non-churchgoing twelve-to-fifteen-year-olds in the UK. *Religious Education* 1996;99:1,9-21.
42. Bar-Tur L, Savaya R, Prager E. Sources of meaning in life for young and old Israeli Jews and Arabs. *J Aging Stud*. 2001;15:253-69.
43. Stuckey JC. Faith, aging and dementia. Experiences of Christian, Jewish, and non-religious spousal caregivers and older adults. *Dementia*. 2003;2:337-52.
44. Kurtz E. Bardziej duchowy niż religijny charakter ruchu Anonimowych Alkoholików. Warszawa: Instytut Psychiatrii i Neurologii; 1989.
45. Cawley N. An exploration of the concept of spirituality. *Int J Palliat Nurs*. 1997;3:31-6.
46. Nagai-Jacobson MG, Burkhardt MA. Spirituality: cornerstone of holistic nursing practice. *Holist Nurs Pract*. 1989;3:18-26.
47. Wulff DM. *Psychologia religii*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne; 1999.
48. Bloch DR. Spirituality, complexity and career counseling. *Professional School Counseling*. 2004;7:343-50.
49. Lewis L. Spiritual assessment in African-Americans: A review of measures of spirituality used in health research. *J Rel Health*. 2008;47:458-75.
50. Seligman MEP, Parks AC, Steen P. A balanced psychology and full life. *Philos Trans R Soc*. 2004;359:1379-81.
51. O'Connor BP, Vallerand RJ. Psychological adjustment variables as predictors of mortality among nursing home residents. *Psychol Aging*. 1999;13:368-74.
52. Compton WC. Toward a tripartite factor structure of mental health: Subjective well-being, personal growth, and religiosity. *J Psychol*. 2001;135:486-500.
53. Evangelista LS, Doering L, Dracup K. Meaning and life purpose: The perspectives of post-transplant women. *Heart Lung*. 2003;32:250-7.
54. Ardelit M, Koenig CS. The role of religion for hospice patients and relatively healthy older adults. *Res Aging*. 2006;28:184-215.
55. Fleer J, Hoekstra HJ, Sleijfer DT, Tuinman MA, Hoekstra-Weebers JEHM. The role of meaning in the prediction of psychosocial well-being of testicular cancer survivors. *Qual Life Res*. 2006;15:705-17.
56. Baumeister RF. *Meanings of life*. Guilford. New York 1991.
57. Emmons RA. Motives and goals. In: Hogan R, Johnson JA, Eds. *Handbook of personality psychology*. San Diego: Academic Press; 1997.

Informacje o Autorach

Mgr MARCIN WNUK – doktorant; dr hab. med. JERZY T. MARCINKOWSKI – kierownik, Katedra Medycyny Społecznej, Uniwersytet Medyczny w Poznaniu.

Adres do korespondencji

Jerzy T. Marcinkowski
Katedra Medycyny Społecznej Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Poznaniu
ul. Rokietnicka 5 „c”, 60-806 Poznań
tel. +48 61 854 73 90
e-mail: jtmarcin@gmail.com