

## Meaning of Life-Setting Life Goals: Comparison of Substance Abusers and Non-Abusers

### Yaşama Anlam Yükleme-Yaşam Amaçları Belirleme: Madde Bağımlısı Olan ve Olmayan Gençlerin Karşılaştırılması

Ali ERYILMAZ<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The present study aims to make a comparison between young men who are substance-abusers and non-abusers in terms of how they set their life goals and attribute meanings to life. In line with this purpose, this study was conducted through quantitative and qualitative method. In the quantitative analysis, the study group consists of 108 participants between 20 and 24 years old, 56 of whom are substance abusers and 52 of whom are non-substance abusers. In the qualitative analysis, the study group involves 30 substance abusers and 30 non-substance abusers. The scale of setting life goals in terms of positive psychotherapy and the semi-structured qualitative interview form was used in order to collect data. The independent t-test and sentence-based content analysis technique was used to analyze data. The findings revealed that the substance abusers were having difficulty in attributing meaning to their lives when compared to the non-abusers. Moreover, the substance abusers were capable of setting far fewer life goals than were the non-abusers.

**Keywords:** substance abuser, meaning of life, life goals

**Öz:** Yaşama anlam yükleme ve yaşam amaçları belirleme, bireyleri psikopatolojiden koruyan önemli koruyucu faktörlerdendir. Madde bağımlısı olan bireyler, pek çok açıdan işlevselliklerini yerine getirmede sorunlar yaşamaktadır. Bu denli önemli olan bir konuda çalışmaların yapılması literatüre katkı sağlayabilir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, madde bağımlısı olan ve olmayan gençlerin yaşama anlam yükleme ve yaşam amaçları belirleme açılarından karşılaştırılmasıdır. Bu çalışmada yaşları 20 ila 24 arasında değişen, 56'sı madde bağımlısı olan ve 52'si ise madde bağımlısı olmayan toplam 108 erkek genç yer almıştır. Çalışmada hem nitel hem de nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmada veriler, nitel görüşme formu ve Pozitif Psikoterapi Bağlamında Yaşam Amaçları Ölçeği ile toplanmıştır. Çalışmada bağımsız gruplar için t-testi ve cümle bazında içerik analizi tekniği ile veriler analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, madde bağımlısı olmayan gençlerin olanlara göre daha fazla yaşam amaçlarına sahip oldukları ve yaşamlarına çok geniş çerçeveden anlamlar yükledikleri bulunmuştur. Psikolojik danışmanlar, yaşama anlam yükleme ve yaşam amaçları belirleme noktalarında önleyici çalışmalar yapabilirler.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** madde, madde bağımlısı, yaşamın anlamı, yaşam amaçları

There are known to be several positive and negative factors affecting the health of the youth in our modern day and age. Substance-abusing appears to be the most common of the negative factors. We know of a large number of national and international studies into how common substance-taking has become over the past few decades. What all these studies have come to conclude seems to be that the prevalence of substance-taking varies between 0 and 10 percentage of the young population (Alikaşifoğlu & Ercan, 2002; Belcher & Shinitzky, 1998; Neher & Short, 1998; Ögel, Tamar, Evren & Çakmak, 1998).

Since the present study was conducted in Turkey, relevant studies carried out on substance-taking among the young Turkish population have also been analysed in detail. For instance, a study by Ögel and his colleagues (1998) revealed that the ratio of volatile substance abuse is 8.6%, the ratio of marijuana abuse is 3.6%, and the ratio of heroin abuse is 1.5% among the youth. In the same vein, a study by Alikaşifoğlu and Ercan (2002) revealed that the ratio of heroin or morphine abuse is 0.1%, the ratio of cocaine abuse is 0.4%, the ratio of volatile substance abuse is 0.7%, and the ratio of marijuana abuse is 1.3% among the

<sup>1</sup> Doç. Dr., Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi, Eskişehir, E-posta: erali76@hotmail.com

youth. In addition, both national and international scientific study results have demonstrated that men substance-abusers outnumber their women counterparts (Alikashioglu & Ercan, 2002; Wagner, Lloyd & Gil, 2002).

Studies into substance addiction have revealed several risk and protective factors (Deren, 1986). As far as protective factors are concerned, it has been suggested that some of these factors have a lot to do with individuals themselves, their family, school, peers and the wider environment they are associated with (Belcher & Shinitzky, 1998). As to the individual-based factors, they have been documented to be such positive protective factors as high levels of intelligence, self-esteem, and tendency for optimism (Neher & Short, 1998). However, it is also possible to view the meaning of life and life goals among positive factors that can protect the youth from abusing substance (Miller, Davies, & Greenwald, 2000).

The subject-matter of 'meaning of life', a multi-dimensional construct inclusive of sense of fulfilment and coherence, values in life, purpose in life, and self-worth, has been viewed in psychology as one of the several factors enabling individuals to function optimally (Battista & Almond, 1973; Baumeister, 1991; Reker, 2000; Ryff, 1989). It is interesting to note that studies into the relationship between the meaning of life and substance-abusing have focused on these two variables more on a religious basis (Sinha, Cnaan & Gelles, 2007). Furthermore, they have assumed that attributing religion-related meanings to life contributes a good deal to improving their physical and mental health by way of enabling individuals to avoid abusing substance (McBride, Mutch, & Chitwood, 1996).

Another construct closely related to attributing meaning to life is life goals, since those capable of attributing meaning to their own lives are more goal-oriented and thus striving for the goals they have set for themselves (Reker & Wong, 1988; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Life goals have been defined as sought-after states desired to be achieved by individuals with the help of cognitive and behavioural strategies (Emmons, 1999). Furthermore, goals of individuals towards what they will be doing in their whole life seem to constitute the content of life goals (King, Richard & Stemmerich, 1998).

There are known to be many positive contributions of attributing meaning to life, cherishing life goals, and striving for them to the life of individuals. For instance, attributing meaning to life and cherishing life goals may result in adjustment of individuals to life, protecting their mental health, resistance to certain diseases, and increasing their happiness (Baumeister

& Vohs, 2002; Emmons & King, 1998; Frankl, 1967; Klinger, 1998; Myers & Diener, 1995; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). On the other hand, substance-abusing has been shown to impair the ability of individuals to display health-related functions, ranging from physiological, psychological, and social functions (Aseltine, Colten & Gore, 1998). Besides, studies have emphasized that the ratio of substance-abusing tends to increase among children and the youth (Chen & Kandel, 1995). For the purpose that the youth can grow up to be healthy adults, they are supposed to go through some experiences related to such dimensions as love, work and worldview (Arnet, 2000). However, for some youths, substance-abusing impairs their ability to fulfil some vital roles, such as being a parent, being a spouse, and being a worker in the course of transition to adulthood (Neher & Short, 1998).

Being a substance abuser is known to have negative consequences, whether for financial, individual or social reasons (Belcher & Shinitzky, 1998). For this reason, it could be very useful to make a comparison between young men substance abusers and non-abusers in terms of how they attribute meaning to life and cherish life goals to understand the nature of substance abuse better and put forward preventive, protective and therapeutic factors concerning substance addiction. Therefore, the present study aims to seek answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference between young substance abusers and non-abusers when setting life goals?
2. How do men young substance abusers attribute meaning to their lives?
3. How do men young non-substance abusers attribute meaning to their lives?
4. What kind of life goals are valued by young men substance abusers?
5. What kind of life goals are valued by young men non-substance abusers?

## **Method**

### **Research Design and Procedure**

The present study aims to make a comparison between substance-abusers and non-abusers in terms of how they set their life goals and attribute meanings to their lives. With this purpose in mind, this study was conducted through both qualitative and quantitative methods, for which the purposive sampling method was employed. The independent t-test technique was used to determine if there was a significant difference as regards setting life goals for both study groups.

The way of the qualitative data were collected was through a one-to-one interview. The interviews

were first recorded on the qualitative question form by the author and then decoded. The informants were asked four open-ended questions in total, the answers to which were then analysed on the sentence-based content analysis technique. This analysis was undertaken through the cooperation of the author with one specialist in psychiatry and one expert with PhD in clinical psychology.

In the course of the content analysis, a form was devised in order to be able to categorize the sentences provided by the informants into appropriate dimensions. Next, these sentences were evaluated by the aforementioned experts in view of achieving a three-point scale inclusive of the categories of "very appropriate", "appropriate", and "not appropriate". Then, they were referred to the experts for an evaluation concerning the appropriateness of the sentences considering the proper category. Finally, the sentences upon which the experts agreed were distributed to the appropriate category, while the sentences causing disagreement among them were re-evaluated and distributed to the appropriate category unanimously. Inter-rater reliability was also computed, and also were found 0.83 and 0.88.

Categorization of the data was achieved with the help of the findings and explanations of both empirical and theoretical studies into substance-abuse, life goals, and meaning of life (Belcher & Shinitzky, 1998; Emmons, 1999; Ryff, 1989; King, Richard & Stemmerich, 1998; Neher & Short, 1998; Peseschkian, 1987; Reker, 2000, Seligman, 2002). The data of young men substance abusers and non-abusers in the present study were collected in November 2011 to March 2012. The substance abusers in this study were chosen from among those referring to the psychiatry clinic of a state hospital in Ankara, Turkey. Likewise, the samples of non-abusers were chosen from among those referring to the emergency department of this hospital for acute upper respiratory tract infections. The reason why both sample groups were chosen from the same hospital was the convenience of and accessibility to data, considering that acute diseases do not have long-term negative effects upon optimal functioning of people (Myers & Diener 1995).

All the necessary legal and ethical procedures were followed strictly, and the informed consents were also obtained from the informants, who were first informed about the content and details of the study. Finally, those willing to participate in the study were accepted and the others were excluded. The common criteria to be met by those suitable for abusers and non-abusers included being 20 to 24 years old, men, single, and having a high-school education at most. On the other hand, the distinguishing criterion for abusers was that

they had just been diagnosed as substance abusers. As to the non-abusers, they were diagnosed with acute upper respiratory tract infection and they had never used a substance other than cigarette before.

## Participants

### *The quantitative study group:*

*The substance abusers group:* The mean age of the substance abusers was 21.27 and the standard deviation was 1.22. 41 (73.2%) of these young men were primary school graduates, 15 (26.8%) were high school graduates. Of the fathers of these abusers, 38 (67.8%) were primary school graduate, 15 (26.8%) high school graduate, and three (5.4%) university graduates. As to their mothers, 49 (87.5) were primary school graduates, and seven (12.5%) were high school graduates. Of these young men substance abusers, 42 considered themselves as having low Socio Economic Status (SES) (75%) while 14 considered themselves as having a middle SES (25%). These abusers were interrogated to determine which substances they had been using. While some of the abusers had used only one kind of substance, some had used more than one. The substances abused were marijuana (f=39), drug (f=24), heroin (f=17), alcohol (f=11), glue (f=9), thinner (f=6), bonsai (f=4), and cocaine (f=3), respectively.

*The non substance abusers group:* The mean age of the non-substance abusers was 21.13 and the standard deviation was 1.46. 30 (57.7%) of these young men were primary school graduates, 22 (42.3%) were high school graduates. Of the fathers of these non-abusers, 42 (80.9%) were primary school graduate, eight (15.3%) high school graduates, and two (3.8%) university graduates. As to their mothers, 47 (90.4%) were primary school graduates, and three (5.8%) high school graduates, and two university graduates (3.8%). Of these young men non-substance abusers, 40 considered themselves as having low SES (76.9%) while 12 considered themselves as having a middle SES (23.1%).

### *The qualitative study group:*

*The qualitative study group:* All the 108 young males were informed briefly about the content of the study, 60 of whom (30 substance abusers and 30 non-abusers) volunteered to participate in the qualitative study. A qualitative study was conducted on these 60 young males.

## Instruments

*The Scale of Setting Life Goals in Terms of Positive Psychotherapy:* The scale of setting life goals in terms of positive psychotherapy was developed for adolescents by Eryılmaz (2010) on the basis of balance model of positive psychotherapy. The psychometric

properties of this scale were also investigated on university students by Eryılmaz (2012). This scale used in order to determine whether or not individuals have set life goals in three life domains. The scale of setting life goals is the 4-point Likert scale, and consists of three dimensions: achievement-career goals, relationship-based goals and body-senses goals. The minimum and maximum score to be obtained from this scale are 9-36. Getting a high score on this scale would mean that the participants have already set their life goals. The explained variance of the scale for adolescents is 65.32%, and also for university students is 69.55%. Considering of the validity of the scale, *Oxford Happiness Scale* and *Life Orientation Scales* was used. Furthermore, confirmatory factor analysis has been conducted and high fit values were obtained in consequence. The Cronbach Alpha value of this scale has been determined to be 0.85 for the sub-dimension of achievement-career goals, found to be 0.73 for the sub-dimension of relationship-based goals it has been found to be 0.68. For the present study, the Cronbach Alpha values of this scale were found such as 0.84 for achievement-career goals, 0.76 for relationship-based goals, and 0.79 for body-sense life goals. Furthermore, the explanatory factor analysis was also conducted for the present study, and its total variance was 61.86%.

### *The Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview Form:*

At the above of the semi-structured form were some questions querying the demographic features of the informants, including age, sex, education level of the individuals, education status of the parents, marital status, kind of the substance/s abused, the perceived SES, and so forth. In addition to this information, the two open-ended questions below were asked to both study groups:

- a- What is the meaning of your life?
- b- What kind of life goals do you have?

## Findings

### Quantitative Findings

The independent t-test results have been presented in Table-1. According to the results of the t-test for the total point of the scale, the non-abusers ( $\bar{X} = 27.44$ ) were determined to have higher mean levels than did the abusers ( $\bar{X} = 18.25$ ) ( $t = -8.97$ ;  $p < .01$ ). For the setting career-achievement based goals, the non-abusers ( $\bar{X} = 9.36$ ) had higher mean levels than did the abusers ( $\bar{X} = 6.03$ ) ( $t = -6.33$ ;  $p < .00$ ). As to in setting relationship-based-based goals, the non-abusers ( $\bar{X} = 9.53$ ) had higher levels compared to the abusers ( $\bar{X} = 6.66$ ) ( $t = -7.28$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Finally, in terms of setting body-senses based goals, non-abusers ( $\bar{X} = 8.53$ ) had higher values than did the abusers ( $\bar{X} = 5.55$ ) ( $t = -7.02$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 1.** Results of Independent t-test

	Groups	N	M	SD	t
Achievement-career goals	Abusers	56	6.03	1.65	-6.23**
	Non-Abusers	52	9.36	3.60	
Relationship-based goals	Abusers	56	6.66	1.97	-7.28**
	Non-Abusers	52	9.53	2.12	
Body-sense life goals	Abusers	56	5.55	2.07	-7.02**
	Non-Abusers	52	8.53	2.34	
Total point of the scale	Abusers	56	18.25	4.42	-8.97**
	Non-Abusers	52	27.44	6.14	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

### Qualitative Findings

In this section, the qualitative findings on the meaning attributed to life by the informants are presented prior to those on their life goals (Table 2 and Table 3). In presenting the findings of the informants concerning life goals and meaning of life, priority is given to those of the substance abusers.

Even though analysis was achieved on a sentence basis, it was determined that the majority of the abusers stated that they found no meaning

in their lives or they were not sure what the meaning of life could be. Thus, 26 of the abusers were assumed not to either know the meaning of life, or not to think about it at all, or not to find any meaning in it. The rest of the answers to the question concerning the meaning of life were provided by four of the abusers who came up with more than one statement as regards to the meaning of life, such as struggling, deriving pleasure, being incapable of thinking of a meaning to life due to

substance abuse, and engagement in work life. The young men not taking any kind of substances other than cigarette tended to attribute meaning to their lives by establishing positive relationships

with their environment, which was followed by deriving pleasure from life, achieving personal growth, cherishing spiritual and religious values, and engagement in work life.

**Table 2.** *Meaning of Life for Substance Abusers and Non-Substance Abusers*

Abuser Status	Categories	Sample Sentences	f	%
<i>Substance abusers</i>	Attribution of no meaning to life	There is no meaning to my life.	14	37.83
		Were there meaning of life, would I resort to these substances?		
		I don't know why I'm leading this life.	9	24.32
	Not knowing meaning of life	I don't know the meaning of life. We are in the middle of nowhere.		
	Struggling	The meaning of life is struggle.	5	13.52
		It is struggle that loads life with meaning.		
	Deriving pleasure	The meaning of life is being happy.	4	10.82
		The meaning of life is deriving pleasure.		
	Being incapable of thinking of a meaning to life	A significant part of my life has been wasted, so cherishing expectations makes no sense to me now.	3	8.11
		I can think of nothing but drugs, and my life has been this way for a very long time.		
Engagement in work life	The meaning of life is being engaged in work life.	2	5.40	
	The meaning of life is working to support your family.			
Total			37	100
<i>Non-Substance abusers</i>	Establishing positive relationships with people	The meaning of life is getting on well with others.	19	44.19
		The meaning of life is being with your beloved ones.		
	Deriving pleasure	The meaning of life is being happy.	12	27.91
		The meaning of life is deriving pleasure.		
	Achieving personal growth	The meaning of life is improving oneself.	4	9.30
		The meaning of life is improving yourself through learning every single minute.		
	Cherishing spiritual and religious values	The goal of creation is worshipping God.	4	9.30
		The meaning of life is leading a decent life.		
	Engagement in work life	The meaning of life is being engaged in work life.	4	9.30
		The meaning of life is working and working.		
Total			43	100

**Table 3.** *Life Goals for Substance Abuser and Non-Substance Abuser*

Abuser Status	Categories	Sample sentences	f	%
<i>Substance abuser</i>	Relationship-based life goals	One goal of my life is to settle down through marriage. One goal of my life is to be happy with my family.	16	43.24
	Achievement-work based life goals	One goal of my life is to get a steady job. I don't want to end up dealing drugs because of being jobless, so I want to get a job that will support me for good.	12	32.43
	Having no life goals	I have set no goals in my life. I don't know what will befall me. I feel like a leaf swept away with wind.	8	21.62
	Getting rid of substances	I'm thinking of getting rid of substances.	1	2.71
Total			37	100
<i>Non-substance abuser</i>	Relationship-based life goals	One goal of my life is to get married. One goal of my life is to gain favour with those around me and be respected by them.	28	45.16
	Achievement-work based life goals	One goal of my life is to save money and set up a small business. One goal of my life is to be in charge of my family business and develop the company.	24	38.71
	Religious and spirituality-based life goals	One goal of my life is to be a pilgrim. One goal of my life is to be a decent citizen.	4	6.45
	Community and altruistic behaviour based life goals	One goal of my life is to help those needing my life. One goal of my life is to visit the nursing homes.	3	4.84
	Body-senses based life goals	One goal of my life is to be a numismatic. One goal of my life is to travel across the world.	3	4.84
	Total			62

The substance abusers were determined to have mostly relationship-based life goals, while also cherishing achievement-work based ones. Eight of them stated that they had no life goals whatsoever. However, one of these abusers reported that his life goal was to rid of substances he had been abusing for a long time. The non-substance-abusers mostly had relationship-based life goals, while also cherishing achievement-work based ones. However, unlike substance abusers, they were assumed to have already set religious and spirituality-based life goals, body-senses based life goals and community-altruistic behaviour based life goals.

### Discussion

An overall analysis of the findings of the present study revealed that the substance abusers were having difficulty in attributing meaning to their lives when

compared to the non-abusers. Moreover, the substance abusers were capable of setting far fewer life goals than were the non-abusers.

*Evaluation of the findings as to attributing meaning to life:* The study results demonstrated that not only the substance abusers but also the non-abusers took effort in attributing meaning to their lives, though with different quality. The fact that both of the study groups attributed meaning to their lives in varying dimensions confirms the findings in the literature asserting that there is more than one dimension to attributing meaning to life (Battista & Almond, 1973; Baumeister, 1991; Reker, 2000).

The dimensions of how the informants of the present study attributed meaning to their lives were named in light of the statements provided by the informants and the existing information and findings in the literature. For instance, the dimension of

deriving pleasure was named in light of the authentic happiness approach that was conceptualized by Seligman (2002), according to whom one of the essential dimensions of a happy life is deriving pleasure. As to another dimension, named personal growth, it was inspired by the theory of psychological well-being, according to which *personal growth* constitutes one of the six essential dimensions of personal growth (Ryff, 1989). Yet another dimension was named cherishing spiritual and religious values based upon the findings of empirical studies and the approach of *authentic happiness* (Hodge, Cardenas & Montoya, 2001; Seligman, 2002; Steger, Manni Michels & Copper, 2009). The dimension of engagement in work life was named as this based both on the dimension of engagement in the authentic happiness approach (Seligman, 2002) and on the notion in positive psychotherapy that work is a source of coping with conflicts (Peseschkian, 1987). Finally, the dimension of building positive relationships with the environment was named in light of the theory of intimacy by Prager (1995) and the theory of psychological well-being theory, according to which building positive relationships with the environment constitutes one of the six essential dimensions of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989).

86% of the substance abusers in the present study stated that they saw no meaning whatsoever to their lives, a finding in agreement with the findings of other studies. For example, individuals who attribute meaning to their lives have been reported to have a less tendency to resort to substances (Steger, Manni Michels & Copper, 2009). It could be argued that substance abusers have a less tendency to attribute meaning to their lives because their psychological and social functioning deteriorates due to resorting to substances (Belcher & Shinitzky, 1998). For instance, substance-abusing results in impaired cognitive functioning of the abusers (George, Ellison, & Larson, 2002; Gorsuch, 1995; Hawkins et al., 1992). Another argument could be that substance-abusers tend to be raised in disorganized or shattered families (Grunbaum et al., 2002; Neher & Short, 1998), which fail to set a good model for their children on the subject of attributing meaning to life. To this end, it could be argued that having been raised in such family environments could have led the substance-abusers in the present study to failing to attribute meaning to their lives. On the other hand, the informants in the present study who did not abuse substances were determined to have attributed meaning to their lives, even if in one dimension only. What is more, these non-abusers used a wider perspective in attributing meaning to life. For instance, as opposed to the abusers

group, the non-abusers loaded life with meaning through building positive relationships with their environment, achieving a healthy personal growth, and integrating religious and spiritual values into their lives. However, although some of the findings of the present study are in agreement with those of other studies (Grunbaum et al., 2002; Steger, Manni Michels & Copper, 2009), what makes this study original is that, unlike the previous ones, it compares substance abusers and non-abusers in terms of how they end up attributing meaning to life.

*Evaluation of setting life goals:* In this present study, qualitative and quantitative results indicate that the substance abusers have difficulties for setting life goals. However, evaluation of the qualitative findings of this study revealed that both substance-abusers and non-abusers have a tendency to set their own life goals, the content analysis of which showed them not to have been achieved in only one dimension. This finding confirms the claim that setting life goals and striving for them involves more than one aspect of life (Ebersole, 1998; Emmons, 1999; Heady, 2008; Kasser, 2002; Sheldon & Bettencourt, 2002; Peseschkian 1987; Wong, 1998).

The dimensions of how the informants of the present study set life goals were named in light of the statements provided by the informants and the existing information and findings in the literature. In this respect, relational and achievement goals are of great importance to both substance-abusers and non-abusers in setting life goals. There are known to be theoretical explanations and empirical findings drawing attention to this point. For instance, while Ebersole (1998) and Wong (1998) dealt with relational and achievement goals in the framework of engagement in work life and relationship with the environment, Emmons (1999) dealt with the same issue in the framework of achievement and relationship. On the other hand, Peseschkian (1987) viewed the setting of achievement and relational life goals as the sources of coping with conflicts in life. Furthermore, Sheldon and Bettencourt (2002) viewed achievement goals as financial achievement ones. However, the present study named religious and spiritual goals the way it was done by Ebersole (1998) and Wong (1998). Likewise, Peseschkian (1987) viewed the setting of religious and spiritual goals as fantasies-future goals. As to community-altruistic goals, Emmons (1999) and Heady (2008) viewed these goals as helping others, while Kasser (2002) takes them as contributing to society. When it comes to body/senses goals, they are taken as sources of coping with conflicts in life by Peseschkian (1987).

The results of the present study show that 26.66% (eight persons) of the substance abusers participating in the study stated that they had no goals in life, a finding in agreement with that of other studies (Steger, Manni Michels & Copper, 2009). The reason for this, it could be argued, is that their deteriorating cognitive functioning (Belcher & Shinitzky, 1998; George, Ellison, & Larson, 2002; Gorsuch, 1995). Hence, the substance abusers fail to focus properly on near and distant future under the influence of the harmful substance they take, which causes failure to set goals in life on their part (Grunbaum et al., 2002; Neher & Short, 1998). Interestingly, one of the abusers cherished the hope of ridding of the substances he had been abusing for years, which he viewed as a life goal for himself. Such a goal as this is in line with the health goals mentioned by the self-determination theory (Kasser, 2002). However, unlike the self-determination theory, which views health goals as a whole, the present study attributes the health goal set by one of the informants as a domain specific goal, which is ridding of the harmful substance.

The present study deals with the young men substance-abusers seeking help to rid of their

addiction to the harmful agent/s, and non-substance abusers who were having acute upper tract respiratory infection. Therefore, this study argues that future studies into the substance-abusers with low levels of motivation and unwillingness to rid of their addiction to harmful agent/s could shed further light on this issue. The present study argues that attributing meaning to life and setting life goals could be focused on when dealing with substance-abusers who have difficulty in achieving doing these without support as far as the issues of prevention, treatment and protection of substance abuse are concerned. In conclusion, the present study suggests that future programs on how to attribute meaning to life and set life goals should be devised for both clinical and non-clinical samples that form the risk group, with specific preventive programs aimed at clinical samples and protective programs aimed at non-clinical ones. Particularly, in educational settings (schools) some preventive educational programs might be established in order to prevent being a substance-abuser. The programs should include meaning of life and setting life goals.

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