# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEANING MAKING AND COPING STRATEGIES IN WOMEN INCARCERATED AT KISUMU WOMEN PRISON, KENYA.

**BY**

**ADIKINYI ANNA OSIRO**

**MA/FA/00019/2014**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY**

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**MASENO UNIVERSITY**

**May 2019**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for assessment at Maseno University or any other university.

Sign.: ……

Date: ……

Anna Adikinyi Osiro
MA/FA/00019/2014

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

Supervisors:

Name: Dr. Margaret Disiye. Date:……. Sign.:……
Department of Psychology,
Maseno University.

Name: Dr. Catherine Mbagaya Date:…… Sign.:…….
Department of Educational Psychology,
Maseno University.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of individuals who dedicated their time and effort to see to it that it comes to a completion. First, I would wish to thank my divine source of strength, encouragement and drive, my God whom I believe ensured my studies were on track to a successful completion. I committed the whole exercise in prayer and requests that re-energized me from time to time. Secondly, I would wish to appreciate my classmates and colleagues in their tireless efforts that ensured I forged on even when I faced difficulties at times. I thank Cornila and Emmy for their input particularly on statistical tests whenever I experienced challenges, for their patience and concern at all times.

Secondly, I would wish to express my gratitude to Maseno University for availing this opportunity to pursues my studies in this program. My sincere appreciation goes out to the diligent, committed supervisors, Dr. Disiye, Department of Psychology and Dr. Mbagaya, Department of Educational Psychology, both of Maseno University. I have acquired knowledge and experience beyond what I had envisaged and which I hope to use beyond this research. I would wish to thank staffs of School of Arts and Social Sciences and School of Graduate Studies who were very supportive whenever my research work in progress required their attention.

Lastly, my gratitude and appreciation goes to my entire family members for listening to me, offering emotional, instrumental and material support whenever I needed it. Any conversation we had with my children Anthony, Edith, Winifred and Noel was not without mention of progress in my studies as they also pursued theirs. This motivated us all to forge on. My sister Josephine who was also pursuing her studies encouraged me to persist just as she also did and that made two of us. And to my late father Jonathan who sang the song of education in my ears for all the days I knew him, I thank him very much for his legacy lives on.

God bless all who have made this a reality.

## ABSTRACT

Incarceration of women in KWP produces various indices of existential harms experienced cognitively as meaninglessness and functionally as ineffective coping. The women enter prison in perilous states which potentially disrupt their lives, restrict their liberties, challenge their self-identity, and distort their global meaning, diminishing their prospects for mental and behavioral health recovery. Thus, women need to restore coherence and transform the prison experience into optimal growth. Meaning-making is a necessary and essential accompaniment of incarceration that protects and enhances incarcerated women's well-being through meaning reconstruction and the development of psychosocial resources through use of effective coping strategies. In order to successfully propagate meaning-making, stakeholders working with this population require empirically tested information that would informs interventions and mitigation efforts. Thus, the study sought to establish associations between meaning-making and coping strategies in women incarcerated at KWP. The study was guided by the following objectives: to establish psychological correlates of presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP, establish social correlates of presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP, determine influence of selected demographic characteristics on meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP, and, determine coping strategies that predict meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. Meaning-making Model (Park, 2010) was adopted for the present study to illustrate the adaptive nature of meaning-making in relation to coping strategies. Correlational and descriptive survey designs were adopted to study a saturated sample ($N$ = 127) of women aged over 18 years. Data was collected by administering a demographic profile, Personal Meaning Profile-B, and Brief- COPE inventory, which were verified for content validity by subject experts. Test-retest reliability was obtained to establish their suitability and cultural relevance, and was deemed reliable, $r$ (10) .07. Data was analyzed using Pearson's $r$ for correlations, Kruskal-Wallis H test, an extension of Mann Whitney $U$ test for influence, and regression analysis for prediction, all tested at $\alpha = .05$ level of significance. The first and second hypotheses were rejected, confirming positive correlations between self transcendence, religion, self acceptance achievement (psychological) and fair treatment, relationship, intimacy (social) factors, and presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. The third hypothesis was retained for all except imprisonment term, as the only demographic characteristic that had influence on meaning-making of women incarcerated at KWP. The fourth hypothesis was rejected for emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies confirming that these two predicted meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. The study concluded that meaning-making was positively correlated to coping strategies in women incarcerated at KWP. It was recommended that an interdisciplinary approach involving all stakeholders should aim at helping women incarcerated at KWP reappraise their global meaning in the context of their psychosocial resources and imprisonment term and use of effective coping strategies that would promote living a purposeful life – whether they are released from prison – or not.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content Page

Declaration ..... ii
Acknowledgement…….. iii
Abstract ..... iv
Table of content..…v
List of tables..... viii
List of figures……..…….. ix
Operational definition of terms .....x
**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION……..1**
1.1. Background of the study……...1
1.2. Statement of the problem……..5
1.3.Purpose of the study……...6
1.4. Research objectives……...…6
1.5. Research hypotheses…….7
1.6. Significance of the study……...…7
1.7. Study limitations……...…8
1.8. Scope of the study…….8
1.9.Conceptual framework: The Meaning-making Model...……...…9
**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW……...10**
2.1. Meaning-making…….10
2.1.1. Process of meaning-making…….11
2.1.2. Levels and measures of meaning-making……12
2.2. Psychological correlates of meaning making ……13
2.2.1. Self acceptance in relation to meaning-making……...14
2.2.2. Self-transcendence and meaning-making…….....16
2.2.3. Role of religion in the meaning-making process……17
2.2.4. Role of achievement in the meaning making enterprise……..19
2.3. Social correlates of meaning making…….....…...20

2.3.1. Intimacy in incarcerated women……..21
2.3.2. Relationship among incarcerated women……22
2.3.3. Fair treatment in relation to meaning-making…….24
2.4. Role of demographic characteristics in meaning-making..…….…….....26
2.5. The role of coping strategies in the meaning-making process……29
2.5.1. Emotion-focused coping strategies……..30
2.5.2. Problem-focused coping strategies……..32
2.5.3. Avoidance coping strategies……33
**CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY …….35**
3.1. Research design……..35
3.2. Study area……35
3.3. Study population…….36
3.4. Sampling procedure and sample size..……36
3.5. Data collection techniques….…….37
3.6. Instruments for data collection……38
3.6.1. Demographic Profile……38
3.6.2. Personal Meaning Profile – B questionnaire……...39
3.6.3. Brief COPE inventory ……40
3.7. Reliability and Validity...……....41
3.9. Data Analysis Procedures……...42
3.10. Ethical considerations..…….....43
**CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS, INTEPRETATIONS AND DISCUSSION……..45**
4.1. Participants' demographic characteristics……...45
4.2. Psychological correlates of meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP……..48
4.3. Social correlates of meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP……...54
4.4. Influence of selected demographic characteristics on meaning making of women incarcerated at KWP……...60

4.5. Coping strategies that predict meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP…66
**CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS…….74**

5.1. Summary of findings……...74

5.2. Conclusions…….75

5.3. Recommendations……...77

5.4. Suggestions for further research……...……..78

**REFERENCES**…….79

**Appendix A**: Informed consent letter…….....93

**Appendix B:** Governing rules for women's prisons in Kenya……...……...…94

**Appendix C:** Demographic Profile ….……...95

**Appendix D**: Personal Meaning Profile – B…….96

**Appendix E**: Brief Cope …….....98

**Appendix F**: School of Graduate Studies introductory letter……100

**Appendix G:** Permit to conduct research (NACOSTI, Kenya)……..101

**Appendix H**: Kisumu County Director of Education research authorization letter…...…….102

**Appendix I**: Kisumu County Commissioner research authorization letter…..……103

**Appendix J:** Location map of Kisumu women prison……104

## LIST OF TABLES

**Table** Page

Table 1. Participants' demographic characteristics…..…….45
Table 2. Responses on psychological factors in relation to presence of meaning-making……...48
Table 3. Pearson's Correlation Analysis for presence of meaning-making and psychological factors…….….49
Table 4. Participants' responses on social correlates of meaning making…….54
Table 5. Correlations between social factors and presence of meaning-making……...55
Table 6. Hypothesis test summary for influence of demographic characteristics on meaning-making….....60
Table 7. Chi square Test for Differences in demographic characteristics ……....61
Table 8. Pairwise Comparisons for Imprisonment Term Groups ……..……..…...62
Table 9. Test ranks: Mann Whitney *U* test for imprisonment term groups..……..……...63
Table 10. Test statistics: Mann Whitney *U* test for imprisonment term groups……..……..65
Table 11. Descriptive Statistics for first order Coping Strategies for Women at KWP….....67
Table 12. Model summary table…….…...……69
Table 13. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of emotion-focused, problem-focused and avoidance Coping and meaning making…….70
Table 14. Regression analysis of emotion-focused, problem-focused and avoidance coping Strategies in prediction of meaning making……..71

## LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Figure1. Meaning-Making Model (Park, 2010)……..……..... 8

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Global meaning: Comprises the beliefs, values, goals and subjective sense of purpose through which women at KWP interpret their experience of the world upon incarceration (E.g. belief that ability of prayer protects one from the dangers inherent in the prison environment such as physical fights)
2. Meaning-making: The motivational, relational, affective, cognitive and personal processes women at KWP engage in to try and make sense of prison experience.
3. Meaninglessness: Inability of women at KWP to attribute meaning to their experience of incarceration (E. g. refusing to accept that they can continue with their lives in prison).
4. Situational meaning: These are perceptions held by incarcerated women that being in prison is a threat, loss or controllable situation (E.g. Giving up their children for adoption because of the stigma associated with being jailed).
5. Stakeholders: Professionals working with women incarcerated at KWP namely Counseling Psychologists, Prison Welfare Officers, Religious mentors, Probation Officers and Social Workers.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the study

Historically, psychiatrist, holocaust survivor and founder of Logotherapy, Viktor Frankl in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning,* posited that the primary motivation of a person is to discover meaning in life (Frankl, 1962). Accordingly, meaning can be discovered under all circumstances, even in the most miserable experiences of life, through, doing a deed, experiencing a value, and experiencing suffering. Detecting the meaning of life's moments is a personal responsibility, one that cannot be simply delegated to another (Pattakos, 2011). Therefore, if people experiencing adversity develop awareness of the many possibilities in their situation, they open themselves to meaning. Basic processes of meaning are comprised of meaning-seeking, meaning-making and meaning-reconstruction (Wong, 2008). Meaning-making allows individuals to evaluate and reflect on incarceration in light of personal values and life's goals (Park, Riley & Snyder, 2012).

In psychology, meaning-making is defined as the process of construing, understanding, or making sense of life events, relationships, and the self (Molden & Dweck, 2006). Man is inherently meaning-seeking and meaning-making because we live in a world of meaning (Wong, 2013). Meaning-oriented hope that is not based on one's own competence or expectations of a good outcome can be useful in time of adversity (Lyubormirsky, 2007). When things are going well and people are enjoying positive pleasant, engaging and successful activities, positive emotions are probably sufficient to sustain a high level of subjective meaning. Conversely, failure to attribute meaning to negative life events leads to more long-term distress and meaninglessness for some people (Neimeyer, 2012). Thus, having a clear sense of meaning and purpose contributes to the will to live in extreme situations (Frankl, 1985; Wong, 2009). The meaning we attribute to events affects us more than the events themselves, hence the need to determine the meaning women make of their incarceration.

Meaning-making is an existential strategy that uses pathways such as acceptance and seeing positive potential of negative events in coping with situations beyond one's control (Wong, Recker, & Peackock, 2006). Incarceration induces behavior patterns and attitudes ranging from,

deepening social and emotional withdrawal to extremes of aggression and violence (Guerino, Harrison & Sabol, 2011). Studies show that long-term incarceration can result in an increase in hostility and social introversion, and a decrease in self-evaluation and evaluations of work for some prisoners (Neimeyer, 2012). Imprisonment is potentially an extremely adverse and traumatic event that is unusual, highly disruptive, and has significant psychological, social and existential outcomes that are likely to impact rehabilitation efforts in varied ways (van Ginneken, 2014). Key components of tragic optimism among victims consist of acceptance, affirmation, faith in God, self-transcendence, and courage (Frankl, 1985). Incarceration impacts meaning-making in ways that can produce so many indices of psychological and social symptoms in persons subjected to it (Gillies, Neimeyer, & Milman, 2014). Thus, it is imperative that incarcerated women's psychological and social profiles be considered when exploring meaning-making of this population.

Prison related trauma affects women prisoners at different stages of their prison lives with some experiencing the initial period of incarceration as the most difficult (Folkman, 2011). The resulting stress may precipitate acute psychiatric symptoms that surface for the first time, or exacerbate a pre-existing psychological disorder. Some prisoners appear to survive the initial phases of incarceration relatively intact only to find themselves worn down by the ongoing physical, social and psychological challenges of imprisonment (Halama, & Bakosova, 2009). Nevertheless, they may suffer a range of social problems much later in the course of incarceration including; increased dependency upon staff for direction, social introversion, deteriorating community relationships over time and unique difficulties with family separation issues (Liebmanet al. 2010). Individuals not only try to maintain a sense of continuity and coherence in the face of change but also attempt to compensate multiple losses that come with advancing time and age (Paloutzian & Park, 2013). Thus, time may have implications for the prison experience.

Previous prison adjustment research suggests that, locus of control, self-esteem, motivation to change, and religiosity, are psychological characteristics related to adjustment in female offenders (Prati & Pietrantoni, 2009; DeVeaux, 2013). Related studies cite optimism, humor, strong faith, social support, positive role models, positive coping styles, appropriate exercise, and, a history and capacity of recovery from negative events as factors associated with positive

outcomes (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). Separation from family and friends during incarceration is particularly deemed to be detrimental (Keith, Travis, & Matthew, 2013). Therefore, support offered in prison through participation in religious activity, positive interpersonal relationships, perceived justice and self-transcendence plays an important role in facilitating adjustment and growth (Schnell, 2011). Wong's sources of meaning namely religion, relationship, self-transcendence, fair treatment, intimacy, self acceptance and achievement are psychosocial needs that women constantly depend on to adapt to the adversity of incarceration. This necessitates need to determine how these needs relate to meaning-making in incarcerated women because this knowledge would inform effective mitigation efforts by relevant stakeholders.

Coping supposedly involves a great deal of intra-psychic cognitive processes or "meaning-making," since only through cognitive adaptation can individuals transform the meaning of the stressful experience (Carrol, 2013). However, making sense of a traumatic experience is more than just a coping strategy which also provides direction for the future (Varahrami, Arnau, Rosen & Mascaro, 2010). Hence, the pathways involved operate within and across personal, interpersonal, and organizational contexts. Wong (2013) observed that people experiencing adversity need to develop higher levels of self-acceptance, intimacy, and a sense of achievement in order to be adjusted. Commonly used coping strategies include emotion-focused, problem-focused and avoidance coping. However, not all may be useful in the case of incarceration. Therefore, an awareness of coping strategies that predict meaning-making is necessary to promote positive adaptation to incarceration.

About 6.5 per cent of the world's prisoners are women and the number increased by over 40% between 2000 and 2013 (Global Prison Trends, 2015). Although women constitute between two and nine per cent of the total population in most prison systems, the prevalence is highest in the Americas, more than four times that of Africa, and lowest in African countries where the median is 2.5 per 100,000 of the national population (Global statistics of female prisoners, 2015). In Asia and especially South-Eastern and Eastern Asia, the median level is three times as high, while the median level in Europe is 4.9%. Female offenders make up to 18% of the prison population with the cumulative annual turn-over increasing and accounting for up to 4% of all violent crimes in Kenya (Kenya Police Crime statistics, 2014). In Kenya, the population of female offenders has

increased from 3.4% in 2013 to 7.4% of the total prison population in 2016 (Kenya/World Prison Brief, 2018). Most female offenders in Kenya are from poor backgrounds with low social status, majority are illiterate and mainly from broken families. In certain cases, an abusive past and residence in urban centers also predispose some females to commit crimes. These demographic profiles predispose the women to existential crises which require urgent mitigation.

KWP, like all women's prisons in Kenya is structured and operates under similar rules and regulations in accordance with the Prisons Act- 1968 (*CAP. 90: Kenya Law, 2010).* Majority of female offenders commit assault, loitering, littering, and hawking. Women incarcerated at KWP are facing charges or have been jailed for varied offences including illicit alcohol brewing and sale, prostitution, child neglect, child trafficking, drug trafficking, economic fraud and homicide (Criminal Justice Systems in Kenya, 2016). In line with international standards, female offenders in Kenya are separated in female only institutions and the department with various partnerships has provided facilities and materials for women's specific hygiene needs including sanitary towels and regular supply of water and electricity. A number of children aged below three years who accompany their mothers benefit from day care institution within the prison and are accommodated in separate dormitories. Although the offences for which they are confined are considered to be less serious than their male counterparts, the social and psychological implications are enormous necessitating further attention from legal and justice systems.

Regardless of location, prison related trauma is common among incarcerated women impacting their personal meaning in diverse ways (The National Academies Press, 2014). Overall, prisons are for the most part remote, closed environments that vary widely in their administrative and physical structures and operations. This makes broad generalizations about the consequences of imprisonment difficult to formulate (Brown, 2008). Wong's research on inmates has demonstrated that meaning is necessary for healing (Wong, 2010a), resilience (Wong & Wong, 2012), optimism (Wong, 2009a) and well-being (Wong, 2014). Incarceration is a low control situation not amenable to direct problem-solving and subsequently meaning-making is often the most adaptive (Park, 2010). Meaning-making can contribute to the women's effective coping, reduction of stress, and successful implementation of change by regulating their own experience of incarceration (Wong & Wong, 2006).

When most people first enter prison, they struggle to discover and realize meaning and thus from a life-span perspective, values shift and so do the sources of meaning (Van Tongeren & Klebe, 2009). In relation to coping, meaning serves two important functions: protecting one's well-being through effective coping, and enhancing one's well being through meaning reconstruction and the development of psychological resources (Wong & Wong, 2006). Fillipi (2016) argues that studies on women's strategies of adaptation and resistance in prison in the context of colonial and postcolonial Africa are scarce. The judiciary viewed women ranging from categories of race, class and to the naturalized identities linked to them in different ways according to the social, economic and political imperatives of the time. The picture is replicated in all African women prisoners where majority don't benefit from legal representation and can barely understand, owing to language barriers, the trial procedure conducted in language other than vernacular. Physical amenities are hardly adequate because most prison were annexed from the male main prison put up during colonial eras.

The different compulsory jobs the women have to do reflect the idea that during their sentence, they learn how to achieve the classic 'feminine duties' society would require of them once outside (Neumann, 2011). Coping at any one point is meaning oriented, and based on review of literature, presence of meaning-making is associated with high levels of psychological and social sources of meaning (Wong, 1998). There is vast literature on the importance of appraisal and meaning in effective coping and stress reduction but not much research has been carried out on possible relationships between meaning-making and specific coping strategies. Studies of this nature have been conducted in USA and Europe and yet remain scarce in Africa and more specifically, Kenya. This situation has implications for incarcerated women's mental health and behavioral recovery. It is therefore imperative that factors involved be investigated in order to gain a clear understanding of association between meaning-making – as process and coping – as outcome.

### 1.2 Statement of the problem

Female offenders make up to 18% of the prison population with the cumulative annual turn-over increasing and accounting for up to 4% of all violent crimes in Kenya. Majority of women incarcerated in KWP come from poor, dysfunctional families and have educational deficits and low intellectual ability. Most of them have encountered family and marital problems, are

unemployed and have been victims of physical and sexual abuse from childhood. Thus, they enter prison in perilous states which potentially disrupt their lives, restrict their liberties, challenge their self-identity, and distort their global meaning. This state is compounded by more subtle emotional and social harms potentially leading to existential crises experienced cognitively as meaninglessness and functionally as ineffective coping. Meaning-making is a necessary and essential accompaniment of incarceration that helps women restore coherence and transform the prison experience into optimal growth.

This meaning-making process protects and enhances incarcerated women's well-being through meaning reconstruction, development of psychosocial resources, and use of effective coping strategies. Counseling psychologists, Social workers, Religious mentors, Welfare officers and Probation officers require focused, empirically tested information that would provide critical insights and familiarity to help mitigate the negative consequences of incarceration in women at KWP. Therefore, it is imperative that systematic analyses of relationship between meaning-making and coping strategies be carried because absence of such information potentially diminishes prospects for these women's mental and behavioral health recovery from the harms incurred in the course of incarceration. Further, lack of empirically tested information hinders development of effective rehabilitation programs and intervention frameworks for women incarcerated at KWP. The findings would also help advance meaning-related research.

### 1.3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate associations between meaning making and coping in women incarcerated at KWP.

### 1.4. Research objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To establish psychological correlates of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP.
2. To establish social correlates of meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP.
3. To determine the influence of selected demographic characteristics on meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP.
4. To determine coping strategies that predict meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP.

### 1.5. Research hypotheses

The research was guided by the following hypotheses:

$H_{0.}$ There is no relationship between psychological factors and presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP.

$H_{0.}$ There is no relationship between social factors and presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP.

$H_{0.}$ There is no significant influence of selected demographic characteristics on meaning-making of women incarcerated at KWP..

$H_{0.}$ Coping strategies do not significantly predict meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP.

### 1.6. Significance of the study

This study sought to provide information on the associations between meaning making and coping strategies of women incarcerated at KWP. Vanhooren, Leijssen, and Dezutter (2016) observed that studies on meaning among prisoners are very few and more work is needed in this area. Thus, findings of the study provided a framework for incorporating meaning into the analysis of coping with incarceration.

I. There being no early studies of this nature to refer to in any women's prison in Kenya, the study would provide insights and familiarity both as a preliminary stage of investigation, and also for future investigation in incarcerated women. Thus, it was hoped that findings of this study would contribute to advancement of meaning related research.

II. Counseling Psychologists would use information from this study to formulate best fit interventions at different stages in their therapeutic encounters.

III. Information from this study would provide Social Workers and Prison Welfare Officers with a collaborative framework for understanding the potential role of meaning-making in incarcerated women's recovery - whether or not they expected to be released from prison.

IV. Religious mentors would use this information to help restore coherence through religious meaning-making and subsequently positively transform the prison experience into optimal growth.

V. Probation officers require this information for use in effecting rehabilitation programs for these women both in the course of incarceration and even after being released from prison.

VI. Women at KWP would be helped to translate their incarceration into meaningful experience and also adopt effective coping strategies as a result of meanings made.

### 1.7. Study Limitations

The study was limited by the correlational design, because it was impossible to draw conclusions about time order, direction of effect and causality. The study was limited to correlation and descriptive because despite the weakness of most non-experimental research done in psychology, sociology and education where many research problems do not lend themselves to experimental inquiry. There could have been other designs that would have produced more accurate results but this was limited by the kind of variables studied. For example, ex post facto design, also referred to as after-the-effect research would have been ideal for the present study to test the hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationship. The attritional nature of the target population posed challenges on retention of participants. Further, the problem was compounded by their unpredictable availability as their cases come up for trial and judgment on diverse dates; others were due to be released, transferred, paroled, admitted in hospital, or solitary confinement.

### 1.8. Scope of the study

The study investigated the relationship between meaning making and coping strategies in women incarcerated at KWP. It was conducted between September 2017 to September 2018 using correlational and descriptive survey designs on a sample ($N$ = 127) of women aged over 18 years. The study was conducted KWP and data was collected using three questionnaires namely Demographic Profile, PMP-B, and the Brief COPE inventory. Victor Frankl's existential theory was adopted to guide the study.

### 1.9. Conceptual framework: Meaning making and coping

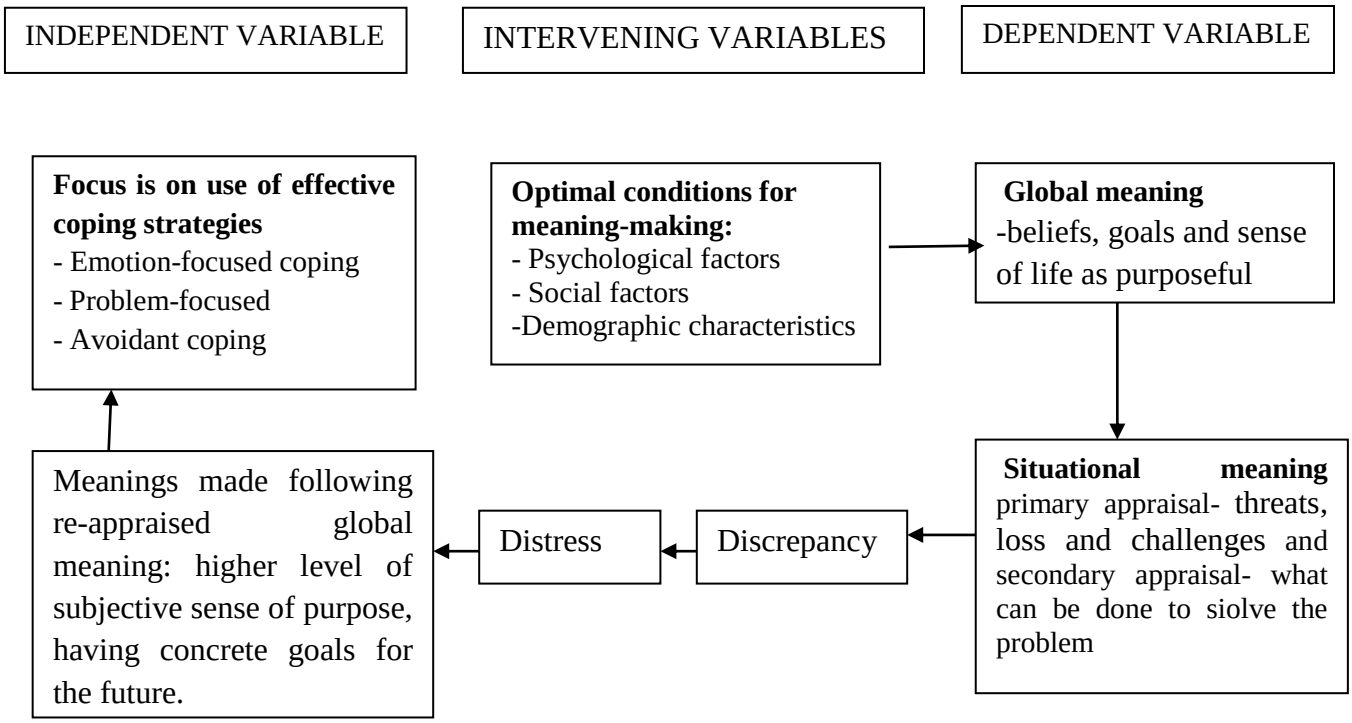


***Figure 1.*** **Meaning-making Model (adopted from Park, 2010).**

Women attempt to make sense of the distressing situation because incarceration challenges their global meaning. After appraising the initial meaning as either a threat, loss or controllable, the women must determine the extent to which that meaning is congruent with their global meaning and the arising discrepancy causes distress. The motivation to reduce distress generally leads to reappraising the situational meaning in a more positive light that provides them a more acceptable reason for incarceration than what meaning they originally made. This is possible through making reattribution, Psychological and social factors as well as demographic characteristics offer avenues for making positive reattribution. These positive reattributions depend on productive use of coping strategies. Prison related growth corresponds to; a subjective sense of having made sense of the incarceration, higher level of subjective sense of purpose, having concrete goals for the future. Focus is on use of effective coping strategies.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, psychological and social correlates of meaning-making as well as demographic characteristics of incarcerated women are reviewed. Commonly used coping strategies by female offenders are also examined and reviewed in the context of existing literature and related studies.

## 2.1. Meaning-making

Meaning in life or personal meaning describes the extent to which people comprehend and see significance in their lives (Borsa, Damásio, & Bandeira, 2012). It is the degree to which people perceive themselves to have a purpose or overarching aim in life in their current circumstances. Victor Frankl's logotherapy and existential analysis comprehensively views humans not only as creatures of meaning, but *willed to* find meaning as espoused in the following quote:

> "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves," (Frankl, 1962, p. 46).

According to the principles of Logotherapy, meaning can be discovered in three ways: first, life has meaning under all circumstances, even the most miserable ones; second, our main motivation for living is our will to find meaning in life; and third, we have freedom to find meaning in what we do, and what we experience, or at least in the stand we take when faced with a situation of unchangeable suffering (Woolfe, Strawbridge, Douglas, & Dryden, 2010). Although Frankl did not use the term "meaning-making", his emphasis on the making of meaning influenced later psychologists (Davis, Harasymchuk, & Wohl, 2012). When people encounter difficult times, meaning, rather than positive emotions become more important in maintaining some level of well being (Frankl, 1985; Wong 2011).

Theoretical tradition, provided by Frankl (1963, 1968) in his landmark studies posited that lack of meaning in life directly resonates in existential crises experienced as frustration and neurosis, and, perceived as lack of fulfillment of the will to find meaning. Such neurosis does not involve the instincts and biological drives but rather is spiritually rooted in the person's escape from

freedom and responsibility (Park, & Amy, 2006). Frustration of the will to meaning leads to an "existential vacuum" characterized by a sense of meaninglessness experienced as boredom, apathy, or indifference (Frankl, 1968). Frankl was the first psychotherapist who made the will to meaning, self-transcendence and responsibility the primary therapeutic objectives, which had largely been ignored by mainstream psychotherapists (Wong, 2014). Van Ginneken (2016) observed that although the initial shock of incarceration challenges women's assumptive worlds, they still manage to overcome this crisis by finding meaning in the prison experience and end up using it as an opportunity for personal development.

### 2.1.1. Process of meaning-making.

Basic processes of meaning are comprised of meaning-seeking, meaning-making and meaning-reconstruction (Wong, 2008). Incarcerated woman can to some extent choose to ignore or concentrate on effort towards change on their lives hence the need to introduce a regulatory process. Meaning-making allows individuals to evaluate and reflect on incarceration in light of personal values and life's goals (Park, Riley & Snyder, 2012). This is in line with classic coping which shows that adjustment is dependent on perceived personal meaningfulness and fulfillment of one's personal values and goals despite being in prison. Wong's (1998) implicit theories of research established five components of meaning making systems; affective, motivational, cognitive, relational and personal. Frankl (1963) emphasized the motivational dimension of meaning because he believed that humans are not merely biological, social, and psychological beings but also spiritual beings capable of transcending physical limitations through meaning and spirituality. He emphasized that a clear sense of meaning and purpose can add something positive and significant to one's life regardless of one's circumstances – a claim that has already received considerable empirical support.

Park (2010) proposed that the process of meaning making implies a cognitive component (integrating experiences with pre-existing schemas), as well as an emotional processing component (experiencing and exploring emotions). Wong's 5 components of meaning making systems have generally been used to assess both self and life events in regard to meaning (McDonald et al., 2011). Wong (1988a) conceptualized the cognitive component as an individual's belief system and world view that has been developed within a specific cultural

context and has been affected by the individual's unique life experiences. The motivational component sees personal meaning as both cognitive and behavioral in nature, consisting of actively pursuing goals and participating in activities which the individual deems to be valuable. The affective component consists of feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction resulting from participation in worthwhile activities and pursuit of life goals, as well as a positive outlook on life. Wong (1998b) further identifies two additional components namely personal and social, the former consisting of qualities unique to the individual, while social referring to personal relationships, love, and compassion.

### 2.1.2. Levels and measures of meaning-making

Personal meaning measures implicit meaning, that is, conceptions and beliefs regarding life held by people. It assesses meaning in seven levels, four of which are psychological and three are social. Psychological domains comprise: religion which is the about having affirmative belief about relationships with the divine; self transcendence which involves engagement in selfless pursuits; self acceptance expressed as a humble acceptance of one's limitations; and, achievement which entails pursuit and attainment of significant life goals. The social domain includes: relationship which is concerned with general social addictiveness; intimacy which is about having emotionally close relationships; and, fair treatment which entails perceiving a degree of justice in life. Wong's seven sources of meaning have been shown to enhance personal growth and emotional well being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). They can lead to resilience and reduction of mental illness symptoms and consequently promote mental health.

Inmates are viewed as active construers and the construction happens through individual process of interpretation and reflection. These processes encompass different levels of need ranging from basic biological, transcendental and spiritual needs. These needs subsequently represent generalized, relatively stable psychological and social orientations towards life ... motivate commitment, give direction to life, and increase its significance (Schnell, 2010). Each source reflects basic needs, corresponding life goals, and the four components of the meaning structure namely; purpose, understanding, responsible action, and enjoyment. For presence of meaning-making to be effectively measured, there should be clear markers or indicators in the individual. Steger, Oishi, and Kashdan (2009) assessed structure, levels and correlates of the presence of

meaning in life, and the search for meaning, within four life stage groups: emerging adulthood, young adulthood, middle-age adulthood, and older adulthood.

Results from a sample of Internet users ($N$ = 8756) demonstrated the structural invariance of the meaning measures used across life stages. Those at later life generally reported a greater presence of meaning in their lives, whereas those at earlier life stages reported higher levels of searching for meaning. Correlations revealed that the presence of meaning has similar relations to well being across life stages, whereas searching for meaning is more strongly associated with well-being deficits at later life stages. Components of meaning-making are critical in the self-regulation and self-perception of behaviors thus offering a sense of existential meaning. The inmate is assisted to overcome psychosocial stressors more easily by making decisions that are congruent with an organized system of personal values. Pursuant to this rationale, the psychometric instrument designed to assess meaning-making system for the present study namely PMP-B, reflected specific psychological and social items to effectively measure presence of the meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP.

### 2.2. Psychological correlates of meaning-making

Meaning-making concerns the psychological process of in-depth, internal exploration of an issue of concern. Thus, meaning-making occurs when attention is triggered by an encountered situation (in the case of the present study incarceration), regardless of the positive or negative outcome on the individual. As a process, psychological adjustment reflects the relative adaptation of an individual to changing environmental conditions (Heather, et al. 2006). Cognitively, prisoners develop an impaired sense of identity; hypersensitivity to stimuli; and, cognitive dysfunction such as confusion, memory loss and ruminations (James & Glaze, 2006). Emotionally they present with irritability, anger, aggression, and/or rage, anxiety and panic attacks; and, emotional breakdowns (Ong, Bergeman, Bisconti, & Wallace, 2006).

Behaviorally disruptions include other-directed violence (stabbings, attacks on staff, property destruction, and collective violence), lethargy, helplessness and hopelessness (Iacoviello & Charney, 2014). Others may lapse into chronic depression; engage in self-mutilation and/or suicidal ideation, impulsivity, and/or loss of control; hallucinations, psychosis and/or paranoia. These psychological outcomes resonate with Frankl's (1963) existential vacuum characterized by

boredom, apathy, indifference and a sense of meaninglessness. Kashdan and Rottenberg (2010) proposed a broader concept of psychological flexibility that is reflected in a number of dynamic processes that unfold overtime. Accordingly, these processes may involve adapting to fluctuating situational demands, reconfiguring mental resources, shifting perspectives, and balancing competing needs and life domains.

A multiple case study involving six incarcerated women of Manila City Jail utilized five standardized psychological tests, two psychometric measures and three projective techniques, case history interviews and behavioral observations, to establish their psychological profiles (Ormita, Reyes, &Perez, 2012). The women came from poor and dysfunctional families, experienced trauma in the past, were not well-educated, had low intellectual ability and encountered family or marital problems during the time they committed the crime. Results indicated that they were utilizing negative coping mechanisms, namely passivity, regression, and reacted emotionally in response to stress. The study concluded that even if they remain to have positive goals which they want to achieve, doing so is painstaking because of the respondents' use of ineffective coping mechanisms.

Psychological consequences in the ongoing climate of collective trauma can create complex mental health needs that in turn, represent significant impediments to adjustment (Park, 2010). The cited study utilized several measures on a fairly small sample, possibly easing the process of collecting data. However, the present study used two standardized psychological tests and one demographic profile developed by the researcher. In the current study, psychological constructs of interest to be investigated were derived from Wong's (1998) sources of meaning namely self-transcendence, self acceptance, religion and achievement.

### 2.2.1. Self acceptance in relation to meaning-making

Self acceptance is an individual's acceptance of all her attributes both positive and negative. In clinical and positive psychology, self acceptance is considered the prerequisite for change to occur (Pillay, 2016; Wong, 1998; Ryff, 1989 & Seligman, 2011). These authors agree that acceptance serves as a starting point for positive change, facilitates unconditional self acceptance, and helps develop one true self or authenticity. It also aids individuals to experience eudemonia by living according to one's true self. Acceptance has been shown to have adaptive

benefits: it helps avoid habitual dependence on negative thinking, facilitates positive reappraisal, reinforces resorting to spiritual values,, and enables us to function much better by relation in a flexible manner to what cannot be change (Wong, 2013).

In relation to meaning-making, self acceptance entails that the individual discover meaning through creative work, doing what they love and can do best, be authentic to self and pursue what's right according to one conscience and values in spite of obstacles. More important is the need to forgive oneself for one's own mistakes and failures. A qualitative investigation of benefit-finding and meaning-making in families that had recovered from the impact of Hurricane Katrina revealed that they were able to return to their houses, they had improved relationships within the family and developed insights into the importance of building relationships with people rather than objects (Garrison & Sasser, 2009). The authors concluded that the participants had made sense of the adverse event. Park, (2010) pointed out that the mere search for meaning in the face of adversity may not necessarily be beneficial to the well-being of the individual.

Rather, the deciding factors are usually the products of the meaning-making process - meanings made. These meanings result in the subjective sense of having made sense as shown in the cited Hurricane Katrina study. These may include a feeling of acceptance, a perception of growth and positive life changes. This acceptance makes it easier to cope with a range of personal and social experiences inherent to the most difficult of circumstances. Acceptance is probably the most effective an adaptive way of adaptation, capable of repairing the worst and bringing out the best in us (Wong, 2013). The five pathways of acceptance cover five major life domains namely personhood, relationships, existential issues, loss and suffering, and, mindfulness. The practice of acceptance enables individuals experiencing adversity to become mature, responsible, positive, compassionate and resilient individuals, who in turn contribute to the development of a positive society (Allen & Leary, 2010). Subsequently, acceptance makes it easier to cope with a range of personal and social experiences inherent in incarceration. This is because one's ability to fully and meaningfully regardless of circumstances depends on learning to accept the negative and unchangeable aspects of life. Therefore, it is imperative that incarcerated women's level of self acceptance be determined as a way of measuring presence of meaning-making and also for its complementary role as an emotion-focused coping strategy in the course of incarceration.

### 2.2.2. Self-transcendence and meaning-making

The term self-transcendence has been widely used to refer both to a process of expansion, or movement beyond one's immediate self-boundaries. In psychology, Frankl posited self-transcendence as an integral part of the human ability to create meaning and the hallmark of the spiritual nature as well as the end state of becoming fully human (Wong, 2014). With so much of their personal freedom taken away as a consequence of their actions, incarcerated women not only seek redemption, but are also try to discover the deeper meaning behind their predicament (Pattakos, 2010). Frankl emphasized the altruistic nature of self-transcendence: 'Meaning comes from commitments that transcend personal interests, reaching beyond the self toward causes to serve or people to love. Logotherapy maintains that meaning comes from self-transcendence with its basic values: experiential and attitudinal.

On one hand the experiential value focuses on relationships – relating to other people, life and nature with openness and appreciation. On the other hand attitudinal value applies to finding meaning in times of suffering in a positive way by 1) taking a defiant attitude to confront it, 2) finding some important lesson or positive meaning in the negative experience, 3) revising our goals and global beliefs, 4) making the most of life in spite of suffering, 5) transforming suffering into an opportunity for being a heroic example to others, and, 6) transcending suffering by cultivating spirituality. This may not be easily articulated given the restrictive environment that prisons are. Wong (2013) proposed that from a meaning-management perspective, self-transcendence has three levels: mindful awareness (transcends defense mechanisms), setting life goals (transcends egotistic desires), and choosing core values (transcends material world).

Park, Riley and Snyder, (2012) expressed that inherent in the meaning making process is the generalized result, that is, the feeling of leading a meaningful life or not. Mattis (2003), analyzed narratives from African American women ($n$ = 23) on how to cope and to construct meaning in times of adversity. Findings of the qualitative study revealed a set of non-overlapping themes that explicate religiosity/spirituality's role in meaning-making enterprise. Findings suggested that religion/spirituality helped women to interrogate and accept reality, and to gain the insight and courage needed to engage in spiritual surrender. Ultimately, they were able to confront and transcend limitations, identify and grapple with existential questions and life lessons, and, recognize purpose and destiny. Moreover, they defined character and acted within subjectively

meaningful moral principles, achieved growth, and trust in the viability of transcendent sources of knowledge and communication. The cited study viewed religion as a basis for building transcendental experiences following trauma, hence a prerequisite to transcendent growth or attainment. However, the present study differed in its design and regarded religion as a distinct psychological entity from self – transcendence in the meaning making enterprise. In the present study, self transcendence is one of the reflection activities that depicted the experience of meaning for which information was sought. Thus, the reflection activities and their result (meaningfulness achieved) together formed the construct of meaning-making.

### 2.2.3. Role of religion in meaning-making process

Many social scientists have tried to explain religion by reducing it to presumably more basic psychological, social, or physiological processes (Pargament (2002). However, a number of studies suggest that religion may be: a) a unique form of motivation; b) a unique source of significance; c) a unique contributor to mortality and health; d) a unique forms of coping; and e0 a unique source of distress. Thus, religion may be a unique aspect of human functioning; one that cannot simply be reduced to or explained away by presumably more basic psychological, social, or physiological processes. Several researchers have explored the meaning and impact of religious practice in prisons throughout the US in a series of ethnographic and empirical studies. Clear and Sumter (2002), for instance found that practice of religion helped people to psychologically adjust to prison life in a healthy way, derive motivation and meaning in life, hope for the future, peace of mind, and make a shift in their behaviors. They concluded that religion and spirituality in prison help to humanize a dehumanizing situation by assisting prisoners in coping with social isolation in a context that is fraught with loss, deprivation, and survival challenges.

Inmates practice religion for a variety of personal and practical reasons. In some cases they are simply practicing their faith by worshiping God or a higher power (O'Connor & Duncan, 2011). They either grew up practicing a religion or joined a religion later in life, or developed the interest during incarceration. A host of more specific meaning-related needs have been identified and although people have many options for meeting these needs, religion is one of the most powerful sources of meaning, present throughout history and thriving in the 21$^{st}$ Century (Park & Edmondson, 2010). As a psychological factor, religion provides a source of self-esteem and

moral superiority, and more important, serves a compensatory control function (Kay, Gaucher, McGregor, & Nash, 2010). Moreover, religion is central to the life purposes of many people, providing their ultimate motivation and primary goals and values for living as well as guidelines for achieving those goals (Pargament, 2002). Religion as a framework of meaning can strongly influence individuals' initial situational appraisal or understanding, global meaning and outcome of meaning making process (meanings made).

The present study conceptualizes religion as the many activities incarcerated women draw upon to meet the pressing need for a functional meaning system. These include beliefs, values, goals and subjective sense of fulfillment in a higher being necessary for surviving the incarceration. Religion is accessible in that it is widely promoted and comes in many forms, so that people can usually find a way of being religious that suits them. Religions also provide opportunities for transcending their own concerns or experience and connecting with something greater. Finally, religion makes bold and authoritative claims regarding their ability to provide a sense of significance. All these characteristics lead to the unmatched ability to serve as the source of global meaning systems (Park & Edmondson, 2010).

However religious beliefs can be negative in their content and influence on the believer particularly when people abdicate responsibility to take actions to alleviate problems, hence posing the risk of religious fatalism (Norenzayan & Lee, 2010). Thus, religion is central to people's life purposes, providing their ultimate motivation and primary goals for living as well as prescriptions and guidelines for achieving these goals. When religion is incorporated into people's global systems, their understanding of the divine will inform their beliefs about the nature of people, this world, as well as perhaps the next (Park 2010). Incarcerated women at Oregon State Correctional facility (N = 213) participated in a study of the relationship between stress, adjustment, institutional misconduct, and degree of personal support derived from religious participation (Lacey, & Booker, 2009).

A series of multivariate analyses of variance investigated differences on adjustment indicators on their self-reported support from religious activities, while controlling for self-reported support for other institutional activities. Inmates who received high-level support from participation in religious activities reported significantly less depression, recounted perpetrating fewer aggressive

acts, and committed fewer serious institutional infractions than those who did not attend religious activities as well as those who attended but reported receiving low-level support. In addition, inmates reporting a high level of support through their religious activities reported fewer instances of feeling angry, having arguments with inmates and correctional officers, physical fights, and injury than those who reported no participation in religious activities. Religion offers many avenues for making positive re-attributions, and is frequently invoked in the search for a more acceptable reason for an event's occurrence than one may have originally made. Thus, religion definitely has a role in the meaning-making process warranting further investigation in related populations elsewhere.

Meta-analytic findings from studies commissioned by the American Psychological Association, together with findings from ethnographic and some recidivism studies in prison reinforce the significance of the religion construct in relation to meaning-making. Findings point to humanist/spiritual/religious (H/S/R) pathways to meaning as an important part of the responsive principle of effective correctional programming and the desistance process for women offenders (O'Connor & Duncan, 2011). Out of the sample of 349 women at an Oregon prison system, 95% voluntarily attended at least one H/S/R event during their first year of incarceration. These events were facilitated by religious leaders and spiritual traditions and other increasingly secular events within a humanist context, with activities such as education, yoga, life skills development, non-violent communication, and transcendental meditation groups. Findings of the study revealed a diverse and widespread human, social and spiritual capital that is naturally supportive of H/S/R responsively and the desistance process for women in prison. The incarcerated women had much higher rates of H/S/R involvement than the general population in Oregon. The present study considered religion as a unique meaning-making element of mental health that traverses human adaptive phenomenon and deserving special empirical attention.

### 2.2.4. Role of achievement in the meaning-making enterprise

In psychological research, adjustment or coping refers both to an achievement or outcome as well as a process (Seaton, 2009). As an achievement, psychological adjustment is a phrase used to denote positive mental health associated with positive outcomes (Korte, et al., 2012). Meaning in life can be sustained through goal achievement and fulfillment. People believe their lives have meaning when they are making progress towards their goals and achievement experiences are an

important source of personal meaning (McDonald, Wong, &, Gingras, 2012). Personal goal may organize and orient people toward valued activities and provide meaningful justification for further actions (Emmons, 2003). Park, Edomondson, Fenster, and Blank (2008) suggested that efforts at meaning-making may influence the extent to which people in adversity make meaning from their experience (i.e., experience post traumatic growth, find life meaningful, and restore beliefs in a just world). This may in turn influence their psychological adjustment.

Cross-sectional and longitudinal path models of meaning-making process indicate that the efforts are related to better adjustment through the successful creation of adaptive meanings made from the prison experience. The process of conceptualization of psychological adjustment reflects whether an individual is able to cope effectively with the demands of the environmental context as well as with the stress created by these demands. Park, Riley and Snyder, (2012) contend that meaning-making or creation of meaning is fluid and needs to be constructed on an ongoing process. Thus, meaning-making pertains to the cognitive and behavioral abilities used in the value based reflection and refers to the conscious reflection on the evaluations of challenging or ambiguous events based on personal meanings, values and goals. The present correlational and descriptive study carried out on a saturated sample (n = 127), investigated achievement because daily goal achievement has been found to be positively related to daily well-being hence regarded a significant measure of meaning-making in the present study.

### 2.3. Social correlates of meaning-making

Incarcerated women are prisoners first; mothers second and majority are primary caregivers for their children (van Tongeren, & Klebe, 2009). The comparative rarity of women's facilities means that they are often located so far away from home that it can be difficult, and sometimes impossible, for families to visit. Monahan, Goldweber and Cauffman, (2011) observed that socially, people's sense of meaninglessness is represented in three variables namely, lack of autonomy, social isolation and self alienation. Socially, women are an extremely vulnerable group with complex needs and are often incarcerated further away from their families, impeding visits, and other crucial contacts (Silvia, 2014). Deprivation of autonomy in prisoner arises out of evaluative pressures, extrinsic rewards and external constraints as part of the rehabilitation procedure (Carlton & Segrave, 2011).

Prison being a *total institution* where the totality of the individual's existence is controlled by various external forces, immediately deprives inmates of valuable things like liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy and security from violence (Nedderman, Underwood, & Hardy, 2010). Self-alienation – a sense of being detached from and out of touch with one's true self and identity, threatens an individual's world view hence predicting low levels of meaning in life (Schlegel, et al, 2012). Women experience imprisonment as part of entrenched trajectories of social disadvantage. Thus, the present study examined participants' social factors namely relationship, intimacy, and fair treatment to determine their association with meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP.

### 2.3.1. Intimacy in Incarcerated Women

Incarcerated women cope with their despair primarily through the social and emotional support, and a search for new meaning in life (Vanhooren, Leijssen, &Dezutter, 2017). Women in prison experience an unparalleled sense of isolation, frustration, conflict and guilt of being both separated from and unable to care for their children. The emotional deprivations of prison life – in confluence with the gendered way in which most of those who are serving long term having been abandoned by their loved ones and other having severed abusive relational obligations, incites them to seek out forms of intimacy with fear, due to prior experiences that have eroded their trust. They often experience feelings of despair and depression, and anxiety arising over fear of losing custody of their children while others face the threat of getting divorced.

Houck and Booker (2012) investigated 362 incarcerated mothers (aged 19-59 yrs) at a maximum security prison were assessed using R. R. Abidin (1995) Parenting Stress Index, and adjustment, measured by the L. Derogatis (1993) Brief Symptom Inventory and institutional records of misconduct to study the relationship between parenting stress and institutional conduct. Findings intimated that stress associated with limited contact with children was related to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and somatization. Stress concerning visitation was significantly related to anxiety. Stress concerning competence as a parent was associated with elevated anxiety and depressive symptoms as well as with increased institutional misconduct. The authors concluded that incarcerated women experience considerable distress related to parenting manifested in psychological and behavioral adjustment. The initial shock of incarceration challenges prisoners' assumptive worlds, but they often manage to overcome this crisis by finding meaning in the

prison experience and using it as an opportunity for personal development (Ray, 2016). Lack of intimacy with their children in particular can lead to psycho-physiological disruptionsy.

Research suggests that rehabilitative programs for women need to create an environment that is a safe place where women can share about intimate details of their lives. Self-imposed social withdrawal and isolation may mean that incarcerated women retreat deeply into themselves, trust virtually no one, and adjust to prison stress by leading isolated lives of quiet desperation (Villines, 2013). Isolation from their loved ones does little to help women prisoners' attitudes. Close ties to families during incarceration are crucial in maintaining connections in the community. Visits from relatives, sustained correspondence, phone calls, or any types of communication serves to maintain a support system for inmates. Family contacts let the woman know that she is not forgotten and that there are people who care about her. Support from relatives can also enhance emotional survival and boost the incarcerated woman's self esteem.

In one qualitative study that employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to six female participants selected from a prison in England (Van Ginneken, 2014). By administering semi-structured interviews, narratives of participants were analyzed and findings showed that imprisonment is potentially an extremely adverse and traumatic event that is highly disruptive. The pain of separation from family and friends was a difficult aspect of imprisonment for these women to deal with. The author concluded that making sense of a traumatic experience is more than just a coping strategy; it also provides direction for the future of the prisoner and their dependents. Although the study provided information about the psychosocial effects of incarceration with particular emphasis on the disruptive nature of imprisonment, there was no suggestion on remedial measures. Most researches on intimacy among inmates focus on sexual intimacy but the present study was concerned with social bonds held by incarcerated women.

### 2.3.2. Relationship in incarcerated women

Relational theory indicates that the state of women's relationships is often the driving force behind their criminal behavior (Barlow, 2014). Similarly, authors in the field of relational theory have developed three elements in women's development: the cultural context implies the importance of social environments that a woman develops in, relationships concept which recognizes the importance of connections as the central organizing feature of a woman's

development, and, pathways to growth which indicates that the value a woman places on relationships is a strength and can lead to healthy fostering of identity. Benda et al. (2005) in a study on differences in male and female recidivism found that living with a criminal partner is a statistically strong predictor of recidivism. Women who found positive relationships, especially with a partner and children, were far less likely to reoffend.

Incarcerated women's retrospective reflections and current accounts portray conflicted emotions about children and relationships both in and out of prison (Crewe, Hulley & Wright, 2017). The stigmatization that imprisoned women experience carries great costs with few social bonds, being treated as outcasts and judged for their criminal behavior. This leads to women offenders experiencing a degradation process in which they suffer feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability that are likely to lead to increased levels of shame in their relationships. Relationship experiences and achievement related activities are included in constructions of the "taxonomy of meaning" and contribute to the global perception of meaning in life (Emmons, 2003, p. 108). Punishment is compounded for many women inmates when they are separated from their children. Imprisoned mothers rank estrangement from children as their primary concern.

Given that incarcerated women come from a background of violence and abuse, it is critical that women feel safe and supported in their journey toward rehabilitation and recovery (Crewe, Hulley &Wright, 2017). The absence of relationships with their children and the isolation of prison can cause serious hindrances in a woman's rehabilitation (Barlow, 2014). Historically, prisons have emphasized a model of power and control which limits the ability for nurturing, trust and compassion. Social isolation threatens the human motivation of the need to belong, a fundamental basic component of meaning in life (Richard, & David, 2012). Moreover, because there are fewer prisons for women, they are often imprisoned far away from their homes and families, causing serious problems in the attempt to preserve strong family ties (Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2007). The loss of autonomy that imprisonment entails is particularly painful, first, because of its impact on relationships with children, second, because it echoes the powerlessness that these women had experienced prior to imprisonment, and third because – paradoxically – most were accustomed to managing their lives relatively autonomously (Crewe, Hulley &Wright, 2017).

Meaning in life declines when people lack interpersonal relationships that bolster their sense of self-worth and this potentially generates feelings of helplessness, loneliness, emptiness and meaninglessness. One aspect of relationships, social support, has been shown to be positively related to meaning in life across the life span (Steger, Kashdan, & Oishi, 2008). Family support or lack of it also factor into women's relational concerns hence opting for intimate relationships with fellow inmates. Connecting with another person however briefly or achieving a goal however small, may increase someone's sense that her action will have value that extends beyond that moment in which those events occur (King et al., 2006). Thus, both relationship and achievement may provide the women in prison with the illusion that their lives in prison will have a lasting impact on the world, thereby increasing their perception of how meaningful their existence is (Greenberg, 2012).

King, Hicks, Krull and Delo (2006) in a study found that daily positive affect was positively related to both global meaning in life and daily meaning in life (that is, meaning as experienced on a day-to-day basis). Similarly, daily negative affect was negatively related to both global meaning in life and daily meaning in life. Research on meaning making in the context of stressful events and suffering has shown that people can find meaning in life in the absence of positive affect (Park & Folkman, 1997). Consistent with this possibility, research has found that daily measures of well-being and self focused constructs co-vary with daily events above and beyond the co-variations between daily affect and daily events. Daily social and achievement events can provide a sense of significance in the moment. The present study is important because incarceration possibly poses negative relational risks and threatens social networks in the course of incarceration that could have lasting disruption on families.

### 2.3.3. Fair treatment in relation to meaning-making

Prisoners do not represent a homogenous segment of society. Many have lived at the margins of society, are poorly educated and come from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (Van den Bergh et al., 2011). They often have unhealthy lifestyles and addiction such as drug use which contribute to poor general health and put them at risk of disease. Since their foundation, prisons have been built and run to cope with the needs of the male majority. Until recent times, the small numbers of women prisons were annexed from the male prisons and were expected to cope with the same routines and facilities as men. Lack of attention to the very different and often more

complex needs of women have resulted in neglect of their human rights, disregard to international recommendations and many instances of social justice. A review of gender equity in health states that the present position is “unequal, unfair, ineffective, and inefficient” (Van den Bergh et al., 2011).

Women’s behaviors in prison are generally shaped by disciplinary ‘regimes of feminity’. In addition to cleaning their section, women prisoners could for instance work in the prison fields, ploughing and collecting vegetables, or sew and wash prison uniforms. Prisoner also work as nannies at the prison nursery where prisoner who have children in the prison are cared for, where as others were occupied in the prison kitchen preparing meals for inmates. Therefore, the organization of women’s daily life inside prison reflected the fact that punishment was gendered. In most prisons punishments range from arbitrary beating to reduced diet and solitary confinement. Several specificities in women’s conditions of incarceration include the facts that women require sanitary towels when menstruating, and may have to undergo body searches and vaginal examination may be performed as need arises.

A systematic search collected and reviewed all available and relevant published literature (2000-2017) of Sub- Saharan Africa prisons and these records were subsequently charted and thematically analyzed (Van Hout & Mhalaga-Gunda, 2018). Three themes were generated; ‘*The Prison Regime’; ‘Navigating Inside the Prison Health Services’;* and *‘Accessing the outside Community and Primary Health Care* Services’. Human rights abuses, substandard prison conditions and poor access to prison based and community clinical care, along with the invisible nature of women and that of their unique health needs were found to be consistently deplorable. Women in these prisons experience substandard nutrition, overcrowding and unhygienic conditions which exacerbate poor health and infectious disease transmission. The researchers recommend enhanced donor support, resource allocation, prison health and population health policy reform, prison systems surveillance and gender sensitive prison health service provision to address women prisoners’ conditions and their specific health needs in Sub-Saharan Africa prisons (Van Hout & Mhalaga-Gunda, 2018).

Several researchers have found that people in prison may be diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorders, as well as other psychiatric disorders which will subsequently hinder these prisoners

from achieving social adjustment and social integration upon release (DeVeaux, 2013). However, there are encouraging signs that new approaches and plans are being developed in various parts of the world (Van den Bergh et al., 2011). There have been changes in several relevant public services such as the police, probation services and community facilities, and these have been reflected in initiatives of nongovernmental organizations. This trend has been towards more emphasis on alternatives to custodial sentences alongside supporting women offenders who've committed non-violent or minor offenses. The legal and criminal justice systems are also changing, with new restorative justice approaches. United Nation's basic principles applicable to all prisoners provides in Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Rule 26).

> 'Women prisoners' contact with their families, including their children, their children's guardians and legal representatives shall be encouraged and facilitated by all reasonable means' (Penal Reform International (2007).

In sum, meaning-making is manifested in psychological and social behavioral and existential adjustment. To this effect, it is imperative that incarcerated women engage in any particular form of meaning-making at any given time. However, questions are rife concerning whether their choice of meaning-making depended on how they understood the impinging situational demands and therefore what particular meaning making cognitive and emotional resources they were capable of using for engaging in and making meaning. One outcome of meaning-making that often accompanies adversity is stress-related growth which includes changes such as taking better care of themselves, seeing their own identities more clearly, feeling closer to God, being more intimate with loved ones, handling stress more effectively, appreciating more the everyday aspects of life, and having the courage to try new things. A closer look at the needs of women in prison and related health aspects raises issues of gender inequity and insensitivity, of human rights neglect and a general lack of public health concern. Thus, the present study would by extension address some of the concerns raised in relation to unique gender specific needs.

### 2.4. Role of demographic characteristics in meaning-making

Offending women's demographic profiles are as diverse as the crimes they commit. Majority of women entering jails are from lower socio-economic strata, low in education, married, single

mothers, unemployed, aged between 21-59 years and have been sexually and physically abused, mirroring demographic trends that cross gender lines (Lartey, 2016). In most societies, women have the primary responsibility for the family, particularly if children are involved (Jiang, 2006). In one study which the authors used 74 semi-structured interviews with mothers before trial and during incarceration to document coping strategies employed to deal with potential and actual separation from their children (Katarzyna & Siegel (2010). Seven strategies emerged: being a good mother, mothering from prison, role redefinition, dissociation from prisoner identity, self-transformation, planning and preparation, and self blame.

These findings showed that mothers used multiple strategies and tended to employ emotions more to cope with the stress of separation. Loper (2006) suggests that the way in which a woman experiences her role as a parent in prison is more relevant than parental status alone. This means that when women are sent to prison, the consequences for the family which is left behind can be quite uncertain. When a mother is sent to prison, the father who is frequently left with the family often finds it difficult to take on parental duties especially if there is no wider family support (UN office on drugs and crimes, 2008). In many cases, the mother may be the sole caretaker. This means that special provisions need to be made to ensure that women prisoners can maintain meaningful contact with their children.

Mitra and Agarwal, (2016) assessed well-being of 120 randomly sampled female prisoners in Lucknow jail, India. Data was obtained and analyzed using ANOVA, chi square and correlation tests. The study sought to investigate the socio-economic profiles of women prisoners, carry out their situational analysis, assess their mental well-being, and, establish the relationship between their mental well-being and selected demographic characteristics namely age and marital status. The sample was categorized in three age brackets: 20-40 years (30.8%), 40-60 years (52.5%), and, above 60 6ears (16.7%). Close to 80% of the participants were married and the remaining 20% were widowed, and none were divorced or separated. The study results showed no significant relationship between mental well-being and age or marital status. There was a slight difference in the age brackets between the cited study and the present study but the categories for marital status were similar.

Majority of the incarcerated women are mothers who must grapple with the burden of being separated from their children during incarceration. Although female prisoners are a minority within prison populations worldwide, usually accounting for between 2- 9% of the prison population in any country, most of them have children for whom they were the primary or sole caretakers before they were imprisoned (Van de Bergh & Aguirre, 2012). United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Rule 2) provides that:

> 'prior to or on admission, women with caretaking responsibilities for children shall be permitted to make arrangements for those children, including the possibility of a reasonable suspension of detention, taking into account the best interests of the children' (Penal Reform International (2007).

A related study examined 581 female inmates from three Ohio correctional facilities to find out how their psychological well-being was influenced by participation in institutional programs, frequency of visitation with outsiders, and experiences with victimization during incarceration (Wooldredge, 2013). Support was found for the hypotheses that healthier attitudes correspond with greater program participation, more frequent visitation, and no experience with victimization. Time spent in prison may rekindle not only the memories but the disabling psychosocial reactions and consequences of this traumatizing experience (Reker, Peacock, & Wong, 2006). Time is of ultimate importance for the meaning and significance we assign to events and other people. Time has been linked, both indirectly and directly to such concepts as the process of adaptation, coping with trauma, and the impact of psychological disorders on time orientation. (Livneh, 2013).

During the first hours after exposure to traumatic stress, for example, meaning-making would seem unlikely. The initial response to trauma is often characterized by intense cognitive and biological variability. However, the period immediately after the initial trauma response (i.e., from several hours to several days or weeks after the event) would seem an ideal time for meaning making to occur (De Quervain, Aemi, Schelling, & Roozendaal, 2009). The initial shock supposedly challenges prisoners' assumptive worlds, although they often manage to overcome this crisis by finding meaning in the prison experience and using it as an opportunity

for personal development (Ray, 2016). Interestingly, how trauma responses unfold suggests that the initial response is often characterized by intense cognitive and biological variability (De Duervain et al., 2009).

The surge of glucocorticoides that typically accompanies the experience of intense stress temporarily limits both the working and long-term memory, which would undoubtedly impede meaning-making efforts. By contrast, the period immediately after the initial trauma response (i.e., from several hours to several days or weeks after incarceration) would seem an ideal time for meaning-making to occur. Typically, both biological and cognitive disorganization will have abated during this period while social sharing, an important mechanism by which humans gain information and create meaning, is typically common (Rime 2009). Meaning-making may also occur after longer periods of time have passed. However, if distress remains elevated, or if the search becomes prolonged, meaning-making may evolve into rumination and only further exacerbate distress and obscure understanding (Bonanno, Pat, & Noel, 2011).

The cited study examined associations between age, marital status, prison visitation, religious activity, adjustment, parenting stress, and institutional conduct. These studies demonstrate how different investigators would cluster age groups variedly to meet the set objectives and study method. Some investigators may emphasize biological variables while others may focus on the cognitive variables. Thus, the present study studied the influence of selected demographic attributes namely age, attained education level, marital status, prison visitation, caretaking responsibility, current activity involvement and period spent in prison, on meaning-making.

### 2.5. The role of coping strategies in the meaning-making process

Coping has been defined as an intentional cognitive and behavioral attempt to manage a stressor (Carver, Scheier, & Weintvauly, 1989). There are several coping strategies depending on the issues being addressed. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed two types of coping: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Accordingly, Lazarus and Folkman (1988) suggested that coping comprises two distinct functions: the internal emotion-focused coping which serves to regulate emotions, and problem-focused coping which serves to change the problematic person-environment situation. Meaning-making bears similarities with coping and has recently been described as a coping process, hence the term meaning-focused coping. This is an appraisal

based coping in which the person draws on his or her beliefs (for example, religious/spiritual), values and existential goals (for example, purpose in life), to motivate and sustain coping and well-being during difficult times (Folkman, 2008, p.7).

Research findings from a study in Manila City Jail suggested that even if the incarcerated women remain to have positive goals which they want to achieve, doing so is painstaking because of employing ineffective coping mechanisms (Ormita, Reyes, & Perez, 2012). Available evidence indicates that the predominant use of any coping strategy can be debilitating, and rather that people need to be flexible in the deployment of coping strategies for effective coping with the diverse types of situations. Theory and research on flexibility has been applied to a number of domains of self-regulation, most notably in experimental studies of coping and emotion regulation (Gupta & Bonanno, 2011). Studies on the adaptive value of flexibility implicate at least three different sets of processes: one set involves appraisals of environmental demands; a second set pertains to the repertoire of possible behavioral responses that might be used to meet those demands; and a third set involves ongoing sensitivity to internal and external feedback about the relative success or failure of the behavioral responses as well as the ability to shift away from a behavior that is not clearly working (Bonanno & Burton, 2012). The present study investigated emotion-focused, problem-focused and avoidant coping.

### 2.5.1. Emotion-focused coping strategies

Emotion-focused is comprised of several independent factors that make up action variables that were measured in the present study namely self-distraction, substance use, use of emotional support, venting, positive reframing, acceptance, religion, and self-blame. The coping mechanisms involve a cognitive reappraisal process that includes self-reflection and taking control over one's emotions, by examining the emotional response to the stressor. In addition, they can also express and process emotions as a prelude to reappraising unchangeable stressors. Therefore, the most effective way to manage the stress is for the individual to change her perspective or appraisal of incarceration. Focus should be on changing or denying the experience, although denial, too, is an emotion-focused means of coping (Laureate Education).

Prisoners ruminate a lot by over thinking their way out of uncomfortable emotions and this leads to cognitive dysfunction. Research findings suggest that emotion-focused coping can help with psychological adjustment. Religion has been regarded to play a crucial role in a person's coping process if it is prominent in their lifestyle. Thus, religious meaning serves as the basis for the global beliefs and goals of many individuals (Park, 2010). Paragment, (1997) agrees that the extent to which religion is involved in a given individual's coping with a particular event is largely predicated on the extent to which religion is a part of her orienting system. Hence religion is far more likely to be used in coping for those for whom religion is a highly salient aspect of their understanding of self and the world than in coping of those who are less devout. Nonetheless, religion as emotion-focused coping essentially helps people restore a sense of equilibrium in distressful times and also provides them a meaningful life (Park, 2010).

Self distraction in prison involves using behaviors such as watching television, exercising, reading (for those who attend basic education classes), or engaging in other pleasurable activities (such as pageant shows and sporting activities). This helps to distract oneself from the stress of incarceration. Distraction is sometimes conceptualized as an accommodative or secondary control coping tactic which involves changing one's goals in order to accept the stressful event and related problems (Allen & Leary, 2010). Similarly, secondary control involves changing oneself and one's reactions in relation to the environment, whereas primary control involves controlling the environment itself. When confronted with the unavoidable stressor, incarcerated women may distract themselves from the situation, this being a secondary control strategy. Thus, whether distraction is adaptive and effective depends on the situation. To the extent that the situation cannot be changed, distraction may help the incarcerated women to take their mind off the pain, worries, or other difficult circumstances that are associated with this situation. The present study will seek to establish how women incarcerated at KWP use distraction at the first-order level.

A correlational study that investigated relationships between coping strategies of inmates and their psychological and physical well-being showed that general affective states such as optimism were related to both psychological and physical well-being (Van Harreveld, Van der Pligt, Claassen, & Van Dijk, 2007). Moreover, inmates who experienced specific negative emotions such as regret, anxiety, and sadness reported more psychological and physical

complaints. The way in which inmates coped with these negative emotions was also important. Inmates who used ventilation emotion-focused coping strategy were in better health than inmates inclined to keep their negative feelings to themselves. The authors concluded that emotion-focused coping by sharing negative emotions with people in one's social network can help to increase both psychological and physical well-being. Consequently, mechanisms that mediate meaning-making and coping include resilience, adaptation, and fair treatment. The cited study examined how the sample experienced negative and positive emotions separately. However, the present study included use of emotional support, venting, positive reframing, acceptance, religion and self blame in the second-order factors created among the scales to form the larger repertoire of emotion-focused coping strategy.

### 2.5.2. Problem-focused coping

Problem-focused coping generally gives the individual a sense of control over their stressor and is considered the most efficient method of handling stress and adversity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This is because it targets the source of the stress and eliminates the source itself or aids in learning to manage the stress associated with the source. Problem-focused coping aims at resolving the stressful situation or event by altering the source of the stress by removing the source of the stress, seeking information or assistance in handling the situation, and removing oneself from the stressful situation. Carver (2011) observed that problem-focused coping had a biological effect on stress, lowering the cortisol levels and promoting recovery from stress. Ineffective problem-focused coping involves utilizing problem solving to manage the stress when the stressor cannot be modified. People who use this strategy may seek instrumental support (social support or professional advice/information) on how to deal with their stress, and, actively plan, take direct action, focus on the positives, and become patient with their situation when needed (Leary et al., 2007). They may ruminate on the past, but are generally more productive in changing behavioral and cognitive methods in dealing with the stress.

Problem-focused variables for which information was sought in the present study were; use of instrumental support, planning and active coping. Use of instrumental support, also referred to as social support is normally sought for two reasons: information and moral support. Seeking information is the core of problem-oriented coping in that individuals want to know how to better deal with their stress (Allen & Leary, 2010). Support seeking behavior encompasses a

broad array of tactics that involve seeking help, advice, comfort, and support from parents, friends, professionals, spiritual figures, and others. Although some taxonomies of coping suggest that seeking support should be considered a higher-order factor in its own right, other theorists have included it as a lower-order factor that can serve a variety of higher-order functions (Allen & Leary, 2010). For example, someone may seek support as either a problem-focused or emotion-focused strategy. Although one might expect that people who desire to treat themselves caringly might turn to other people for support at times, available evidence suggests that the self-compassion is not related to seeking instrumental support - a problem-focused tactic - or emotional support from other people (Allen & Leary, 2010).

Negy, Woods, and Carlson, (2014) carried out a study in a minimum-security prison camp for women whose purpose was to identify specific coping strategies associated with psychological adjustment. A sample of 153 female inmates completed a demographic questionnaire, the COPE inventory, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, the Beck Depression Inventory, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Of 13 theoretically distinct coping strategies, 6 were significantly positively associated with adjustment (higher self-esteem, less depression, and less state anxiety) and 2 were significantly negatively associated with adjustment. Larger coping repertoires were also associated with higher adjustment scores. The authors concluded that larger coping repertoires are associated with higher adjustment scores, a notion adopted to examine the coping strategies in the current study.

### 2.5.3. Avoidance Coping

Avoidance coping, proposed by Carver (1987) refers to choosing a behavior based on trying to avoid or escape particular thoughts and feelings. Avoidance coping strategies include: minimization, self-enhancement, re-interpretation, attentional diversion, downplaying, denial, behavioral disengagement, emphasizing one's own efficacy, humor, accentuating positive aspects, and, trust. Avoidance coping is the most commonly used strategy in the United States though associated with little to worse outcomes of psychological well-being (Allen & Leary, 2010). Specifically, earlier findings have shown that lack of behavioral engagement can lead to meaninglessness (Park, Riley, & Snyder, 2012). Avoidance can be understood as denial: it is as if the person has decided that there is no stressor, and therefore there is no need to change

behavior, perception, or emotional response. It was interesting to observe how the sample in the present study would perform on avoidant scores in comparison with the cited evidence.

Avoidance can result from a sense that although the situation is indeed stressful, it can never be changed and may actually be the stop-gap measure in overwhelming events. Thus, the present study sought information about three avoidance coping strategies namely behavioral disengagement, humor and denial to establish how specific choices in the ongoing levels of coping might predict meaning-making in incarcerated women at KWP. In sum, the cited studies provided insights about distinct sources of meaning, demographic attributes, and coping strategies against which meaning-making could be measured.

# CHAPTER THREE
# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1. Research design

The correlational, descriptive survey design was adopted for the present study to explore the relationship between meaning-making and coping strategies of women incarcerated at KWP. The one group design had participants from one women prison. Both methods enabled the investigator to collect relevant information from many subjects in a short time (two weeks) and subsequently analyze relationships between meaning made by women in the course of incarceration and the coping strategies (McLeod, 2014). Descriptive survey specifically enabled the investigator to gather information about prevailing situations for the purpose of description, interpretation, proper analyses, interpretation, comparisons, identification of trends and relationships, and the making of predictions **(**Laerd Dissertations, 2012**).**

## 3.2. Study Area

KWP was established in 1968 by law under "Subsidiary Legislation of 1911"... CAP. 90section 24 – coded as- L.N. 721/1961, L.N. 297/1968(Kenya Law Reports, 2014).The prison is located in Otonglo Division, Kisumu West Sub-county, Kisumu County, 1.5 kilometers off Kisumu-Busia Highway and 2 kilometers from Kisumu International airport (See Appendix J). During the period of the present study, the prison was admitting women aged over 18 years from Western region of Kenya. Although there are several women prisons in Kenya, KWP was chosen because, first, CAP. 90 Prison rules provide for similar governing structures in all female correctional institutions in the country, as well as other physical and social amenities. The female inmates were more accessible to the researcher owing to the support accorded by the prison management. They were also thought to be well-equipped to be recruited as participants for the study given their mental and physical status as well as fitting the inclusion criteria. They were expected to comprehend the process of collecting data and cooperate throughout the process.

Work related activities in the prison included farming, industry, baby care, hair salon and cleaning duties in administration offices. Leisure activities included watching television, sports, singing, modeling concerts and beauty pageants organized and sponsored by the prison administration in collaboration with private sponsors. KWP administration provided support for

religious programs and practices every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon for Christians and Friday for Muslims respectively. Religious activities differed according to inmate interest, of time allotted and space available in the prison, availability and competence of the religious staff, and the support of the correctional authorities. Programs offered at KWP include adult basic education as well as instruction in vocational or work-related skills. Training is provided in specific trade areas such as tailoring, art and craft, prison industry, work release programs, and farming. In addition to educational and vocational trainings, prisons offer opportunities for work experience which can serve as a rehabilitative tool as inmates develop and improve work habits and skills.

### 3.3. Study population

The population of incarcerated women at KWP as reflected in the register by October, 2017 was 137.The study targeted the total population of 127 women aged 18 years and above, regardless of their imprisonment status (that is, both convicted and yet to be convicted). The participants had been in KWP from one hour to more than three years. KWP admits adult women aged 18 years and above and it was assumed that adult women could very well comprehend the information that was being sought by the researcher given their experiences in and out of prison.

### 3.4. Sampling procedure and Sample size

A saturated sample of 127 participants was drawn through Saturated Sampling technique which included the total population except 10 who participated in the pilot study. Participants were sampled from the official register at the KWP records office. A saturated sample was expected to provide deep insights into the phenomenon of interest and this reduced risk of missing potential insights (Laerd Dissertations, 2012**).** For the present study**,** saturation did not mean the point at which no new ideas emerged, rather it implied that categories were fully accounted for, the differences and relationships between them were explained, tested and validated (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). It was a saturated sample because all women at KWP were recruited to participate in the study. This was intended to buffer the study from the foreseeable attritional challenges. Attrition was explicitly taken into consideration in recruitment plans for the final sample hence saturation sampling was adopted to ensure the desired sample size was realized. Moreover, it

may not have been possible to obtain a complete sample frame given the peculiarities of studying a population with quite a high turnover.

Every subject meeting the criteria of inclusion was selected and data collection commenced until the required sample size was achieved. A pilot study was conducted in order to evaluate feasibility, time, cost, adequacy of instrumentation, and improve upon the design of the study before conducting the full-scale research. Approximately 10 participants were obtained for pilot study in view of the attrition dynamics in this population. Neiswiadomy (2002) recommends that approximately 10 participants for a pilot study can be obtained when there are cost and time constraints as well as by size and variability of the population. Implementing procedures with even a few cases is likely to be very informative with respect to difficulty in recruitment as was the case for the present study given the situation with prison setting. Attrition rates in Kisumu Women Prison were very critical to decision on pilot study sample size. Inmates were being admitted and released under different conditions on a daily basis and the population was quite unpredictable.

### 3.5. Data Collection Techniques

A letter of introduction to enable the investigator to collect data at KWP was obtained from Maseno University, School of Graduate Studies (see Appendix G). Permit to conduct research was obtained from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, Kenya - Permit No: NACOSTIP/17/06909/18550 - (see Appendix H). On the instruction of NACOSTI, Kenya, Kisumu County Director of Education research authorization letter was obtained from Ministry of Education, duly signed by the Kisumu County Director of Education (See Appendix I). Kisumu County Commissioner research authorization letter was obtained from Ministry on Interior and Coordination of National Government, duly signed by the Kisumu County Commissioner, Kisumu County (see Appendix J). The letters requested the KWP administration to allow for data collection from participants. Quantity of test instruments was based on the sample size and the pilot study sample size. Participants were contacted through appropriate KWP protocols. The Officer-in-Charge authorized the Welfare Officer to contact the prospective participants first, informing them of the intention to conduct research.

The Officer-in-Charge organized for a meeting between the investigator, Welfare Officers and the participants during which the planned study was outlined. This was an induction meeting meant to introduce all who were involved in any way and participants were also given an opportunity to seek clarity on arising matters. Permission was granted by the Officer-in-Charge on behalf of the Regional Commander to allow the researcher weekly visits to establish rapport with the anticipated participants before the actual data collection. During the four visits, the participants were sensitized on the method of the intended research. When the researcher was satisfied the recruited participants were well equipped, voluntary informed written consent was obtained a day before commencing the exercise of data collection (see Appendix A). Data was collected by administering three questionnaires by the investigator and two assistants who were also the KWP Welfare officers. Both convicted prisoners and pre-trial detainees participated in the study and all the questionnaires were administered in the welfare office on a daily basis for a period of two weeks, except for Sundays. The welfare office was spacious and offered the necessary privacy.

### 3.6. Instruments for data collection

The study utilized survey data that comprised of three measures: The PMP-B (a 21-item measure of personal meaning), a demographic profile (a profile comprised of eight questions) designed to gather relevant demographic information from the sample, and the Brief Cope inventory (a 28-item measure of three coping levels). The investigator and assistants administered the questionnaires in order to minimize non-response rates. The demographic profile was allotted 20 minutes, the PMP-B 30 minutes and the Brief COPE inventory 30 minutes to fill in. In sum information was obtained using the three questionnaires within one hour for each of the 12 participants each day from Monday to Friday for the two weeks and the remaining seven participants on the first Saturday.

#### 3.6.1. Demographic profile

This instrument was developed to evaluate the demographic characteristics of the sample and specifically inquired about participants' age, education level attained, marital status, number of children, caretaking responsibility, imprisonment term, current activity involvement, and prison visitation. Participants completed a demographic profile which had seven characters and three

groups of independent variables to choose from. They indicated their responses by checking the appropriate answer as instructed (see Appendix B).

### 3.6.2. Personal Meaning Profile-B questionnaire

In order to establish participants' psychological and social correlates of presence of meaning-making, PMP-B (Wong, 1998) developed for the purpose of measuring meaning in life was administered. The 21-item scale consisting of seven sub-scales representing the various facets of meaning-making namely relationship, achievement, religion, self transcendence, self acceptance, intimacy, and fair treatment. The original Likert scale had seven responses which were modified to five items in order to make it relevant to the overall purpose of the present study (see Appendix D).The original scale had seven responses of which 1 meant not at all, 3 refered to moderately with 2 indicated an in-between position, 5 referred to a great deal with 4 indicated middle position between moderate and a great deal. The adjusted questionnaire presented five responses on a scale of; 1 = not at all, 2 = seldom, 3 = moderately, 4 = usually, and, 5 = a great deal. Information on seven subscales with each subscale containing 3 items was distributed as shown below: Assessment for psychological and social profiles was done by recording at seven levels:

- Achievement (items- 5, 6, 16)
- Religion (items- 4, 9, 18)
- Self-transcendence(items-1, 3, 17)
- Self-acceptance (items- 11, 15, 21)
- Relationship (items- 7, 8, 12)
- Intimacy (items- 2, 13, 14)
- Fair treatment (items- 10, 19, 20)

Relationship, achievement, self acceptance, religion and self transcendence represented the psychological correlates of presence of meaning-making while the social correlates were represented by relationship, intimacy, and fair treatment. *Achievement* refers to an individual's accomplishments or what they strive to achieve; *religion* refers to an individual's belief in a higher power and personal relationship with God; *self-transcendence* focuses on the value of serving others; while *self acceptance* refers to having the right attitude towards self and an ability integrate past mistakes and personal limitations into one's present life and future goals. *Relationship* refers having the right attitude and skills needed for building community and

working with others; *intimacy* focuses on family and intimate relationships; and *fair treatment* refers to how an individual is treated and respected by others in society. The participants were expected to evaluate and reflect on incarceration meanings in light of these items. Wong (1998) notes that the closer one's ratings on the idealized prototype, the higher they tend to score on measures of well-being.

### 3.6.3. Brief COPE inventory

The present study collected data from a saturated sample of 127 participants by administering the Brief COPE inventory. Of particular relevance to the question of meaning-making in the present study was the need to use a questionnaire that assesses various behaviors relevant to the specific context of coping with incarceration. The Brief COPE inventory was chosen because it is conceptually close to meaning making (Carver et al., 1987). The Brief COPE inventory was chosen the present study because it is conceptually close to meaning-making. The items to be measured were clustered into three coping levels namely emotion-focused, problem-focused, and avoidant coping. Specific items included: self-distraction, active coping, denial, substance use, use of emotional support, use of instrumental support, behavioral disengagement, venting, positive reframing, planning, humor, acceptance, religion, and self-blame.

The introduction section of Brief Cope was modified to make it relevant to the participants and the location of study. This adopted inventory was administered to obtain information on 28 items that were rated using Likert Scale. The 14 areas assessing several coping responses comprised of scales that were computed as follows (with no reversals of coding):

- Self-distraction (items- 1, 19)
- Active coping (items- 2, 7)
- Denial (items -3, 8)
- Substance use (items- 4, 11)
- Use of emotional support (items - 5, 15)
- Use of instrumental support (items-10, 23)
- Behavioral disengagement (items - 6, 16)
- Venting, items 9 and 21
- Positive reframing, items 12 and 17
- Planning, items 14 and 25

- Humor, items 18 and 28
- Acceptance, items 20 and 24
- Religion, items 22 and 27
- Self-blame, items 13 and 26

Each scale was looked at separately to determine its strength and spread in relation to the other variables (Table 12). Emotion-focused coping items comprised of 8 items namely: self-distraction, substance use, use of emotional support, venting, positive reframing, acceptance, religion, and self-blame. Problem focused coping comprised of 3 items: use of instrumental support, planning and active coping; while avoidant coping comprised 3 items: behavioral disengagement, humor and denial. The 14 coping items were rated using a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = '*I haven't been doing this at all'* 2 = *'I've been doing this a little bit'* 3 = '*I've been doing this a medium amount'* and 4 = *'I've been doing this a lot'*.

Then second-order factors were created from among the scales namely emotion-focused coping, problem focused coping and avoidant coping. These factors were eventually measured to determine their ability to predict meaning making. Composition of these second order factors was as follows: emotion focused which comprised of self distraction, venting, self blame, positive reframing, use of emotional support, substance use, acceptance and religion; problem focused comprising of use of instrumental support, active coping and planning; and, avoidance coping comprising of behavioral disengagement, humor and denial. The data was collated and tabulated for statistical analysis and results were interpreted for findings and recommendations.

### 3.7. Reliability and Validity

The survey began with a researcher-developed demographic profile and two standardized instruments with known psychometric properties. Reliability meant the extent to which the measures yielded the same result consistently under the same conditions. PMP-B previously went through a series of studies that culminated in a final one when a Principle Component Analysis was conducted on a combined group on a sample (153 males and 182 females) in the US and results demonstrated clear stability of the subscale structure. Test-retest reliability for a five-week period showed stability for each subscale and for the total score of the Personal Meaning Profile-B, $r$ (123) = .73. The corresponding alpha for the 21-item PMP-B total score of

*r* = .84. In order to test the suitability of the research tools and verify their cultural equivalence, test-retest reliability was further obtained by administering the three tests to 10 female prisoners at KWP twice at an interval of one week.

Evidence was sought that an observed correlation was at least .70, a lower bound to acceptable stability and preferably that it exceeds .80 for it to be qualified as an established instrument. With 10 participants per group, the population value easily might be as high as .80 or as low as .56 (Hertzog, 2007). For the present study, the scores were correlated in order to evaluate the test for stability over time correlated using Pearson's *r* and reliability score for PMP-B, *r* (10) .87 obtained was deemed reliable. Validity was concerned with just how accurately the observable measures represented the concept in question. Subject experts in the Department of Psychology were consulted to determine face validity and help refine them to suite the present study. The standardized instruments had their scoring interpretations and this ensured construct validity. Wong (1998) had used PMP-B to study personal meaning and to investigate how various sources of meaning seeking and meaning-making are related to various psychological and social constructs. Thus, content validity was ascertained through doing a literature review. The validity and reliability of the scale was quite high, with an overall Cronbach's alpha Coefficient of 0.93 and 0.94 respectively.

### 3.8. Data Analysis Procedure

**S**PSS Version 23 statistical software was used to conduct all statistical analyses. Quantitative data was coded, entered into database and each objective analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics (frequencies and percentages). Relationships were examined to determine size and direction of correlations. Pearson's *r* was performed to determine the strength of the relationships between meaning making and psychological and social variables for the first and second objective respectively. When the data failed to satisfy the normality test of the one-way ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis H (also called "one way ANOVA Test on ranks"), a rank-based nonparametric test was used to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the three groups of the significant demographic characteristic on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable (meaning making).

For the third objective, data was analyzed to determine the influence of demographic characteristics on meaning making. The Kruskal-Wallis H, an extension of the Mann-Whitney U

test that allows for comparison of the three independent groups. In order for Kruskal-Wallis H test to be performed, 4 assumptions had to be met:

*Assumption 1:* The continuous distributions for the test variable were exactly the same for the different populations.

*Assumption 2:* The cases represented random samples from the populations, and the scores on the test variable were independent of each other.

*Assumption 3:* The chi-square statistic for the Kruskal-Wallis H test was only approximate and the *p* value for the chi-square approximation test was assumed to be fairly accurate because the number of cases was greater than 30.

*Assumption 4:* For interpretation of the results from the Kruskal-Wallis H test to be made, it had to be determined whether distributions in each group had the same shape (that is variability).

Subsequently, a chi-square statistic was used to evaluate differences in mean ranks to assess the null hypothesis that the medians were equal across the groups. However, in order to further determine which of these groups differed from each other, a post hoc analysis using Mann-Whitney *U* test was performed. For the fourth objective, regression analysis was performed to determine which coping strategy predicted meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP. The study findings were presented in textual form and tables. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

### 3.9. Ethical Considerations

This study was examined by subject experts to determine its suitability and overall soundness of design and implementation. Ethical principles, values, and standards of practice included maintaining the rights of research participants. Measures were put in place to ensure the investigator's safety during data collection by adhering to the established safety protocols for staff at the correctional institution. These included: (a) staff awareness of the investigator's location when interviewing a participant, (b) a prison officer was assigned to be outside the partially open door to the room where the exercise was taking place and (e) removal of any items in the room that could be potentially used as a weapon. Clear consent documentation which addressed issues pertaining to autonomy and veracity was obtained and participants were assured that participation or lack thereof would not have any impact on the current conditions of

confinement. Serialized codes for each individual alongside the admission number were used to identify, conceal participants true identify and protect any information obtained.

Participants were informed that the decision to participate was voluntary, complemented by their signature or that of an appointee, having read through and understood the information provided in the consent letter (See Appendix C). They were informed that this research would not provide direct psychological intervention in the event that they developed any issues needing counseling but rather arrangements would be put in place to ensure they were appropriately debriefed. Participants' privacy and anonymity were up held, and, limits of confidentiality were explicitly discussed (e.g., confidentiality would be breached if anything was revealed about intended suicide; harm to someone else, if a crime was intended on being committed). In an effort to uphold respect, fidelity, beneficence and justice, the investigator administered the questionnaire in person, assisted by two Prison Welfare Officers who had a background in psychology.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESULTS, INTEPRETATATION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reports the results on the four objectives of the study namely psychological and social correlates of meaning making, selected demographic characteristics that influence meaning-making, and coping strategies that predict meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP. The reporting of statistical results followed a consistent pattern: restatement of the objectives, after which pertinent descriptive statistics and inferential statistics are presented in tables. Each result was simultaneously discussed for each study objective in the context of related literature. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

## 4.1.Participants demographic characteristics

Participants' identifying information was obtained using the demographic to provide a general description of the subjects in the study as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**
***Participants' Demographics Characteristics***

| Characteristic | Likert scale | *f* | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age (in years) | 18-35 | 63 | 49.6 |
| | 36-60) | 60 | 47.2 |
| | 61+ | 4 | 3.2 |
| Level of education | Primary | 104 | 81.9 |
| | Secondary | 21 | 16.5 |
| | College/university | 2 | 1.6 |
| Marital status | Single | 43 | 33.8 |
| | Married | 74 | 58.3 |
| | Separated/divorced | 10 | 7.9 |
| Number of children | None | 16, | 12.6 |
| | One | 26 | 20.5 |
| | > one | 85 | 66.9 |
| Imprisonment term | 0-1 Year | 62 | 48.8 |
| | 1 – 3years | 25 | 19.7 |
| | > 3 years | 40 | 31.5 |
| Activity involvement | Always | 104 | 81.9 |
| | Sometimes | 18 | 14.2 |
| | Never | 5 | 3.9 |
| Prison visitation | < one month | 117 | 92.1 |
| | 1 month – 1 year | 9 | 7.1 |
| | > 1 year | 1 | 0.8 |
| Caretaking responsibility | Spouse | 17 | 15.3 |
| | Relative | 85 | 76.6 |
| | Don't know | 9 | 8.1 |

Results in Table 1 showed that of the 127 respondents, half were aged between 18-35 years (50%, *n* = 63), an almost equal proportion were aged between 36-60 years (47%, *n* = 60), and a few were aged over 61 years (3%, *n* = 4). The US Federal Bureau of Prison statistics (2018) reports similar trends for the average age for female prisoners across the state jails at 18 – 35 years (39%), 36-60 years (58%), and over 61 years (5%). On level of education attained, over three quarters of the sample had attained primary level (82%, *n* = 104), while few had reach secondary (17%, *n* = 21) and only two had studied up to college or university level (2%, *n*= 2). This result replicates research findings on other populations of female inmates that literacy rates among prisoners is generally low, and substantially lower than in the general population (National Institute for Literacy, 2002; Greenberg et al., 2007).

Many women enter prison with educational deficits and adult basic education in one of the programs offered at KWP to empower them with knowledge as well as instruction in vocational or work-related skills. Majority of the respondents were married (58%, *n* = 74), close to a third were single (34%, *n* = 43) and less than one third were separated or divorced (8%, *n* = 10). Bureau of Justice Statistics (2018) indicates that when a woman is incarcerated, her family will often break up resulting in many children ending up in state care and their husbands in alternative relationships. This is evidenced by the finding that of the 58% who were married, only 15% (*n* = 17) of the spouses were living with their children. Majority of the sample had more than one child (67%, *n* = 85), less than a quarter had at least one child (21%, *n* = 26), while a few had none (13%, *n* = 16). This result concurs with research findings by Lartey (2016) that about 80% of women in jails have dependent children and in a majority of these cases, the mother is single. This finding confirms Van Tongeren and Klebe's (2009) assertion that incarcerated women are prisoners first; mothers second and majority are primary caregivers for their children.

Close to a half of the sample had been in prison for less than one year (49%; *n* = 62), while approximately a quarter had been in KWP for more than three years (32%; *n* = 40), and quite a few had been incarcerated between 1-3 years (20%, *n* = 25). Imprisonment term is significant because it is associated with time. Time has been linked to such concepts as: the process of adaptation, coping with trauma, and the impact of psychological disorders on time orientation (Livneh, 2013). This finding confirms general observations from previous and current researches

that female offenders are jailed for non-violent crimes which attract shorter imprisonment terms (Prisons for women, 2018). Participants were also asked to rate their activity involvement and the result indicated that majority were always engaged in activity (82%, 104). The result that less than a quarter of the sample was involved sometimes (14%), and a few never participated in prison activities (4%, 5). Neimeyer (2012) found that incarceration can result in a decrease in self-evaluation and evaluations of work for some prisoners which explain the reason for a few who were not always participating in prison work. Wooldredge (2013) found that healthier attitudes correspond to greater program participation and more frequent visitation.

Prison officials have long recognized that programs aimed at preventing idleness and encouraging inmates to develop skills and social behaviors are beneficial for institutional security as well as public safety (Government Accountability Office, 2012). The result of the present study concurs with previous observations that majority of these women enter prison with few skills and since prison offers opportunity for developing a variety of vocational skills could explain the women's enthusiasm at getting involved in these activities. Majority of the participants had been visited in the first month of being incarcerated (92%, 117), while very few were visited after the first month to one year (7%, $n$ = 9) and only one participant beyond one year. Out of the over three quarters of the sample who were mothers, majority reported that their children were in the custody of relatives (77%, $n$ = 85), few were living with the spouse (15%, $n$ = 17) while a minority did not know the whereabouts of their children (8%, $n$ = 9).

This result concurs with the UN report that when fathers are imprisoned, the mothers usually continues to care for the children, but when a mother is imprisoned, the father often does not continue to care for the children, resulting in large numbers of children being institutionalized or displaced (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008). Less than a quarter (9%) of the sample did not know the whereabouts of their children. Aday and Krabil (2011) found out that close to a fifth of women prisoners are single parents before imprisonment compared to nine percent of the general population, an observation that seems suggest a weak support systems for their children upon incarceration.

Prison visitation may form an integral part of social support and caring for the incarcerated woman. Social support and connections to the outside world established and maintained through

prison visitation are critical programs that help inmates maintain communication with family and friends throughout their incarceration *(*Tewksbury, & Connor, 2012). Accordingly, prison visitation may conceivably reduce stressors inherent in the prison environment, thereby enhancing institutional coping among incarcerated women. However, the results indicate that with passage of time the frequency of visits diminish and eventually no visits at all for the long-term imprisonment period. Ultimately, these demographics were analyzed in the third objective to determine their influence on meaning making. This can be explained by the comparative rarity of women's facilities, meaning that they are often located so far away from home that it can be difficult, and sometimes impossible, for families to visit.

### 4.2. Psychological correlates of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP

The first objective of this study was to establish psychological correlates of presence of meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP. It was hypothesized that there would be no correlation between psychological characteristics and presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP, based on the scores from PMP-B questionnaire. Participants' responses on the four psychological correlates of presence of meaning-making are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

***Responses on Psychological Factors in Relation to Presence of Meaning-making***

| Character | Frequency of responses *N* (%) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | ***M*** | ***SD*** |
| **1. Religion** | - | 1(1) | 2(2) | 13(10) | 111(87) | 4.85 | 0.56 |
| 2. **Achievement** | - | 9(7) | 56(44) | 55(43) | 7(6) | 3.45 | 1.08 |
| **3. Self- transcendence** | 1(1) | 8(6) | 16 (13) | 92(72) | 10(8) | 3.74 | 1.01 |
| **4. Self acceptance** | - | 12(9) | 38(30) | 56(44) | 21(17) | 3.71 | 1.30 |

***N* = 127**

Participants reported highest mean scores for religion (*M* = 4.85, *SD* = 0.56), over self-transcendence (*M* = 3.74, *SD* = 1.01) and self acceptance (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = 1.30). However, of the three, achievement had the lowest mean score (*M* = 3.45, *SD* = 1.08). All respondents reported having attained some sense of achievement, self-acceptance and religious experience, while one

participant had no sense of self-transcendence. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between psychological factors and presence of meaning-making. Results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

***Pearson's Correlation Analysis for Presence of Meaning-making and Psychological Factors***

| | | Meaning -making | Self acceptance | Self-transcendence | Achievement | Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Meaning making | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .597** | .748** | .473** | .547** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| Self acceptance | Pearson Correlation | .597** | 1 | .432** | .196* | .222* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .000 | .027 | .012 |
| Self transcendence | Pearson Correlation | .748** | .432** | 1 | .229** | .464** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | .010 | .000 |
| Achievement | Pearson Correlation | .473** | .196* | .229** | 1 | .182* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .027 | .010 | | .041 |
| Religion | Pearson Correlation | .547** | .222* | .464** | .182* | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .012 | .000 | .041 | |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The first hypothesis predicted that self-transcendence, self acceptance, religion and achievement would be negatively correlated to presence of meaning-making. However, results indicated a positive correlation between self-transcendence and presence of meaning making, $r$ (127) = .748, $p < .001$. This meant that higher scores for self transcendence were associated with higher scores for presence of meaning-making, suggesting that the more self-transcending, the more meaning was made from the experience of incarceration. There was a positive relationship between self acceptance and presence of meaning-making, $r$ (127) = .597, $p < .001$. Higher scores for

acceptance were associated with higher scores for meaning-making and this meant that the more accepting these women were of their circumstances the more meanings they made of the incarceration.

Similarly, high scores obtained showed statistically positive associations between religion and presence of meaning-making, $r$ (127) = .547, $p < .001$. This meant that the more religious these women were, the more they meaning they made of incarceration situation. Lastly, higher score for achievement was associated with higher score in meaning-making, $r$ (127) = .473, $p < .001$. Thus, the more their sense of achievement meant the more meanings made of the experience of incarceration. Therefore, hypothesis one was not supported by the data. These findings affirm Park's (2010) assertion that the mere search for meaning in the face of adversity may not necessarily be beneficial to the well-being of the individual. Rather, the deciding factors are usually the products of the meaning-making process referred as meaning made. Consequently, these meanings result in the subjective sense of having made sense of incarceration.

The positive correlation between self-transcendence and presence of meaning-making ($r$ = .748, $p < .001$) relates to observations by Mattis (2003) that in a way, the experience of meaning seems to buffer the daily experience of distress associated with incarceration. This result also concurs with Maschi and Gibson's (2012) finding that the self-transcendent value is one of the world's assumptions that have been associated with positive mental health outcomes. From this result, it may be assumed that prisoners with such profiles might have better chances to lead pro-social and fulfilling lives while serving their jail terms. The fact that self transcendence showed a stronger association with presence of meaning-making more than self acceptance, religion and achievement is consistent with Frankl's (1966) suggestion that self-transcendence is an integral part of the human ability to create or make-meaning.

This finding further confirms suggestions that absence or frustration of self-transcendence in individuals faced with adversity may induce or perpetuate meaninglessness and unfulfilled lives manifesting as mental health problems. With so much of their personal freedom taken away, incarcerated women not only seek redemption, but also try to discover the deeper meaning behind their predicament (Pattakos, 2010). These findings concur with Frankl's (1963) emphasis on the altruistic nature of self-transcendence with its basic values: experiential value which

focuses on relationships with people, life and nature with openness and appreciation; and attitudinal value which applies to finding meaning in times of suffering in a positive way by 1) taking a defiant attitude to confront it, 2) finding some important lesson or positive meaning in the negative experience, 3) revising our goals and global beliefs, 4) making the most of life in spite of suffering, 5) transforming suffering into an opportunity for being a heroic example to others, and, 6) transcending suffering by cultivating spirituality.

The high level of self- transcendence observed in the present study contradicts previous reports by Wong (2014) that this psychological factor may not be easily articulated given the restrictive prison environment. Park, Riley and Snyder, (2012) expressed that inherent in the meaning-making process is the generalized result, that is, the feeling of leading a meaningful life or not. The positive correlation between self acceptance and meaning-making ($r = .597$, $p < .001$) extends earlier research work in which self acceptance had been identified as one of the components of psychological well-being as well as one of the two components of existential coping (MacDonald, Wong, & Gingras, 2011). Self-acceptance is considered a necessary attitude to soften the blow of negative events, helps one to develop one true self or authenticity, and considered a prerequisite for change to occur (Pillay, 2016; Wong, 1998; Ryff, 1989 & Seligman, 2011).

More important is that self acceptance helps one to avoid unnecessary frustration particularly when achievement striving fails to materialize because of deficiency arising out of loss of autonomy related to incarceration (Wong, Reker, & Peacock, 2006). This acceptance makes it easier to cope with a range of personal and social experiences inherent to the most difficult of circumstances. Because of its adaptive benefits, self acceptance facilitates positive reappraisal, reinforces resorting to spiritual values, and enables us to function much better by relation in a flexible manner to what cannot be changed in line with global meaning (Wong, 2013). In relation to meaning-making, self acceptance entails that the individual discover meaning through creative work, doing what they love and can do best, be authentic to self and pursue what's right according to one conscience and values in spite of obstacles.

KWP offers incarcerated women opportunities to display their talents in the prison industry and other organized activities as clearly demonstrated by over 80% of the sample's involvement in

prison activities (see Table 2). Allen and Leary (2010) argue that loss and suffering is one of the pathways of acceptance primarily appraised by incarcerated women. The experience of suffering and loss enables incarcerated women to become mature, responsible, positive, compassionate and resilient, learning to accept the negative and unchangeable aspects of life and self. Subsequently, acceptance makes it easier for incarcerated women to cope with a range of personal and social experiences inherent in incarceration fully and meaningfully regardless of prevailing circumstances.

The positive association between religion and presence of meaning-making ($r = .547$, $p < .001$) affirms Frankl's (1963) motivational dimension of meaning. This dimension views humans not merely as biological, social, and psychological beings but also spiritual beings capable of transcending physical limitations through meaning and spirituality. Although it is difficult to judge why an inmate becomes involved with religion, in many cases, inmates gain direction and meaning for their lives from the practice of religion while in prison (Park, 2010). In some cases they are simply practicing their faith by worshiping God or a higher power (O'Connor & Duncan, 2011). Park and Edmondson (2010) suggested that religion as a function of psychological well being is a source of comfort to women in prison and a form of atonement for guilt arising out of imprisonment. A host of more specific meaning-related needs have been identified and although people have many options for meeting these needs, religion is one of the most powerful sources of meaning. In KWP, religion also helps to enhance social interaction with others in their environment. It is assumed here that incarcerated women seek whatever they hold to be of value or significance in life, that which gives meaning to their lives.

KWP's women value of religion also resonates with Frankl's (1962) observation that meaning can be discovered under all circumstances through doing a deed, experiencing a value - in this case religion - and experiencing suffering. Because the core of many religious beliefs includes acceptance and love from a higher being, and from members of the faith group, inmates often feel better about themselves if they practice religion while incarcerated (Pargament, Magyar-Russell, & Murray-Swank, 2005). As espoused in the conceptual framework, religion serves as a source of global meaning systems by providing individuals with comprehensive and integrated frameworks for meaning that are able to explain worldly events, experiences and situations in highly satisfactory ways (Park, 2010). As earlier intimated, Pargament, (2002) observed that

religion is central to the life purposes of many people, providing their ultimate motivation and primary goals and values for living as well as guidelines for achieving those goals. Thus, as a framework of meaning, religion can strongly influence individuals' initial situational appraisals of incarceration or understanding, global meaning and outcome of meaning-making process (meanings made).

Religion provides opportunities for women incarcerated at KWP to transcend their own concerns or experience and connect with something greater. Ultimately, religion makes bold and authoritative claims regarding the ability to provide a sense of significance. All these characteristics lead to the unmatched ability to serve as the source of global meaning systems (Park & Edmondson, 2010). However in contrast, Norenzayan and Lee (2010) argue that religious beliefs can be negative in their content and influence on the believer particularly when people abdicate responsibility to take actions to alleviate problems, hence posing the risk of religious fatalism. However, Park (2010) argues that religion is central to people's life purposes, providing their ultimate motivation and primary goals for living as well as prescriptions and guidelines for achieving these goals. When religion is incorporated into people's global systems, their understanding of the divine will inform their beliefs about the nature of people, this world, as well as perhaps the next.

Achievement, as earlier implied is a phase of psychological adjustment associated with positive outcomes (Korte, et al. 2012). The moderate positive relationship between meaning-making and achievement ($r = .473$, $p < .001$) shows how these women take initiative, remain persistent and resourceful despite being in an atmosphere in which their life is controlled by external authority. However, this is in contradiction with previous research findings suggesting that increased dependency upon staff for direction and social introversion aggravates their frustrations, thus limiting inmate's achievement. McDonald, Wong, and, Gingras (2012) in contrast argue that people believe their lives have meaning when they are making progress towards their goals and hence achievement experiences are an important source of personal meaning.

Personal goals may organize and orient people toward valued activities which may in turn provide meaningful justification for further actions sustained through goal achievement and fulfillment (Emmons, 2003). Further, daily goal achievement has been found to be positively

related to daily well-being. Results of the current study also support earlier findings (Wong, 2013) that prisoners need to develop higher levels of self-acceptance, intimacy, and a sense of achievement in order to be adjusted. Although increases in self transcendence, self acceptance, religion and achievement were positively correlated to increase meaning making, self-transcendence was shown to have greater importance in such circumstances.

Park, Edomondson, Fenster, and Blank's (2008) suggest that efforts at meaning-making may influence the extent to which people in adversity make meaning from their experience. This is achieved through experience of post traumatic growth, finding life meaningful, and restoration of belief in a just world, and this may in turn influence their psychological adjustment. Cross-sectional and longitudinal path models of meaning-making process indicate that the efforts are related to better adjustment through the successful creation of adaptive meanings made from the prison experience. Park, Riley and Snyder, (2012) contend that meaning-making or creation of meaning is fluid and needs to be constructed on an ongoing process., hence the importance of recognizing any kind of achievement registered in the course of incarceration.

### 4.3. Social correlates of meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP

The second objective of this study was to establish social correlates of presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. The results are shown in Table 4

**Table 4**

***Participants' Responses on Social Correlates of Meaning-making***

| **Character** | **Frequency of responses *N* (%)** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | ***M*** | ***SD*** |
| Relationship | 1(1) | 36(28) | 52(41) | 37(29) | 1(1) | 3.04 | 0.70 |
| Intimacy | 1(1) | 33(26) | 37(29) | 55(43) | 1(1) | 3.27 | 0.91 |
| Fair treatment | 2(2) | 7(5) | 16(13) | 98(77) | 4(3) | 3.60 | 0.68 |

*N* =127

The second hypothesis predicted a negative correlation between social characteristics and presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. Participants' responses on social correlates of meaning-making revealed highest mean scores for fair treatment (*M* = 3.60, *SD* = 0.68) and relationship (*M* = 3.04, *SD* = 0.70), while intimacy had the lowest (*M* = 3.27, *SD* =

0.91). Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between meaning making and fair treatment, relationship and intimacy and the result tabulated as follows in Table 5.

**Table 5**

***Pearson's Correlation Between Social Factors and Presence of Meaning-making***

| | | Relationship | Intimacy | Fair treatment | Meaning making |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relationship | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .310** | .308** | .649** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | *N* | 127 | 127 | 127 | 127 |
| Intimacy | Pearson Correlation | .310** | 1 | .224* | .538** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .011 | .000 |
| | *N* | 127 | 127 | 127 | 127 |
| Fair treatment | Pearson Correlation | .308** | .224* | 1 | .654** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .011 | | .000 |
| | N | 127 | 127 | 127 | 127 |
| Meaning making | Pearson Correlation | .649** | .538** | .654** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The second hypothesis predicted a negative correlation between social variables and presence of meaning-making. Contrary to the hypothesis, the result intimated a positive correlation between meaning making and fair treatment, $r$ (127) = .654, $p < .001$. This meant that higher scores in fair treatment were associated with higher scores in meaning making. Significant relationships were also shown for relationship and meaning, $r$ (127) =.649, $p < .001$, which meant the increases in relationships resulted in increase in meaning-making. This indicated that the more these women formed relationships in prison the more they made meaning. The result further indicated that intimacy was significantly correlated to meaning making, $r$ (127) =.538, $p < .001$. Consequently, these moderate scores intimated that an increase in intimacy was associated with increase in

meaning-making of women incarcerated at KWP. Therefore, hypothesis two was not supported by the data.

The result of the present study finding that fair treatment is significantly associated with meaning making ($r = .654$, $p < .001$) concurs with previous research findings that fair treatment has emerged as an important source of meaning that highlights society's responsibility to promote justice, fairness, and equal opportunities (MacDonald, Wong, & Gingras, 2011). Further, this finding also holds true previous research findings that, adaptation and fair treatment are among other mechanisms that are related to meaning-making and coping (Van Harreveld, Van der Pligt, Claassen, & Van Dijk, 2007). Monahan, Goldweber and Cauffman, (2011) observed that socially, people's sense of meaninglessness is represented in lack of autonomy, social isolation and self alienation. Women are an extremely vulnerable group with complex needs and are often incarcerated further away from their families, impeding visits, and other crucial contacts (Silvia, 2014).

Consequently, they experience imprisonment as part of entrenched trajectories of social disadvantage. In support of these sentiments, findings of the present study suggest that the more women incarcerated at KWP felt a sense of fair treatment, the more they made meaning of their experience. Although Penal Reform International (2007) has fundamental principles set out in international law related to the treatment of prisoners, lack of attention to the very different and often more complex needs of women have resulted in neglect of their human rights, disregard to international recommendations and many instances of social justice. Subsequently, a review of gender equity in health states in prisons indicates that the present position is "unequal, unfair, ineffective, and inefficient" (Van den Bergh et al., 2011). Most African women prisoners don't benefit from legal representation and can barely understand, owing to language barriers, the trial procedure conducted in language other than vernacular.

Neumann (2011) correctly observes that the different compulsory jobs the women have to do reflect the idea that during their sentence, they learn how to achieve the classic 'feminine duties' society would require of them once outside. KWP has tended towards more emphasis on alternatives to custodial sentences alongside supporting women offenders who've committed non-violent or minor offenses (Criminal Justice Systems in Kenya, 2016). The legal and criminal justice systems are also changing, with new restorative justice approaches and this could explain

the result on association between fair treatment and presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. KWP has an annual open day when in accordance with Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Rule 26), incarcerated women are joined by their families, including their children and are allowed to socialize within the prison confines.

The result further indicates a positive association between relationship and presence of meaning making ($r = .649$, $p < .001$), replicating prevailing models of psychotherapy for women in corrections which recognize that women's identity, self-worth, and sense of empowerment are defined by the quality of relationships they have with others (Van Voorhis, et al 2008). Correctional scholars have also noted that many women offenders engage in co-dependent relationships that facilitate their behavior yet prison conditions severely limit their ability to recognize and achieve healthy, mutually empowering, relationships. It is apparent that when women enter prison, they are dislocated from their families and their social support network. The pain of separation from family and friends is a difficult aspect of imprisonment to deal with (Van Ginneken, 2014). However, the separation notwithstanding, the findings of the present study confirm that these women value relationships formed with fellow inmates and the efforts made at forming such associations tends to augment their meaning in life in the course of incarceration.

Emmons (2003) argues that relationship experiences and achievement related activities are included in constructions of the "taxonomy of meaning" and contribute to the global perception of meaning in life. Relational theory authors have developed three elements in women's development: 1) the cultural context implies the importance of social environments that a woman develops in, 2) relationships concept which recognizes the importance of connections as the central organizing feature of a woman's development, and, 3) pathways to growth which indicates that the value a woman places on relationships is a strength and can lead to healthy fostering of identity (Barlow, 2014). Incarcerated women's retrospective reflections and current accounts portray conflicted emotions about children and relationships both in and out of prison (Crewe, Hulley & Wright, 2017). This observation replicates the findings of this study in that relationship therefore stands out as a significant factor in determining presence of meaning-making. The stigmatization that imprisoned women experience carries great costs with few social bonds as evidenced poor visitation, which can be translated to mean they are being treated as outcasts and judged for their criminal behavior. This leads to women offenders experiencing a

degradation process in which they suffer feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability that are likely to lead to increased levels of shame in their relationships.

Punishment is compounded for many women inmates when they are separated from their children. Thus, Crewe, Hulley and Wright (2017) observe that incarcerated women come from a background of violence and abuse and it is critical that they feel safe and supported in their journey toward rehabilitation and recovery. Historically, there have been fewer prisons for women causing women to be imprisoned far away from their homes and families, and this causes serious problems in the attempt to preserve strong family ties (Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2007). The loss of autonomy that imprisonment entails is particularly painful, first, because of its impact on relationships with children, second, because it echoes the powerlessness that these women had experienced prior to imprisonment (Crewe, Hulley & Wright, 2017). Meaning in life declines when people lack interpersonal relationships that bolster their sense of self-worth and this potentially generates feelings of helplessness, loneliness, emptiness and meaninglessness.

A lack of social support factors into women's relational concerns to the extent that they end up opting for intimate relationships with fellow inmates. The result of the present study could be explained by the notion by Greenberg, 2012) that, both relationship and achievement may provide the women in prison with the illusion that their lives in prison will have a lasting impact on the world, thereby increasing their perception of how meaningful their existence is. Findings of this study support King, Hicks, Krull and Delo's (2006) assertion that daily positive affect is positively related to both global meaning in life and daily meaning as experienced on a day-to-day basis. Likewise, they also concluded that daily negative affect is negatively related to both global meaning in life and daily meaning as experienced on a day-to-day basis. Research on meaning-making in the context of stressful events and suffering has shown that people can find meaning in life in the absence of positive affect (Park & Folkman, 1997). Consistent with this possibility, daily measures of well-being and self focused constructs have been found to co-vary with daily events above and beyond the co-variations between daily affect and daily events. Daily social and achievement events can provide a sense of significance in the moment.

Most researches on intimacy among inmates focus on sexual intimacy but the present study was concerned with social bonds held by women incarcerated at KWP. Although intimacy was positively associated with presence of meaning-making ($r$ = .538, $p$ < .001) , it had the least score of the three social variables with only one participant reporting having experienced intimacy '*a great deal'.* This could be attributed to administrative, legal and constitutional prohibitions on same sex relationships in Kenyan that make inmates to avoid any kind of close relationship that could raise suspicion among the authorities and consequently attract punishment. However, a few women in prison have been known to engage in self-imposed social withdrawal and isolation, retreating deeply into themselves, virtually trusting no one, and leading isolated lives of quiet desperation (Villines, 2013).

Social isolation threatens the human motivation of the need to belong, a fundamental basic component of meaning in life (Richard, & David, 2012). The result of the present study emphasizes previous findings intimating that interpersonal relationships, intimacy and fair treatment are known to bolster people's sense of self-worth and lack of these will potentially generates feelings of helplessness, loneliness, emptiness and meaninglessness (Carlton & Segrave, 2011; Nedderman, Underwood, & Hardy, 2010; & Schlegel, et al, 2012). Vanhooren, Leijssen, and Dezutter (2017) argue that incarcerated women cope with their despair primarily through the social and emotional support, and a search for new meaning in life. Emotional deprivations of prison life and apparent abandoned by their loved ones as evidenced by poor visitation trends can incite incarcerated women to seek out forms of intimacy with fear. This explains the marginal association between intimacy and presence of meaning-making in the present study.

Women experience feelings of despair, depression, and anxiety arising over fear of losing custody of their children while others face the threat of getting divorced. Ray (2016) observed that a lack of intimacy with their children in particular can lead to psycho-physiological disruptions. Thus, close ties to families during incarceration are crucial for maintaining connections in the community (Villines, 2013). Family contacts and support from relatives can also enhance emotional survival and boost the incarcerated woman's self esteem. Because most prisoners suffer stigma and rejection from family and society, it is imperative that offenders

develop personal meaning that will transform the prison experience into optimal growth through effective coping (Liebman et al., 2010).

### 4.4. Influence of selected demographic characteristics on meaning-making of women incarcerated at KWP

The third hypothesis predicted that participants' selected demographic characteristics had no significant influence on meaning-making of women incarcerated at KWP. Basing on the responses as shown on Table 2, further analysis was performed to determine the influence of participants' selected demographics characteristics on meaning-making. However, the data failed to satisfy the normality test of the one way ANOVA, and hence the Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to establish that there were statistically insignificant differences between the three groups of each demographic characteristic on meaning making. To establish that meaning-making scores were not the same across all levels of demographic characteristics, a hypothesis test was performed and the results presented in Table 6.

**Table 6**

***Hypothesis Test Summary for Influence of Demographic Characteristics on Meaning-making***

| **Null hypothesis: The distribution of meaning making is not the same across categories of:-** | **Kruskal-Wallis H Test** | **Sig. *p* value** | **Decision** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age of respondents | Independent samples | 0.515 | Retain the null hypothesis |
| Level of education attained | Independent samples | 0.635 | Retain the null hypothesis |
| Marital status | Independent samples | 0.118 | Retain the null hypothesis |
| Number of children | Independent samples | 0.189 | Retain the null hypothesis |
| Imprisonment term | Independent samples | 0.007 | Reject the null hypothesis |
| Activity involvement | Independent samples | 0.294 | Retain the null hypothesis |
| Prison visitation | Independent samples | 0.625 | Retain the null hypothesis |
| Who lives with the children | Independent samples | 0.178 | Retain the null hypothesis |

The null hypotheses for all demographic characteristics except imprisonment term were retained. This meant that the population distributions were different in some way, center, spread and/or

shape, with some patterns of larger or smaller scores among them. A chi-square test was performed to evaluate differences in mean ranks for each demographic characteristic (see Table 7).

**Table 7**

***Chi Square Test for Differences in Mean Ranks for Demographic Characteristics***

| | *n* | Chi-square test statistic | Degrees of freedom | Asymptotic sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 127 | 1.330 | 2 | 0.515 |
| Level of education | 127 | 0.909 | 2 | 0.635 |
| Marital status | 127 | 4.277 | 2 | 0.118 |
| Number of children | 111 | 3.330 | 2 | 0.189 |
| Imprisonment term | 127 | 9.881 | 2 | 0.007 |
| Activity involvement | 127 | 2.448 | 2 | 0.294 |
| Prison visitation | 127 | 0.940 | 2 | 0.625 |
| Who lives with the children | 111 | 3.455 | 2 | 0.178 |

a. Kruskal-Wallis test
b. Grouping variable: demographic characteristics

Results on Table 7 indicated that the distribution of meaning-making was not the same across categories for all demographic characteristics except for imprisonment term: Age, $\chi 2$ (2) = 1.33, $p$ = 0.52; Level of education, $\chi 2$ (2) = 0.91, $p$ = 0.64; Marital status, $\chi 2$ (2) = 4.28, $p$ =0.12. Number of children, $\chi 2$ (2) = 3.33, $p$ = 0.19; Activity involvement, $\chi 2$ (2) = 2.45, $p$ = 0.29; Prison visitation, $\chi 2$ (2) = 0.94, $p$ = 0.63; and, who lives with the children, $\chi 2$ (2) = 3.46, $p$ = 0.18. This meant that there were no differences between mean ranks of at least one pair of groups for all demographic characteristics except imprisonment term, $\chi 2$ (2, $N$ = 127) = 9.88, $p$ = 0.007. Thus, the null hypotheses were retained for all demographic characteristics but rejected for imprisonment term. Because the tests did not show significant differences in the medians across groups, multiple comparisons were not performed for these demographic characteristics.

The finding that having children did not influence the women's meaning-making could be explained by earlier suppositions by Loper (2006) and Van Voorhis et al. (2008), that being an incarcerated parent separated from loved ones could lead to ineffective coping. Consequently,

mothers behave in complex ways associated with their ability to deal with the stress of being an incarcerated parent. This finding supports Katarzyna and Siegel's (2010) observation that mothers use multiple strategies and tend to employ emotions more to cope with the stress of separation. Loper (2006) suggests that the way in which a woman experiences her role as a parent in prison is more relevant than parental status alone. Further, Loper (2006) concluded that for some mothers, having a child at home could improve their likelihood of adjusting to prison life, as there is a sense of connection and purpose that can be reassuring and stabilizing. Therefore, where meaning-making cannot be articulated, coping strategies come in handy to buffer the effects of incarceration.

The finding that the whereabouts of incarcerated women's children did not influence their meaning-making could be attributed to the fact that over three quarters of the women had their children living with relatives and another 15% living with their fathers, thus providing a sense of security. Majority of women incarcerated at KWP reported educational deficits and this could explain why level of education has no influence on their meaning-making. The result also concurs with Mitra and Agarwal (2016) that mental well-being and age or marital statuses are unrelated. Wooldredge, (2013) observed that prison visitation may form an integral part of social support and caring for the incarcerated woman. However, restricted prison visitation with lack of privacy during such visits may render them undesirable and insignificant hence the lack of influence on meaning making in women at KWP. Further, Wooldredge (2013) argues that healthier attitudes correspond with greater program participation, more frequent visitation and subsequently psychological well-being.

The null hypothesis that prison activity involvement had no influence on presence of meaning-making for women incarcerated at KWP was supported. Prison officials have long recognized that programs aimed at preventing idleness and encouraging inmates to develop skills and social behaviors are beneficial for institutional security as well as public safety (Government Accountability Office, 2012). However, the findings of the present study intimate that existence of prison educational and vocational programs does not necessarily translate into participation by prisoners. Neimeyer (2012) argues that incarceration can result in a decrease in self-evaluation and evaluations of work for some prisoners. This could explain why for the present study involvement in prison activities had no influence on meaning-making.

However, because there were differences between mean ranks of imprisonment term, pairwise comparisons were computed to provide size effect estimates for its three independent samples (group 1 versus group 2, group 1 versus group 3, and group 2 versus group 3) where group 1 represented the 0 – 1 year (short-term), group 2 represented the 1 – 3 years (medium-term), and group 3 represented the > 3 years (long-term). The result is presented in Table 8.

**Table 8**

***Pairwise comparisons for imprisonment term groups***

| **Comparison between group 1 to 2** | *N* | Mean | *SD* | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Meaning making | 127 | 3.19 | .349 | 1 | 4 |
| Imprisonment term | 127 | 1.83 | .883 | 1 | 3 |
| **Comparison between group 1 to 3** | | | | | |
| Meaning making | 127 | 3.19 | .349 | 1 | 4 |
| Imprisonment term | 127 | 1.83 | .883 | 1 | 3 |
| **Comparison between group 2 to 3** | | | | | |
| Meaning making | 127 | 3.19 | .349 | 1 | 4 |
| Imprisonment term | 127 | 1.83 | .883 | 1 | 3 |

N = 127

The test ranked all the dependent values, that is, lowest value got a score of one and then used the sum of the ranks for each group (group 1 to 2, group 1 to 3, and group 2 to 3) in the calculation of the test statistic. Kruskal-Wallis H test for pairwise comparisons yielded identical results for the three groups and hence could not clearly identify which of these was significantly different from the other. Therefore, a post hoc Mann-Whitney *U* test was completed to compare the three pairs of group and establish how they differed from each other. The test ranked all the values, the lowest value getting score of one, and then used the sum of the ranks for each group. Results are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9**

***Mean Ranks for Imprisonment Term Groups 1and 2, 1and 3, and 2 and 3***

| | Imprisonment term | *N* | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group 1 and 2** | | | | |
| Meaning making | 0-1 year | 62 | 44.56 | 2762.50 |
| | 1-3 years | 25 | 42.62 | 1065.50 |
| | Total | 87 | | |
| **Group 1 and 3** | | | | |
| Meaning making | 0-1 year | 62 | 44.94 | 2786.00 |
| | >3 years | 40 | 61.68 | 2467.00 |
| | Total | 102 | | |
| **Group 2 and 3** | | | | |
| Meaning making | 1-3 years | 25 | 25.32 | 633.00 |
| | >3 years | 40 | 37.80 | 1512.00 |
| | Total | 65 | | |

Table 9 shows results of Mann Whitney *U* test which revealed a statistically significant difference in imprisonment term score between the different groups. Group 1 and 2 had mean ranks and sum of ranks of 43.59 (1914). Goup1 and 3 had mean ranks and sum of ranks of 53.31 (2626.50), while group 2 and 3 had mean ranks and sum of ranks of 31.56 (1072.50) respectively. Thus, group 1 and 3 had the highest mean rank, followed by group 1 and 2, and the least score was group 2 and 3. This meant that the group with the higher mean rank had the highest influence on meaning-making and the lowest mean rank had the least influence. Thus, meaning-making was different between prisoners serving short-term (0-1 year) versus long-term (3 years+) and between those serving medium-term (1-3 years) and long-term (3 years +) sentences. This meant that there was no statistically significant difference in meaning-making between women serving short-term and medium-term sentences.

The *U* - statistic as well as the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) *p*-value were calculated to show the actual significance value of the test and evaluate differences among the three groups on median change in meaning making. The result is presented in Table 10.

**Table 10**
***Mann Whitney U Test for Imprisonment Term Groups***

| | Meaning-making |
|---|---|
| **Group 1 and 2** | |
| Mann-Whitney *U* | 740.500 |
| Wilcoxon W | 1065.500 |
| Z | -.325 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .745 |
| **Group 1 and 3** | |
| Mann-Whitney *U* | 833.000 |
| Wilcoxon W | 2786.000 |
| Z | -2.802 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .005 |
| **Group 2 and 3** | |
| Mann-Whitney *U* | 308.000 |
| Wilcoxon W | 633.000 |
| Z | -2.611 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .009 |

a. Grouping Variable: Imprisonment term

The result indicated statistically significant differences between group 1 and 3, $U = 833.000$, and, group 2 and 3, $U = 308.000$. Therefore, meaning-making predominantly occurred in the initial short-term and long-term, but less intense in the medium-term.

There's vast literature in support of importance of time spent in prison on mental well-being. Similarly, the present study confirms that indeed time is of ultimate importance for the meaning and significance assigned to incarceration and other people in times of adversity. Ultimately, imprisonment term is significant because it is associated with time spent in prison. Livneh (2013) affirmed that time has been linked to process of adaptation, coping with trauma, and the impact of psychological disorders on time orientation. Ray (2016) argues that the initial shock of incarceration challenges prisoners' assumptive worlds, but they often manage to overcome this crisis by finding meaning in the prison experience and using it as an opportunity for personal development.

Upon incarceration, women not only try to maintain a sense of continuity and coherence in the face of change, but also attempt to compensate multiple losses that come with advancing time and age (Paloutzian & Park, 2013). The findings support earlier observations (Quervain, et al., 2009), that meaning-making would seem more likely to occur in the period immediately after the

initial trauma response, that is, from several hours to several days or weeks after the event. This finding further affirms related literature that inmates who have served lengthy time in prison appeared to have developed a method of coping with the experience. Reker, Peacock, and Wong (2006) reason that time spent in prison may rekindle not only the memories but the disabling psychosocial reactions and consequences of this adverse experience. However, in contrast to findings of the present study, Ray (2016) argues that meaning-making would seem unlikely during the first hours after exposure to incarceration because the initial shock supposedly challenges prisoners' assumptive worlds.

The surge of glucocorticoides that typically accompanies the experience of intense stress temporarily limits both the working and long-term memory, which would undoubtedly impede meaning-making efforts soon after incarceration. Rime (2009) emphasizes that the period immediately after incarceration would seem an ideal time for meaning-making to occur because typically, both biological and cognitive disorganization will have abated. Moreover, during the same period social sharing, an important mechanism by which humans gain information and create meaning is typically common as evidently demonstrated more prison visitation in the first month of incarceration (see Table 1). The findings also reveal that meaning-making occurs more after longer periods of time have passed (> 3 years). Bonanno, Pat, and Noel (2011) argue that if distress remains elevated, or if the search becomes prolonged, meaning-making may evolve into rumination and further exacerbate distress and obscure understanding.

### 4.5. **Coping strategies that predict meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP**

The fourth objective was to determine coping strategies that predict meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. The fourth hypothesis predicted that coping strategies did not significantly predict meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. Each scale was looked at separately for the first order items to establish the strength and spread of each item in relation to the other variables and the result presented in Table 11. Then second-order factors were created from among the scales namely emotion-focused coping, problem focused coping and avoidant coping.

**Table 11**

***Descriptive statistics for First Order Coping Strategies***

| **Character** | **Frequency of responses *N* (%)** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | *M* | *SD* |
| **Emotion- focused** | | | | | | |
| Self distraction | 4(3) | 12(10) | 23(18) | 88(69) | 3.51 | 0.792 |
| Use of emotional support | 6(5) | 15(12) | 42(33) | 64(50) | 3.11 | 0.882 |
| Religion | - | 1(1) | 12(9) | 114(90) | 3.84 | 0.427 |
| Self-blame | 19(15) | 15(12) | 37(29) | 56(44) | 2.87 | 1.108 |
| Venting | 27(21) | 20(16) | 47(37) | 33(26) | 2.54 | 1.076 |
| Acceptance | 3(2) | 32(25) | 41(32) | 51(40) | 2.87 | 0.858 |
| Positive reframing | 13(10) | 38(30) | 53(42) | 23(18) | 2.45 | 0.841 |
| Substance use | 124(97) | 2(2) | - | 1(1) | 1.03 | 0.273 |
| **Problem-focused** | | | | | | |
| Active coping | 6(5) | 57(45) | 48(38) | 16(12) | 2.35 | 0.770 |
| Use of instrumental support | 7(6) | 13(10) | 43(34) | 64(50) | 3.15 | 0.907 |
| Planning | 2(2) | 25(19) | 62(49) | 38(30) | 2.83 | 0.732 |
| **Avoidance coping** | | | | | | |
| Behavioral disengagement | 14(11) | 58(46) | 36(28) | 19(15) | 2.31 | 0.842 |
| Denial | 67(53) | 10(8) | 31(24) | 19(15) | 1.89 | 1.096 |
| Humor | 56(44.1) | 13(10.3) | 25(20) | 33(26) | 2.16 | 1.203 |

The result indicates that the women incarcerated at KWP predominantly used emotion focused coping strategies. Specifically, nearly all (90%) respondents used religion more to cope with incarceration (*M* = 3.84, *SD* = 0.427), while just over half (69%) used self distraction '*a lot of the time' (M* = 3.51, *SD* = 0.792). Half (54%) of the sample use both emotional support (*M* = 3.11, *SD* = 0.882) and instrumental support (*M* = 3.15, *SD* = 0.907) '*a lot of the time'* and slightly less than half (40%) engaged in acceptance (*M* = 2.87, *SD* = 0.858) and self blame (*M* = 2.87, *SD* = 1.108) (44%) to cope with incarceration *'a lot of the time*. Apparently, religion was the only strategy that was used by all women incarcerated at KWP. This result meant that in order of preference, the respondents used religion, self distraction, use of emotional support, self blame and acceptance most of the time to cope with incarceration.

The least frequently used emotion-focused coping strategies were substance use (*M* = 1.03, *SD* = 0.273), positive framing (*M* = 2.45, *SD* = 0.841), and, venting (*M* = 2.54, *SD* = 1.076). This meant that not all emotion-focused strategies were effective for these women, while a half (57%) did not use denial (*M* = 1.89, *SD* = 1.096) at all. Nearly half (44%) of the sample do not use humor (*M* = 2.16, *SD* = 1.203) at all and less than a quarter (21%) deny use of at all. Just over a quarter (26%) use venting a lot of the time. This result indicates that religion, self distraction, use of emotional and instrumental support were the predominantly used coping strategies by more than half of incarcerated women in KWP. However, acceptance, venting and humor are used a lot by less than half of respondents while substance use, denial and humor are the least used strategies. Planning (*M* =2.83, *SD* = 0.732), behavioral disengagement (*M* = 2.31, *SD* = 0.842), denial and active coping (*M* = 2.35, *SD* = 0.770) are rarely used.

The findings concur with Park (2010) that religion plays a crucial role in a person's coping process if it is prominent in their lifestyle and as earlier mentioned, religious meaning serves as the basis for the global beliefs and goals of many individuals. Self distraction in KWP prison involves using behaviors that help the women to distract themselves from the stress of incarceration such as watching television, exercising, reading, attending basic education classes, or engaging in sporting activities, among other activities. The findings agree with Allen and Leary (2010) that distraction can at times be conceptualized as an accommodative or secondary control coping tactic which involves changing one's goals in order to accept the stressful event and related problems. Similarly, secondary control involves changing oneself and one's reactions

in relation to the environment, whereas primary control involves controlling the environment itself. When confronted with the unavoidable stressor, incarcerated women may distract themselves from the situation, this being a secondary control strategy. Thus, as earlier intimated, whether distraction is adaptive and effective depends on the situation. To the extent that the situation cannot be changed, distraction may helps the incarcerated women to take their mind off the pain, worries, or other difficult circumstances that are associated with this situation and this helps then to cope effectively.

Women at KWP used instrumental support, planning and active coping in the course of incarceration. Use of instrumental support encompasses a broad array of tactics that involve seeking help, advice, comfort, and support from parents, friends, professionals and spiritual figures (Allen & Leary, 2010). Negy, Woods, and Carlson, (2014) argue that larger coping repertoires are associated with higher adjustment scores. This is evident in the present study given the higher mean scores for all problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies, except for substance. The second-order factors namely emotion focused, problem focused, and, avoidance coping were entered into a regression analysis and a model summary representing an output table to predict meaning-making was generated as shown in Table 12.

**Table 12**

***Model summary table***

| Model | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted *R* Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .641[a] | .411 | .396 | .271 |

a. Predictors: (Constant) Emotion-focused, problem-focused, avoidance coping

R denoted the correlation between the predicted and observed meaning making, such that the higher the value of R the more precise the model. The adjusted R square estimates the population R square for the model and thus gives a more realistic indication of its predictive power. A model summary showed that the regression model was a good fit for the data. The R value represents the simple correlation and the derived value of 0.641 indicating a high degree of correlation, hence a good level of prediction. $R^2$ value column indicated how much of the total

variation in meaning-making could be explained by avoidance, emotion-focused and problem-focused coping. The $R^2$ value (coefficient of determination) was the proportion of variance in meaning-making that was explained emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. Result of the regression indicated that the two predictors explained 41% of the variance. Subsequently, regression analysis was used to test if coping strategies predicted participants' meaning-making and the result is presented in Table 13.

**Table 13**

***Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)* of Emotion-focused, Problem-focused, Avoidance Coping *on Meaning-making***

| Model | Sum of Squares | Degrees of freedom | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regression | 6.302 | 3 | 2.101 | 28.568 | .000[b] |
| 1Residual | 9.045 | 123 | .074 | | |
| Total | 15.347 | 126 | | | |

a. Dependant variable: Meaning-making
b. Predictors: (Constant) Emotion-focused, problem-focused, avoidance coping

Emotion-focused, problem-focused and avoidant coping were entered into a regression with meaning-making. ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference ($p$ = < .05) level in scores for the coping strategies: F (3, 123) = 28.57, $p$ =.05. In Table 14, B coefficients showed how many units of meaning-making increased for a single increase in each predictor variable. The result indicated how much meaning-making varied with coping strategies when all other independent variables were held constant. In the unstandardized coefficient B column, for a unit increase in emotion focused coping, there was a corresponding 0.447 increase in meaning-making, while a unit increase of problem focused coping corresponded to a 0.140 increase in meaning-making. For a unit of increase in avoidance coping, there was an insignificant corresponding 0.005 increase in meaning-making. This meant that both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies predicted meaning-making of women incarcerated at KWP. Coping strategies were then tested for statistical significance and the significance values for both emotion and problem focused coping were computed as shown in Table 14.

**Table 14**

***Regression Analysis of Emotion-focused, Problem-focused, and Avoidance Coping Strategies Prediction of Meaning-making***

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.555 | .181 | | 8.570 | .000 |
| | Avoidance coping | .005 | .036 | .009 | .127 | .899 |
| | Emotion-focused coping | .447 | .078 | .492 | 5.756 | .000 |
| | Problem-focused coping | .140 | .058 | .211 | 2.431 | .016 |

*N* = 127

The result of the regression indicated that the two predictors were explained by 41% of the variance ($R^2$ = .41, F (3, 123) = 28.57, $p$ < .05. This meant that emotion-focused strategy significantly predicted meaning making, β= .078, = .447, $p$ < .001, as did problem-focused strategy, β= .058, = .140, $p$ < .016.

This result supports the notion that most emotion-focused coping strategies have been associated with leading people to a more positive psychological outcome. This is because emotional expression is used to de-emphasize the negative qualities of the situation. The results also support related study findings that utilizing specific emotional reactions in response to stress such as substance use, amounts to engaging in negative coping mechanisms (Ormita, Reyes, & Perez, 2012). Religion, as earlier observed, plays a crucial role in a person's coping process if it is prominent in their lifestyle. Religious meaning serves as the basis for the global beliefs and goals for many individuals. This argument is further reinforced by Paragment, (1997) who asserts that the extent to which religion is involved in a given individual's coping with a particular event is largely predicated on the extent to which religion is a part of their orienting system.

Religion is more likely to be used in coping for those for whom it is a highly salient aspect of their understanding of self and the world than in those who are less devout. Religious meaning serves as the basis for the global beliefs and goals for many individuals. Nonetheless, religion as emotion-focused coping essentially helps people restore a sense of equilibrium in distressful times and also provides them a meaningful life (Park, 2010). Problem-focused coping, as earlier alluded to, gives the individual a sense of control over their stressor and is considered the most efficient method of handling stress and adversity because it focuses on targeting the source of the stress and eliminating it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the present study, women who used this strategy sought instrumental support (social support or professional advice/information) on how to deal with their stress, and, actively planned, focused on the positives, and became patient with their situation whenever need arose.

Park, (2010) believes that low control situations are not amenable to direct problem-solving and subsequently meaning making is often the most adaptive. However, the present study findings revealed that problem-focused strategy was functional for women incarcerated at KWP. This is regardless of incarceration being a low control situation in which inmates lives are largely controlled by external authority. Lazarus and Folkman (1988) suggested that emotion-focused coping induces internal changes in a person's attention and personal meaning while problem-focused coping changes the relationship between the person and their environment. Avoidant-coping, also referred to as maladaptive coping, is the most commonly used strategy by inmates in the United States and Europe (Allen & Leary, 2010). Specifically, studies have shown that lack of behavioral engagement can lead to meaninglessness (Park, Riley, & Snyder, 2012). In the current study, behavioral disengagement was one of the avoidant coping strategies that was seldom used by women incarcerated at KWP.

Pearson product moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between meaning-making and coping strategies in women incarcerated at KWP revealed a significant positive correlation $r\ (127) = .594$, $p < .001$. To this effect, findings of this study concur with Park's (2010) observation that meaning making as coping entails processes that people utilize in order to reduce the discrepancy between their appraised situational meaning and global beliefs and goals (Figure 1). The finding is also in support of Folkman's (2008) assertion that meaning making bears similarities with coping and has recently been described as an appraisal based

coping. This is coping in which the person draws on her beliefs (for example, religious as demonstrated in Table 11), values and existential goals (for example, purpose in life), to motivate and sustain coping and well-being during incarceration.

Findings of the present study support Ormita, Reyes, and Perez's (2012) observations that even if the incarcerated women remain to have positive goals which they want to achieve, doing so is painstaking if they employ ineffective coping mechanisms. As earlier intimated, in relation to coping, meaning functionally protects one's well-being through effective coping, and enhances one's well being through meaning reconstruction and the development of psychological resources. Thus, Wong and Wong (2006) argue that meaning-making contributes to women's effective coping and successful implementation of change by regulating their experience of incarceration. Coping mechanisms involve a cognitive reappraisal process that includes self-reflection and taking control over one's emotions, by examining the emotional response to the stressor. Emotions can be expressed and processed as a prelude to reappraising unchangeable stressors. Therefore, the most effective way to manage the stress is for the individual to change her perspective or appraisal of incarceration. Avoidance can result from a sense that although the situation is indeed stressful, it can never be changed and may actually be the stop-gap measure in overwhelming events. Earlier research findings have shown that lack of behavioral engagement can lead to meaninglessness (Park, Riley, & Snyder, 2012).

Available evidence indicates that the predominant use of any coping strategy can be debilitating, and therefore people need to be flexible in the deployment of coping strategies for effective coping with the diverse types of situations (Gupta & Bonanno, 2011). Studies on the adaptive value of flexibility proposed by Bonanno and Burton (2012) implicate appraisals of environmental demands, possible behavioral responses that might be used to meet those demands, and either relative success or failure of the behavioral responses. Further, they emphasize the ability to shift away from a behavior that is not clearly working. These propositions in relation to findings of the present study, show clear links between meaning-making - as process and coping - as outcome. Subsequently, these observations have significant implications for interventions and other mitigation efforts by Counseling Psychologists and other stakeholders.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The correlational and descriptive study conducted on a saturated sample ($N$ = 127) of women aged above 18 years, sought to determine the relationship between meaning-making and coping strategies in women incarcerated at KWP. The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To establish psychological correlates of meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP.
2. To establish the social correlates of meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP.
3. To determine the influence of selected demographic characteristics on meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP.
4. To determine coping strategies that predict meaning making in women incarcerated at KWP.

## 5.1. Summary of findings

Demographic characteristics of women incarcerated at KWP were similar to global trends: primarily aged between 18 - 60 years, majorities were of low basic educational attainment, and nearly half were married while close to 34% were single. Most of the subjects were mothers whose children were either displaced or living with relatives. 15% of the children were in the custody of their fathers. Nearly half of the sample was serving short imprisonment term and almost an equal number were long-term. There was markedly diminished prison visitation and family contact as time advanced while majority participated in prison work related activities.

The first research hypothesis predicted a negative correlation between psychological factors () and presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. This hypothesis was not supported by the research findings and therefore it was established that self-transcendence, religion, self acceptance and achievement were positively correlated with presence of meaning-making. Increase in each of these factors was associated with increase in meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. Self-transcendence had a stronger association with meaning making, followed by self acceptance, religion and finally achievement. Consequently, absence or diminished self-transcendence, religion, self acceptance and achievement are likely to increase meaninglessness and ineffective coping in women incarcerated at KWP.

The second research hypothesis predicted a negative correlation between social factors and presence of meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. Study findings revealed that relationship, intimacy and fair treatment were positively correlated to the presence of meaning-making, thus rejecting the hypothesis. Overall, increase in each social factor was positively associated with increase in presence of meaning-making. Fair treatment had a stronger association with meaning making, followed by relationship and the least was intimacy. Absence of relationship, intimacy and fair treatment is likely to increase meaninglessness and ineffective coping in women incarcerated at KWP.

The third hypothesis predicted that participants' age, level of education, marital status, number of children, activity involvement, prison visitation, and, caretaking responsibility had no significant influence on meaning-making of women incarcerated at KWP. This hypothesis was retained for all demographic characteristics and rejected for imprisonment term. Thus, meaning-making process of women incarcerated at KWP was influenced by imprisonment term and this process predominantly occurred in the short-term (0 – 1 year) , mid-term (1-3 years), and, long-term (3 years +).

The fourth hypothesis predicted that coping strategies did not significantly predict meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. Both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies were shown to significantly predict meaning-making in women incarcerated at KWP. Avoidance coping was not shown to have any predictive value on the sample's meaning-making.

### 5.2 Conclusions

The women incarcerated at KWP were shown to be in the productive and reproductive age group, with low educational attainment and consequently poor intellectual abilities. Majority were mothers potentially faced with the possibility of losing their sources of livelihood, custody of their children, family and marital relationships. Their lack of supportive social networks indicated negative prospects their future should they be released from prison.

Psychological (self-transcendence, religion, self acceptance and achievement) and social (relationship, intimacy and fair treatment) factors that are positively associated with presence of

meaning-making provide women at KWP with alternative ways of experiencing, interpreting and recovering from the stress of incarceration.

Self-transcendence, religion, self acceptance, achievement, relationship, intimacy and fair treatment among women incarcerated at KWP are clearly implicated in appraisals of incarceration as a challenge, loss or threat. Positive psychological and social factors related to presence of meaning-making lead to positive appraisal and sustained coping efforts.

From this result, it may be assumed that prisoners with such profiles might have better chances to lead pro-social and fulfilling lives while serving their jail terms.

Incarcerated women's global and situational meaning key to re-evaluating the positive meaning of incarceration in light of their beliefs, values and goals. These beliefs, values and goals could be pathways through which they can be helped to make effortful world of meaning and restore coherence in their lives.

Global and situational appraisals of incarceration is key to re-evaluating the positive meaning of incarceration and subsequently women incarcerated at KWP benefit by engaging in facilitative cognitive, affective, motivational and personal actions for desired change to occur.

Imprisonment term is of ultimate importance for the meaning-making process and should be taken into consideration when implementing interventions. Timing of interventions should be aligned to imprisonment term because meaning-making process begins soon after incarceration and is equally intense in the long-term, but less intense in the mid-term.

Effective emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies represent adaptive coping and these predict meaning-making by regulating incarcerated women's emotions and changing their person-environment situation.

Findings of the current study provides Counseling Psychologists, Religious mentors, Social workers, Welfare officers with a framework in their collaborative work with greater understanding of the potential role of meaning-making in relation to coping strategies in

incarcerated women's mental health and behavioral recovery - whether or not they expected to be released from prison.

### 5.3. Recommendations

Counseling Psychologists should in the initial phase of therapy assist incarcerated women to clarify their global meaning or assumptions about the world. An early assessment of their psychological and social factors that are associated with presence of meaning-making should be done. This is to help them define and question ways in which they perceive and make sense of their existence; examine their values, beliefs, and goals to determine their validity; and, learn to reflect on their own existence, and to examine their role in creating their problems in life.

In the middle phase of therapy, Counseling Psychologists should: encourage women incarcerated at KWP to fully examine the source and authority of their present value system. This process of self exploration is expected to typically lead to new insights and some restructuring of their values and attitudes. Consequently, they get to know what kind of life they consider worth to live and also develop a clear sense of internal valuing system to help them cope with incarceration.

The final phase of existential counseling focuses on helping incarcerated women take what they are learning about themselves and put it in to action. Counseling Psychologist should help them to find ways of implementing their examined and internalized values in a concrete way. The women typically discover their strengths and find ways to put them to the service of living a purposeful existence. Timing of interventions and mitigation efforts should be in the short-term and long-term when meaning-making is predominantly occurring.

Although external control may be severely limiting the quality of lives of women incarcerated at KWP, Prison Welfare Officers in collaboration with the prison administration should focus efforts on helping them to see that they are not merely victims of circumstances beyond their control. Administrative encounters with women incarcerated at KWP should promote environments in which the women can change their basic values and goals, enhancing personal resources to align their global meaning with their situational meaning.

Social workers should help incarcerated women to examine the degree to which their behavior is being influenced by social conditioning and examine the price they are paying for the decisions

they have made. Social workers may help incarcerated women to develop new social support networks, negotiate other systems in which their children are involved and navigate child welfare, and better relationships with family and friends. Focus should be on ways to promote social support, consistent prison visitation, increased basic adult education and vocational or work-related skills.

Religious mentors should help incarcerated women find meaning and harmony in their lives despite the situational crisis. They should facilitate and stimulate incarcerated women to reflect on and develop religious values, belief systems and mentorship programs that are likely to not only increase religious meaning but also promote adaptive coping strategies namely, emotion-focused and problem-focused.

Probation officers may begin to help the women at KWP to learn how to change their external environment where the offence for which they are incarcerated occurred. They need to be challenged to look within themselves and recognize their own contribution to their plight. This would help them to discover new courses of action that will lead to existential change in their situation.

An interdisciplinary approach involving all stakeholders at all levels of the policy-making chain: politicians, prison management, health advocates and prison staff awareness is necessary to motivate and sustain efforts at meaning-making, coping and well-being in women in the course of incarceration.

**5.4 Suggestions for further research**.

There need to establish the reason for intense meaning-making in the short-term imprisonment term and its implications for incarcerated women's mental health and behavioral recovery.

Longitudinal studies are necessary to determine the incremental value of meaning-making process in incarcerated women at KWP.

Ex post facto study should be considered for incarcerated women who are serving long-m sentences with an aim of testing hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationships for a similar population.

## REFERENCES


Aday, H. R., & Krabill, J. J. (2011). *Women aging in prison.* Boulder, CO: Lynne-Reunner Publishers. Retrieved from https://academic.oup.com>gnv.114

Aggarwal, Y. P. (2008). *Meaning of the term - descriptive survey sampling/survey methodology*. Retrieved from https://www.scribel.com>document>

Allen, B. A., & Leary, R. M. (2010). Self compassion, stress and coping. *Social and personality psychology compass/volume 4(2),* 230-248.Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>

Bonanno, G. A., & Burton, C. L. (2012). Flexibility in coping and emotional regulation: Toward an integrative theory. http://dx.doi.org./10.1002/da.20888

Barlow, E. (2014). Understanding women in prison: a review of gender specific needs and risk assessment and their policy and research implications. https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.46

Borsa, J. C., Damásio, B. F., & Bandeira, D. R. (2012). Adaptation and validation process of psychological measures among cultures: Some considerations *Paidéia, 22 (53)*, pp. 423–432. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-863X2012000300014

Bureau of justice statistics. (2015). *Women offenders*. Retrieved from BJS: http://www.bjs.gov/US Dept. of justice



Bureau of justice statistics. (2015). *Women offenders*. Retrieved from BJS: http://www.bjs.gov/US Dept. of justice



Brown, L. S. (2008). Cultural competence in trauma therapy: Beyond the flashback. , (pp. 227-242). *In Trauma and Systems of Meaning Making.* Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association, viii, 291 pp. https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/11752-012

CAP. 90: Kenya Law Kenya Law Reports (2014). *CAP. 90*. Act Title: Prisons Act. Subsidiary Legislation ... (*L.N. 721/1961, L.N. 297/1968*). Retrieved from http://www.kenyalaw.org:8181/exist/kenyalex/sublegview.xql?subleg=CAP.%2090

Carlton, B., & Segrave, M. (2011). 'Women's survival post-imprisonment: connecting imprisonment with pains past and present.' *Punishment & Society, 13(5),* 551–70. https://doi.org/ 10.1177/0306624X14548531 ijo.sagepub.com

Carrol, L. (2013). Problem-Focused Coping. *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine,* pp 1540-1541. Retrieved from http://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-1-4419-1005-9_1171

Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintvauhy, J. K. (1987).Assessing coping strategies: a theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, vol. 56, pp 267-83.*Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticsscholar.org>…

Clear, T. R., Sumter, M. T. (2002). Prisoners, prison, and religion: Religion and adjustment to prison. *J. Offender Rehabilitaion.2002, 35,* 127-159.doi:10.3390/rel12040590

Cooper, C., Katona, C., &Livingston, G. (2007).*Validity and reliability of the brief COPE in carers of people with dementia: the LASER-AD Study*. Retrieved from, http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19008735

Crewe, B., Hulley, S., &Wright, S. (2017).The gendered pain of life imprisonment. *Brit. J. Criminol.* ***57,*** 1359-358. http://doi.101093/bjc/azw088

Criminal Justice Systems in Kenya (2016). *Understanding Pre-trial Detention in Respect to Case Flow Management and Conditions of Detention*. Printing and Publishing Consultants: Ascent Limited, Nairobi. Retrieved from www.Criminal_...eport.pdfjudiciary.go.ke

Crysral, G. (2012). *Psychological Effects of Long Term Prison Sentences On Inmates.* Retrieved from, http://chrystalwriting101.wordpress.com/literature-review/psychological-effects-of-long-term-incarceration/

Davis, C. G., Harasymchuk, C., &Wohl, M. J. A. (2012*).* "Finding meaning in a traumatic loss: a families approach". *Journal of Traumatic Stress. 25 (2): 142–149.*https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.21675

De DeVeaux, M. (2013).*The Trauma of the Incarceration Experience.* Retrieved from http://harvardcrcl.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/DeVeaux_257-277.pdf

De Quervain, D. J., Aerni, A., Schelling, G. & Roozendaal, B. (2009). *Meaning making, adversity, and regulatory flexibility.* Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> articles

Emmons, R. A. (2003). Personal goals, life meaning and virtue: wellspring of positive life. In C. L. M. Keyes & J. Hardt (Eds.), *Flourishing: positive psychology and the life well lived* (pp. 105-128). Washington DC: American Psychological Association

Fillipi, N. (2016). Women's protests: Gender, imprisonment and resistance in South A frican (Pollmoor Prison, 1970,-90s). *Review of African Political Economy, Vol. 43,*2016,issue149. http://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2016.1214114

Folkman, S. & Lazarus, R. S. (1988).*Manual for ways of coping...* Retrieved from, scirp.org.

Folkman, S. (2008).The case of positive emotions in the stress process. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping, Vol. 21, pp. 3-14.*Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>pubmed

Folkman, S. *(*2011*).* 'Stress, health, and coping: an overview', *in:* S. Folkman *(Ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health, and Coping,* New York, NY: Oxford University Press

Frankl, V. E. (1962*). Man's search for meaning: an introduction to logotherapy.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Frankl, V. (1963).*Man's Search for Meaning.* New York: Washington Square Press.

Frankl,V. (1966).Self-transcendence as a human phenomenon. *Journal of Humanistic Psychol. 1966;6:97–106.*Retreived fromhttps://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3152259/

Frankl, V. (1968). What is meant by meaning? *Journal of Existent. 1966; 6:21–28.* Retrieved from, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3152259/

Garrison, M. E. B.,&Saasser, D. D. (2009).*Families and disasters: making meaning out of adversity.* Retrieved fromhttps://www.researchgate.net>2…

Gillies, J., Neimeyer, R. A., & Milman, E. (April 2014). "The meaning of loss codebook: construction of a system for analyzing meanings made in bereavement". *Death Studies.38 (4): 207–216.* https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2013.829367

Global Prison Trends.(2015). *Global Prison Trends report*. Retrieved fromhttps://www.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/PRI-LR.pdf

Global statistics of female prisoners published. (2015). *World female imprisonment list* (3rd ed.). Retrieved from http//:www.bbk.ac.uk

Greenberg, L. S. (2012). "Emotions, the great captains of our lives: their role in the process of change in psychotherapy" *American Psychologist.***67** (8):697-707. https://doi.org/1037/a0029858. PMID 23163464

Guerino, P., Harrison P. M., & Sabol, W. J. (2011). Prisoners in 2010: Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/p10.pdf

Gupta, S. & Bonanno, G. A. (2011). (Complicated grief and deficits in emotional expressive flexibility. *Journal of Abnormal Paychology. 120 (3),* 635-643 [Pub Med]. http://dx.doi.org./10.1002/da.20888.

Halama, P., & Bakosová, K. (2009). Meaning in life as a moderator of the relationship between perceived stress and coping. *Studia Psychologica, 51 (2009),* pp. 143–148 Retrieved from http://katpsych.truni.sk/osobne/halama/Halama,%20Bakosova%202009.pdf

Heather, N., Rasmussen, N. H., Wrosch, C., Scheier, M. F., Michael, F., & Carver, C.S. (2006).Self-Regulation Processes and Health: The Importance of Optimism and Goal Adjustment. *Journal of Personality Volume 12(5)* pp.1721–1748. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00426.x/full

Hertzog, A. M (2007). Considerations in determining sample size for pilot studies. *Research in Nursing and Health, 31,* 180-191. htpps://doi:10.1002/nur.20247

Houck, D. F. K., & Booker, L, A. (2012).The relationship of parenting stress to adjustment among mothers in prison. *American journal or orthopsychiatry 72(4):* 548-558.Retrieved from researchgate.net.

Iacoviello, M. B., & Charney, S. D. (2014).Psychosocial facets of resilience: implications for preventing post trauma psychopathology, treating trauma survivors, and enhancing community resilience. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*. https://doi.org/ 10.3402/ejpt.v5.23970

Jiang, s. (2006). Social support, Gender and inmate adjustment to prison life. *The Prison Journal, volume 6, number 1, 22-55.* Retrieved from http:/tjp.sagepub.com

Kashdan, T. B., & Rottenberg, J. (2010). Psychological flexibility as a fundamental aspect of health. *Clinical Psychology Review, 30(7): 865-878.* http://dx.doi.org./10.1002/da.20888.

Keith, D . M., Travis P., & Matthew J. L. (Eds.) (2013). The Psychology of Meaning, *American Psychological Association.* https://doi.org/10.1037/14040-012.

Kenya/World Prison Brief.(2018). *World prison brief data.* Retrieved from http://www.prisonstudies.org/country/kenya

Kenya Police Crime Statistics (2014). Annual crime report 2014. Retrieved from www.kenyapolice.go.ke

King, L. A., Hicks, J. A., Krull, J. L., & Delo, G. A. K. (2006). Positive affect and the experience of meaning in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, **90**, 179-196.*

Korte, J., Cappeliez, P., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & G.J. Westerhof, G. J. (2012). Meaning in life and mastery mediate the relationship of negative reminiscence with psychological distress among older adults with mild to moderate depressive symptoms. *European Journal of Ageing*, 9 (4) (2012), pp. 343–35.1https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433012-0239-3

Lacey, L. & Booker , L. A. (2009).The influence of religious participation on the adjustment of female inmates. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol 79(1), Jan 2009,* Vol. 79, No. I, *1-7.* Retrieved August 23rd 2016 from, http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/ort/79/1/1/**.**

Laerd/Dissertations.(2012).*Total population sampling.* Retrieved from http://dissertation.laerd.com/total-population-sampling.php#one.

Lartey, J. (2016). Women in jails. *The guardian, vol. 3no. 294-113*. Retrieved from ampproject.org

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, Appraisal, and Coping. NY: Springer. In, Leary, M. R. (2007).*Self compassion and reactions to unpleasant self-relevant events: the implications of treating oneself kindly*. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>pubmed.

Liebman, L. E. R., Burnette1, L. M., Raimondi, C., Nichols-Hadeed, C., Merle, P., & Cerulli, C. (2010). Piloting a Psycho-Social Intervention for Incarcerated Women With Trauma Histories: Lessons Learned and Future Recommendations. *Int J Offender Their Comp Criminol. Vol. 58 no.* 894-913.https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X13491073**.**

Livneh, H. (2013).The Concept of Time in Rehabilitation and Psychosocial Adaptation to Chronic Illness and Disability: Parts I and II" Counselor Education Faculty Publications and Presentations. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015429.

Loper, B. A. (2006). Contact between incarcerated mothers and their children: assessing parenting stress. *Journal of offender rehabilitation 43 (1)* 23-43.Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net.

Macdonald, J. M., Wong, P. T. P., &Gingras, T.D. (2011).*Meaning-in-Life measures and development of a brief Version of the personal meaning profile.* Retrieved from http://www.drpaulwong.com/documents/HQM2-chapter17.pdf

Maschi, T. & Gibson, G (2012).Profiles of meaning and search for meaning among prisoners. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, vol. 88 no. 4,* 89-103. https://doi.org/10.1177/15347610395626

Mattis, J. M. (2003). Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning–Making and Coping Experiences of African American Women: A Qualitative Analysis. 2002 Division 35, *American Psychological Association Psychology of Women Quarterly* Vol. 3(11) pp. 309–321. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-6402.t01-2-00070

McDonald, M. J., Wong, P. T. R., & Gingras, D. T. (2012).Meaning-in-Life measures and development of a brief version of the personal meaning profile. Retrieved from https://psychnet.apa.org > 2012-03755-018

McKnight, P. E., & Kashdan, T. B. (2009). Purpose in life as a system that creates and sustains health and well-being: an integrative, testable theory. *Review of General Psychology*, 13 (3) (2009), pp. 242–251.https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017152

McLeod, S. (2014). *Correlation method in psychology*. Retrieved from http://www.simplypsychology.org/correlation.htlm

Mitra, P., & Agrawal, S. (2016). Age or marital status and mental well-being of female prisoners of Lucknow jail. *International Journal of Indian Psychology, Vol. 4, issues 1, No. 75*, DIP:18.01.-47/20160401. Retrieved from http://www.ijip.in

Molden, C. D., & Dweck, C. S. (2006). Finding "Meaning" in Psychology: A lay theories approach to self-regulation, social perception, and social development. *American Psychologist Vol. 61, No. 3*, 192–203. Retrieved from http://www.stanfordtechnologies.com/dept/psychology/cgibin/drupalm/system/files/Finding

Monahan, K. C., Goldweber, A., & Cauffman, E. (2011). The effects of visitation on incarcerated juvenile offenders: How contact with the outside impacts adjustment on the inside. *Law and Human Behavior*, 35(2), 143–151.Retrieved from, *link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10979-010-9220-x*

Nedderman, A. B., Underwood, A. L., & Hardy, L. V. (2010). Spirituality Group With Female Prisoners: Impacting Hope. *Journal of Correctional Health Care 16(2)*117-132.https://doi.org/0.1177/1078345809356526

Negy, C., Woods, J. D. K., & Carlson, R. (2014).The Relationship Between Female Inmates' Coping and Adjustment in a Minimum-Security Prison. http://doi.org /10.1177/0093854897024002005

Neimeyer, A. (ed.) (2012). *Techniques of grief therapy: creative practices for counseling the bereaved: Series in death, dying, and bereavement.* New York: Routledge

Niesdwiadomy, R. M. (2002). *Foundations of nursing research* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Education. http//doi.10.1002/nur.

Norenzayan, A., & Lee, A. (2010). It was meant to happen: Explaining cultural variations in fate attributions. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 98,* 702-720. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.91.4.730.

O'Connor, P. T. & Duncan, B. J. (2011). The sociology of humanist, spiritual and religious practice in prison: supporting responsivity and desistance from crime. *Religiosity 2011, 2, 590-610*.https://doi.org. 10.3390/re12040590

O'Reilly, M. & Parker, N. (2012).Unsatisfactory saturation: a critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 13(2), pp.* 109-197. http://doi/10.1177/1468794112446106>

Ong, A. D., Bergeman, C. S., Bisconti, T. L., & Wallace, K. A. (2006).Psychological resilience, positive emotions, and successful adaptation to stress in later life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 91 (4) (2006), pp. 730–749. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.91.4.730

Ormita, L. A. G., Reyes, N., & Perez, M. H. (2012). The Psychological Profile of Incarcerated Women under the FEU – Project HOPE: A Multiple Case Study. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities. Vol. 2, No. 2 (2012), pp. 30-37.* Retrieved from www.irssh.com ISSN 2248-9010

Paloutzian, R., & Park, C. L. (2013). *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. New York: Guilford Press

Paragment, K. L., Magyar-Russel, M. G. & MurraSwank, N.A (2005). *Religion as a unique process.* Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary.Wiley.com

Paragment, K. L. (1997). The Psychology of Religion and Coping. NY: Guillford. In Park, C. L. (2005).*Religion as a meaning making framework in coping with life stress. Journal of social science,vol,61. No. 4,2005,pp.707-729.*https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-9354-92

Park, C. L. & Folkman, S. (1997).Meaning in the context of stress and coping. *Review of General Psychology, 30,115-144.* Retrieved from htpps://www.m.scirp.org.

Park, C. L. (2005) *Religion as a Meaning-Making Framework in Coping with Life Stress- A Meaning-Making Coping Model*. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2005.00428.x

Park, C. L, & Amy, L. A. I. (2006). Meaning making and growth: new directions for research on survivors of trauma. *Journal of Loss and Trauma: International Perspectives on Stress & Coping*, 11:5, 389-407, 11:389–407, 2006. Retrieved 10th August, 2014 from, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15325020600685295

Park, C. L., Edmondson, D., Fenster, J. R., & Blank, T. O. (2008).Stress-Related Growth: Predictors of Occurrence and Correlates with Psychological Adjustment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Vol 76(5), 63-875*. http://guilfordjournals.com/doi/abs/10.1521/jscp.23.2.195.31019

Park, C. L., Edmondson, D., Fenster, J. R., & Blank, T. O. (2008).Meaning making and psychological adjustment following cancer: the mediating roles of growth, life meaning, and restored just-world beliefs. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Vol 76(5), 863-875*.doi. 10.1037/a0013348.

Park, C. L. (2010). Making sense of the meaning literature: An integrative review of meaning making and its effects on adjustment to stressful life events. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136 (2) (2010), pp. 257–30.https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018301

Park, C. L., & Edmondson, D. (2010). Religion as a quest for meaning. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Vol 76(5), 863-875*.doi. 10.1037/a0013348.

Park, C. L. (2013).*Handbook of psychology of religion and spirituality*. Retrieved from https://www.guilford.com> contents

Park, C. L., Riley, E. K., & Snyder, B. L. (2012). Meaning making coping, making sense and post traumatic growth following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 7(3):1-10.* https://doi.org/10.1080/174397602012.67134.

Park, C. L. (2013). *Trauma and Meaning Making: Converging Conceptualizations and Emerging Evidence.* (The Experience of Meaning in Life , pp 61-76) Retrievedfrom http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-94-007-6527-6_5

Pattakos, A. (2010). *Escaping Your Inner Mental Prison.* Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alex-pattakos/escaping-your-inner-menta_b_327332.html

Penal Reform International (2007). *Women in prison*. Retrieved from https://www.penalreform.org

Pillay, S. (2016).*Greater self-acceptance improves emotional well-being.* Havard Health Publishing. Retrieved from www.health.havard.edu

Prati, G., & Pietrantoni, L. (2009). Optimism, social support, and coping strategies as factors contributing to posttraumatic growth: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Loss and Trauma: International Perspectives on Stress &Coping. Volume 14, Issue 5, 2009, pages 364-388*https://doi.org/doi/10.1080/15325020902724271#.VdGCBbVtvIU

Prisons for women (2018). *The composition of women's prisons*. Retrieved from <brief=http://law.jrank.org/pages/1804/prisons-prisons-women-composition-women-s-prisons.html

Quaker Council for European Affairs. (2007). *Women in prison: A review of the conditions in member states of the council.* Retrieved from https://books.google.co.ke> books

Quervain, D. F., Aerni, A., Schelling, G. & Roozendall, B (2009). New approaches to combining pharmacotherapy in mental health. *Am. J Psychiatry 2009,166:293-309.* Retrieved from https:/www.tandfonline.com:doi>ful

Ray, H (2016). *Huge rise in female prison population a problem.* Retrieved from htpps://journals/plos.org>ploime>arnce

Reker, G. T., Peacock, E. J., & Wong, P. T. (2006). Meaning and purpose in life and well-being: A life span perspective. *Journal of Gerontology, 42,* 44–49. Retrieved from http://www.drpaulwong.com/documents/HQM2-chapter17.pdf

Richard, T & David P. C (2012). *Inmates Who Receive Visitors in Prison: Exploring Factors that Predict Outcomes of Social Support and Networks.* Retrieved from http://www.uscourts.gov/uscourts/federalcourts/pps/fedprob/2012/references.html#visitation

Rime, B. (2009). Emotion elicits the social sharing of emotion: Theory and empirical review. *Emotion Review, 1(1): 60-85.* Retrieved from http://www.emr.sagepub.com/content.1.1.60.abstarct.

Seaton, L. C. (2009). *Psychological Adjustment*. Retrieved fromhttp://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?id=g9781405161251_chunk_g978140516125118_ss1-36

Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J.A., King, L. A ., & Arndt, J. (2012). Feeling like you know who you are: Perceived true self-knowledge and meaning in life. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 37 (6) (2011), pp. 745–756*.https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211400424

Schnell, T. (2010). Existential indifference: Another quality of meaning in life. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology,* 50 (1) (2010), pp. 351–373.https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167809360259

Schnell, T. (2011). Individual differences in meaning-making: Considering the variety of sources of meaning, their density and diversity. *Personality and Individual Differences,Vol. 51(5*), pp. 667–673. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191886911002820.

Silvia H. K. (2014). *Complex experiences of meaning in life: individual differences among socio-demographic variables, sources of meaning and psychological functioning*. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/8220012.

Steger, M. F. (2009). Meaning in life. S.J. Lopez (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology (2),* pp. 605–610. Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK.

Steger, M. F., Kashdan, T. B. & Oishi, S. (2008). Meaning of life across the life span: levels and correlates of meaning in life… *Journal of Research in Personality, 42, 22-42.*Retrieved from Psychnet.apa.org >2009-01347-005

Steger, M. F., Kashdan, T. B. & Oishi, S. (2009). Meaning of life across the life span: levels and correlates of meaning in life from emerging adulthood to older adulthood. *Journal of Positive Psychology,Vol.4. No. 1, 43-52.* Retrieved from http//doi:10.1080/17439760802303127

Tewksbury, R. &Connor, D. P (2012).*Inmates who receive visits in prison: exploring factors that predict.* Retrieved from https:www.researchgate.net>2…

The National Academies Press. (2014). "The Experience of Imprisonment."National Research Council. *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences*. Washington, DC. https://doi.org/10.17226/18613

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2008).*World Drug report*. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org> WDR_2008

Vanhooren, S., Leijssen, M., & Dezutter, J. (2017). Ten prisoners on a search for meaning: A qualitative study of loss and growth during incarceration. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 45 (2), 162-178.* http://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000055.

Van Den Berg, B. J., Gatherer, A., Fraser, A., &Moller, L. (2011). *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation 2011;89,* 689-694. Doi:10.2471/BLT.10.082842

Van Den Berg, R.,& Agirre, I. (2012).*Treating trauma in psychosis with EMDR: a pilot study*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net

Van Hout, M. C., &Mhlanga-Gunda, R. (2018). Contemporary women prisoners health experiences, unique prison health care needs and health care outcomes in Sub Saharan Africa: a scoping review of extant. Retrievd from https://doi.og/10.1186/s12914-018-0170-6

Van Ginneken, E. F. J. C. (2013). Doing Well Just Doing Time: A Qualitative Study of Patterns of Psychological Adjustment in Prison. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice 54 (4), 352-370* Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Esther_Van_Ginneken/publication/279244809

Van Ginneken, E. F. J. C. (2014). Making Sense of Imprisonment: Narratives of posttraumatic growth among female prisoners. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology1–20, 2014*.https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X14548531

Van Ginneken, E. F. J. C. (2016). Making Sense of Imprisonment: Narratives of posttraumatic growth among female prisoners. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, Vol. 60, issue 2, 2016*.http://doi. 10.11770306624X145485531.

Van Hartevald, B., Van de Pligt, D., Classer, B., & Van Djik, J (2007).*The psychology of social dilemmas: A review*. Retrieved from https://static 1.squarespace.com > static.

Van Tongeren, D, R., &Klebe, J. K. (2009).Reconceptualizing Prison Adjustment: A Multidimensional Approach Exploring Female Offenders' Adjustment to Prison Life. *The Prison Journal XX(X) 1–21*.https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885509357547

Van Voorhis, W. C., Wright, M. E., Salisbury, E. & Bauman, A (2005). *Women's risk factors and their contributions to existing risk/needs.* Retrieved from www.researchgate.net>publication.

Van Voorhis, W. C., Wells, T. N. C. & Scheer, A. (2008). Achieving accurate pictures of risk and identifying gender responsive needs: Two new assessments for women offenders. *Criminal justice behavior.journals,Vol. 6(2),* 14-18. Retrieved from htpps://sagepub.com.

Varahrami, A., Arnau, A., Rosen, R. C., & Mascaro, N. (2010).The relationships between meaning in life, hope, and psychosocial development. *International Journal of Existential Psychology and Psychotherapy, 3 (1),* pp. 1–13 Retrieved from http://journal.existentialpsychology.org/index.php?journal.pdf

Viechtbauer, W. & Crutzen, R. (2015). A simple method for the calculation of sample size in pilot studies. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology, Vol. 68, 11,* pg. 1375-1379. Retrieved from https://www.sciencedirect.com.

Villines, Z. (2013). *The Impact on children of women in prison.* Retrieved from http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/prison-incarceration-effects-mental-health-0315137.

Wong, P. T. P. (1998). Implicit theories of meaningful life and the development of the personal meaning profile. In P. T. P. Wong & P. S. Fry (Eds.). *The human quest for meaning: A handbook of psychological research and clinical applications*, pp. 111–140. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Retrieved from http://www.drpaulwong.com/documents/HQM2-chapter17.pdf.

Wong, P. T. P., & Fry, P. (1998).*The human quest for meaning: A handbook of psychological research and clinical applications.* Lawrence Erbaum Associates, Mahwen: N.J.

Wong, P. T. P. & Recker, G. T. (2006). *Aging as an individual process: Toward a theory of personal meaning. Emergent theories of aging.* New York: Springer Publishing Company. Retrieved from http://ehj.ssu.ac.ir/article-1-44-en.pdf.

Wong, P. T. P., Recker, G. T., & Peackock, E. (2006). The resource-congruence model of coping and the development of the Coping Schema Inventory. In P. T. P. Wong & L. C. J. Wong (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural perspectives on stress and coping*, pp. 223-283. New York, NY: Springer.

Wong, P. T. P. (2013). *Acceptance & Well-being: A Meaning-Management Perspective.* Retrieved from http://www.drpaulwong.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/pdf

Wong, P. T. P. (2014). Meaning in life. In A. C. Michalos (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research*, pp. 3894-3898. New York, NY: Springer.

Wong, P. T. P. (2014). Victor Frankl's meaning-seeking model and positive psychology. Retrieved from www.drpaulwong.com/victo-frankl-meaning-seeking-model-and-positive-psychology/

Woolfe, R., Strawbridge, S., Douglas, B., & Dryden, W. (2010). *Handbook of counseling psychology* (3rd ed.). London: Sage publications Companies.

Wooldredge, D. J. (2013). Inmate experiences and psychological well-being. *Criminal Justice and Behavior. Vol.26. (2),* 235-250. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0093854899026002005

**APPENDIX A: Informed Consent**

**Anna Adikinyi Osiro,**
**Maseno University,**
**Po box 333.**
**Maseno.**

I am Anna, a student of Maseno University in the Department of Psychology doing research in Counseling Psychology. The purpose of the study is *"to determine the relationship between meaning making and coping strategies of women incarcerated at Kisumu Women Prison, Kenya"*. The research will entail interviews using questionnaires for a period of two weeks. Codes will be used to conceal your true identify and also to protect any information obtained from you. By participating in this research it is possible that interview can make you become aware of issues you did not know about yourself resulting in some emotional distress but the information will be useful for mitigating psychological and social harms acquired in the course of incarceration. The decision to participate is voluntary. Your signature or your appointee below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Subject's signature/ Thumb Print……..... CODE…..... Date……

Investigator's signature…….. Date……..

**APPENDIX B: Governing rules women's Prisons in Kenya**

Act No: CAP. 90

Act Title: PRISONS ACT; SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION

Places declared to be prisons for the purposes of the act, 1911under section 24

**Kisumu Women's: [L.N. 721/1961, L.N. 297/1968.]**

**Prisons Rules, 1963: Arrangement of Rules**

Part 11 – classification of prisons and prisoners

Part III – medical officers and the health of prisoners

Part VI – accommodation in and general management of prisons

Part V – treatment of prisoners

Part VI – discipline of prisoners

Part VII – period and remission of sentence, including release under supervision

Part VIII – treatment of special classes of prisoners

Part IX – visiting justices and the after-care of prisoners

Part X – extra mural penal employment

## APPENDIX C: Demographic Profile

The information you shall provide in this interview schedule is confidential so you will NOT be required to give your name. The questions in this part of the interview are about yourself and will be asked in English, Swahili or mother tongue with aid of a translator when need arises. This is not an exam so feel free to respond to the interview questions truthfully. Kindly let me know when you have difficulties or would not wish to proceed. Please respond to all questions asked and ask for clarification if not clear. Thank you.

Please tick the appropriate answer.

**How old are you?** 18-30 years 36 -60 years > 61years

**Level of education attained:** Primary Secondary College/University

**Marital status**: Single Married Separated/Divorced

**How many children do you have?** None One More than one

**Imprisonment term**: 0-1 year 1-3 years 3 years +

**Are you currently involved in any activity**: Always Sometimes Never

**Have you been visited in prison**: < 1 month 1month- 1 year > 1 year

**APPENDIX D: Personal Meaning Profile -B**

The following statements describe potential sources of a meaningful life. Please listen carefully as each statement is read out to you and respond by indicating to what extent each item characterizes your own life. There are five responses of which; 1 = not at all, 2 = seldom, 3 = moderately, 4 = usually, and, 5 = a great deal. You may respond by indicating the appropriate number according to the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| not at all | seldom | moderately | usually | a great deal |

For example, if going to parties does not contribute to your sense of personal meaning, you may indicate 1. If taking part in volunteer work contributes quite a bit to the meaning in your life, you may indicate 3. It is important that you answer honestly on the basis of your own experiences and beliefs.

1. I believe I can make a difference in the world. 1 2 3 4 5

2. I have someone to share intimate feelings with. 1 2 3 4 5

3. I strive to make this world a better place. 1 2 3 4 5

4. I seek to do God's will. 1 2 3 4 5

5. I like challenge. 1 2 3 4 5

6. I take initiative. 1 2 3 4 5

7. I have a number of good friends. 1 2 3 4 5

8. I am trusted by others. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I seek to glorify God. 1 2 3 4 5

10. Life has treated me fairly. 1 2 3 4 5

11. I accept my limitations. 1 2 3 4 5

12. I have a mutually satisfying loving relationship. 1 2 3 4 5

13. I am liked by others. 1 2 3 4 5

14. I have found someone I love deeply. 1 2 3 4 5

15. I accept what cannot be changed. 1 2 3 4 5

16. I am persistent and resourceful in attaining my goals. 1 2 3 4 5

17. I make a significant contribution to society. 1 2 3 4 5

18. I believe that one can have a personal relationship with God. 1 2 3 4 5

19. I am treated fairly by others. 1 2 3 4 5

20. I have received my fair share of opportunities and rewards. 1 2 3 4 5

21. I have learned to live with suffering and make the best of it. 1 2 3 4 5

**APPENDIX E: The Brief COPE inventory**

These items deal with ways you've been coping with the stress in your life since you found out you were going to be confined in KWP. There are many ways to try to deal with problemsbut I'm interested in how you've tried to deal with it. These items ask what you've been doing to cope with this one. Each item says something about a particular way of coping. I want to know to what extent you've been doing what the item says. Try to rate each item separately in your mind from the others. Just answer whether or not you're doing it or not and make your answers as true for you as you can. Use these response choices: 1 = I haven't been doing this at all; 2 = I've been doing this a little bit; 3 = I've been doing this a medium amount; 4 = I've been doing this a lot.

1. I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.
2. I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.
3. I've been saying to myself "this isn't real.".
4. I've been using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.
5. I've been getting emotional support from others.
6. I've been giving up trying to deal with it.
7. I've been taking action to try to make the situation better.
8. I've been refusing to believe that it has happened.
9. I've been saying things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.
10. I've been getting help and advice from other people.
11. I've been using alcohol or other drugs to help me get through it.
12. I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.
13. I've been criticizing myself.
14. I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.
15. I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone.
16. I've been giving up the attempt to cope.
17. I've been looking for something good in what is happening.
18. I've been making jokes about it.
19. I've been doing something to think about it less, such as going to movies, watching TV, reading, daydreaming, sleeping, or shopping.
20. I've been accepting the reality of the fact that it has happened.

21. I've been expressing my negative feelings.
22. I've been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.
23. I’ve been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do.
24. I've been learning to live with it.
25. I've been thinking hard about what steps to take.
26. I’ve been blaming myself for things that happened.
27. I've been praying or meditating.
28. I've been making fun of the situation.

**APPENDIX F: School of Graduate Studies Introductory Letter**

**MASENO UNIVERSITY**
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**
***Office of the Dean***

**Our Ref:** MA/FA/00020/014

Private Bag, MASENO, KENYA
Tel:(057)351 22/351008/351011
FAX: 254-057-351153/351221
Email: sgs@maseno.ac.ke

Date: 24th July, 2017

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**RE: PROPOSAL APPROVAL FOR ADIKINYI ANN OSIRO— MA/FA/00019/2014**

The above named is registered in the Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology Programme of the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Maseno University. This is to confirm that her research proposal titled "Relationship between Meaning Making and Psychosocial Adjustment of Incarcerated Women at Kisumu Women Prison, Kenya" has been approved for conduct of research subject to obtaining all other permissions/clearances that may be required beforehand.

MASENO UNIVERSITY
24 JUL 2017

for: Prof. J.O. Agure
**DEAN, SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**APPENDIX G: Permit to Conduct Research (NACOSTI, Kenya)**

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
*MS. ANNA ADIKINYI OSIRO*
of MASENO UNIVERSITY, 7100-40100
KISUMU,has been permitted to conduct
research in *Kisumu County*

on the topic: *RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEANING MAKING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF INCARCERATED WOMEN AT KISUMU WOMEN PRISON, KENYA*

for the period ending:
*21st September,2018*

.....
*Applicant's Signature*

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/17/06909/18550
Date Of Issue : 21st September,2017
Fee Recieved :Ksh 1000

.....
*Director General*
*National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation*

**APPENDIX H: Kisumu County Director of Education Research Authorization Letter**

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

# MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
## State Department of Early Learning & Basic Education

Telegrams:"schooling",Kisumu
Telephone: Kisumu 057 - 2024599
**Email: countyeducation.kisumu@gmail.com**

**When replying please quote**

**COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**
**KISUMU COUNTY**
**PROVINCIAL HEADQUARTERS NYANZA**
**3RD FLOOR**
**P.O. BOX 575 – 40100**
**KISUMU**

REF: CDE/KSM/GA/19/3A/V.II/228

13th June, 2018

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**
**ANNA ADIKINYI OSIRO – PERMIT NO. NACOSTI/P/17/06909/18550**

The above named is from Maseno University.

This is to certify that she has been granted authority to carry out research on ***"Relationship between meaning making and psychosocial adjustment of incarcerated women at Kisumu Women Prison, Kenya"*** for the period ending **21st September, 2018.**

Any assistance accorded to her to accomplish the assignment will be highly appreciated.

EUNICE A. OUKO
For: COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
**KISUMU COUNTY**

FOR: COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION - KISUMU

**APPENDIX I: Kisumu County Commissioner Research Authorization Letter**

# THE PRESIDENCY

**MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND COORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

**Telephone: Kisumu 2022219/Fax: 2022219**
**Email: ckisumucounty@gmail.com**

**COUNTY COMMISSIONER**
**KISUMU COUNTY**
**P.O. BOX 1912-40100**
**KISUMU**

**Ref**: CC/KC/RES/VOL.III/

**Date:** 13th June 2018

The Deputy County Commissioner
**KISUMU WEST SUB COUNTY**

**RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION: ANN ADIKINYI OSIRO**

Reference is made to a letter from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation No. NACOSTI/P/17/06909/18500 21st September, 2017 on the above underlined subject matter.

The above named is a student of Maseno University. She has been authorized to carry out a research on "***Relationship between meaning making psychosocial adjustment of incarcerated women at Kisumu Women Prison Kenya".*** The research period ends on 21st September 2018.

Kindly accord her any assistance that she may need.

**P.A. DOLLA (MBS)**
**COUNTY COMMISSIONER**
**KISUMU COUNTY**

**Copy to:**

Ann Adikinyi Osiro
Maseno University
**MASENO.**

a