

Significance of Life's Purpose among Different Generations of Career-Oriented Women

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The Authors have sincerely attempted to investigate life's meaning, including its two dimensions, i.e., i) presence of meaning in life and ii) search for meaning in life across three age groups. The age groups taken as a sample in the study were young age, middle age, and later age, respectively, of working women. Information was gathered from a sample of 300 employed women with at least two years of work experience. The tool used for the study was the Meaning in Life Questionnaire. For the analysis of collected data, descriptive means (Mean and SD), inferential (One way ANOVA and post hoc (TUKEY) were used. The analysis found a significant difference among the three age groups on the presence of meaning in life, search for meaning in life, and overall meaning in life. This study holds significance within the realm of Positive Psychology, emphasizing the necessity to enhance positive capabilities in employed women. Such improvements are essential for effectively managing both domestic and professional responsibilities.

Keywords: Meaning in life, Positive capacities, Psychology, Significance

In psychology, 'meaning in life' explains the experiences that are very subjective to individuals finding purpose, significance, and fulfillment in their existence. It's a multifaceted construct that involves a coherent sense, direction, and understanding of one's life and its value. "Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life, he can only respond by being responsible." (Victor Frankl).

Psychological research has shown that experiencing a strong sense of meaning in life is associated with various positive results and outcomes, including higher levels of well-being, satisfaction, resilience, and overall psychological functioning. Additionally, it can serve as a safeguard against mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and existential crises. Different individuals may find meaning in life

through diverse sources, such as relationships, work or career pursuits, spirituality or religious beliefs, creative endeavors, contributing to society, personal achievements, or making a difference in the lives of others. The search for meaning is highly subjective and can vary across cultures, contexts, and individual life circumstances

The significance of meaning in life is believed to contribute to well-being across all human life stages. Meaning in life encompasses several dimensions, but here in the research paper, only two main dimensions are described.

- 1) Presence of meaning in life
- 2) Search for meaning in life

A research conducted by Michael Steger, Shigehiro Oishi & Todd B Kashdan in 2009 stated that people who are in later phases of their lives tend to express a stronger sense

of 'meaning' in their lives, while people who are in earlier phases of life tend to exhibit a higher proclivity towards searching for meaning. They researched "Meaning in life across the life span: Levels and correlates of meaning in life from emerging adulthood to older adulthood". They took a sample of 8756 people from four different age groups. Groups were classified as emerging adulthood, young age-hood, middle-age adulthood, and older adulthood. Neal Krause & Gerard Rainville conducted a study on Age differences in meaning in life: Exploring the mediating role of social support. The study found that there is a nonlinear relationship between age and meaning in life. The supportive social networks that older people maintain may facilitate finding a sense of meaning. There are a few more studies that support the same findings. However, few of the researchers have contradictory findings, too. Even then, it's clear that there is a relationship between age and having meaning in life because your experiences, life events, expectations, responsibilities, success, failure, etc., somewhat influence your presence and your search for meaning in life.

Objectives

- To compare the 'meaning in life' across young age, middle age, and later age working women
- To compare the 'search for meaning' in life across young age, middle age, and later age working women
- To compare the 'overall meaning in life' across young age, middle age, and later age working women

Hypotheses

- There would be no significant difference among young age, middle age and later age working women on the Presence of meaning in life

- There would be no significant difference among young age, middle-aged age ad later age working women in Search for meaning in life
- There would be no significant difference in overall meaning in life among young age, middle-aged and later age working women

Method

Sample

A purposive sampling method was employed to collect data, involving a sample of 300 employed women with a minimum of 2 years of experience. The participants were categorized into three groups: young ages (30-40 years), middle age (40-50 years), and later age (50-60 years). All the participants worked as a teacher in senior secondary schools in district of 'Bhiwani' Haryana. All the participants were wedded, and their socio-economic backgrounds were nearly identical. The selection process ensured that all participants were from the local vicinity.

Tools

The following tool was used for the purpose of the present study:

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger, M.F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. 2006) is widely utilized for helping individuals comprehend and assess their perceptions of life. Translated into over 12 languages, this questionnaire exhibits robust psychometric properties across diverse demographic factors, including age, gender, race, and nationality. Comprising 10 items, the questionnaire measures two magnitudes of meaning in life, with responses rated on a seven-point scale from "absolutely true" to "Absolutely untrue." The two subscales, "Presence" and "Search," measure respondents' perceptions of life's meaningfulness and their motivation to seek or deepen their understanding of meaning, respectively.

The Meaning in Life questionnaire demonstrates commendable reliability, a stable factor structure, test-retest stability, and convergence among informants. Behavioral aspects are linked to the two subscales, with the "Presence" subscale positively associated with intrinsic religiosity, well-being, agreeableness, and extraversion, while negatively correlated with depression and anxiety. The "Search" subscale is positively related to rumination, religious quest, negative affect, past-negative and present-fatalistic neuroticism, and depression, while negatively associated with future time perspective, close-mindedness, and well-being. Completion of the Meaning in Life questionnaire typically requires approximately 5 minutes.

Procedure

Data was gathered from the selected sample from "Bhiwani district. First of all, a rapport was formed with all the participants, and the Objectives and aim of the research were made very clear to them. After the initial procedure, general or demographic information was gathered from the participants. Then, tools were distributed to them, and they were asked to complete their responses. It had been already told and assured to the participants that their responses would be kept trusted.

Results and Discussion

In the current research, the focus was on examining variables such as the presence of meaning in life, the search for meaning in life, and overall meaning in life. These positive capacities are closely associated with enhancing the psychological strength of females, whether they are employed outside or within their homes. The study aimed to explore the presence of meaning in life, the search for meaning in life, and overall meaning in life. Descriptive & inferential statistics were calculated with SPSS. The findings are presented in the tables below.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation scores on the Presence of Meaning in Life in young ages, Middle Ages, and later ages

	Young age (30-40 Y)	Middle age (40-50 Y)	Later age (50-60 Y)
MEAN	25.67	24.57	27.45
SD	3.69	3.80	3.05

The table above illustrates the mean scores and standard deviation values for the presence of meaning in life among different age groups: young age (30-40 years), middle age (40-50 years), and later age (50-60 years), namely 25.67, 24.57, and 27.45, respectively. The results indicate that the middle age group exhibits the lowest score on the presence of meaning in life compared to the young age and later age groups. There is less mean difference exists among all three groups, but whether the difference among groups is significantly different or not is explained in Table 1(a).

Table 1 (a). One Way ANOVA scores table

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P-Value
Between Groups	422.427	2	211.21	16.930	.000
Within Groups	3705.370	297	12.467		
Total	4127.797	299			

** @ .05 level of significance

* @ .01 level of significance

Table 1(a) provided above elucidates the F value and P value, indicating the significance level concerning the presence of meaning in life across three age groups: young age (30-40 years), middle age (40-50 years), and later age (50-60 years). The calculated F value among the three groups is 16.930, with a corresponding P value of .000. This outcome signifies a significant difference among the three age groups

regarding the presence of meaning in life at the .01 level of significance. Consequently, it can be inferred that each age group holds distinct perspectives on the presence of meaning in their lives. Various factors, such as life priorities, achievements, responsibilities, and family and social support, may contribute to these differing viewpoints. The disparities in resources and opportunities individuals receive also shape their unique perspectives on the presence of meaning in life.

While the scores presented in the aforementioned table unmistakably indicate a significant difference among the three age groups regarding the presence of meaning in life, the specific details of this difference between groups can be discerned from Table 1(b).

Table 1(b). Significance of mean differences based on the Tuckey test

Age groups	Young age	Middle age	Later age
Young age		.072	.001**
Middle-aged			.000**
Later age			

** @ .05 level of significance * @ .01 level of significance

The Tukey test was employed in this study to assess the significance of mean differences among the three groups under examination. In the previously mentioned table, the mean difference value between the young age and middle age group of women is 0.72, signifying a lack of significant difference in their perspectives on the presence of meaning in life. While no statistical significance is observed between these two groups, the value (0.72) suggests the existence of some subtle differences. It implies that young ages and Middle Ages may not share identical opinions and views regarding the presence of meaning in their

lives, indicating a potential shift in perspectives as individuals transition into middle age, gaining clearer insights into their life purposes. Conversely, the mean difference value between the young age and later age group of women is 0.01, indicating a highly significant difference in their perspectives on the presence of meaning in life. This suggests that young age and later age women hold distinct viewpoints concerning the presence of meaning in their lives, emphasizing that individuals tend to become more aware of their life purposes as they age. Similarly, the mean difference value between the middle-aged and later-age groups of women is 0.00, signifying a significant difference in their perspectives on the presence of meaning in life. This underscores that middle-aged and later-age women also exhibit differing viewpoints regarding the presence of meaning in their lives.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation scores on the Search for Meaning in Life in the Young Ages, Middle Ages, and Later Ages

	Young age (30-40)	Middle age (40-50)	Later age (50-60)
MEAN	26.45	23.08	24.33
SD	4.52	6.403	5.431

The table above displays the mean scores and standard deviation values for the search for meaning in life among young ages (30-40 years), Middle Ages (40-50 years), and later ages (50-60 years), with scores of 26.45, 23.08, and 24.33, respectively. Notably, the middle age group exhibits the lowest score on the search for meaning in life compared to the young age and later age groups. Although a mean difference is observed among all three groups, the extent to which the difference is statistically significant is elucidated in Table 2(a).

Table 2(a). One Way ANOVA scores table

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P-Value
Between Groups	580.460	2	290.230	9.575	.000
Within Groups	9002.220	297	30.311		
Total	9582.680	297			

** @ .05 level of significance

*@ .01 level of significance

Table 2(a) presented above details the F value and P value, signifying the significance level regarding the search for meaning in life across three age groups: young ages (30-40 years), middle ages (40-50 years), and later ages (50-60 years). The calculated F value among the three groups is 9.575, with a corresponding P value of .000, clearly indicating a significant difference among the age groups in their search for meaning in life at the .01 significance level. This implies that each age group holds distinct perspectives on the search for meaning in their lives. Possible reasons for these differences may stem from varying successes and failures in different life areas, levels of satisfaction in various spheres of life, and the influence of mental well-being and professional stability on the search for meaning in life.

While the scores mentioned in the above table unmistakably indicate a significant difference among the three age groups regarding the search for meaning in life, the specific details of this difference between groups can be discerned from Table 2(b).

Table 2(b). Significance of mean differences based on Tukey test

Age groups	Young age	Middle age	Later age
Young age		.000**	.019*
Middle aged			.245
Later age			

** significant at .05 level of significance

* significant at .01 level of significance

The Tukey test was utilized to assess the significance of mean differences. In the table above, the mean difference value between young age and middle age groups of women is .000, indicating a significant difference in their perspectives on the search for meaning in life. This suggests that young and middle-aged women hold different viewpoints regarding the search for meaning in life. Similarly, the mean difference value between young age and later age groups of women is 0.19, signifying a significant difference and indicating differing perspectives on the search for meaning in life between later age and young age women. On the other hand, the mean difference value between women's middle age and later age groups is .245, which does not significantly differ in the search for meaning in life. This implies that the perspectives of middle-aged and later-age individuals are almost the same regarding the search for meaning in life.

Several reasons may contribute to the higher level of search for meaning in life among young ages compared to the middle ages and later ages. The younger generation typically has limited practical knowledge, fewer life experiences, and less exposure to success and failures in various aspects of life. This limited experience could be a significant factor in why young ages still actively seek meaning and purpose in their lives. In contrast, middle-aged and later ages have accumulated a wealth of experiences and applied knowledge, including a more

extensive range of success and failure stories. As a result, they are clearer about their desires and needs, thinking more practically and economically, and thus have a more precise understanding of what they are searching for in their lives. The difference in the search for meaning in life between the Middle Ages and later ages is minimal.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation scores on overall Meaning in Life in young ages, middle ages, and later ages

	Young age (30-40)	Middle age (40-50)	Later age (50-60)
MEAN	52.14	47.95	49.23
SD	7.242	8.330	8.607

The table presented above displays the mean scores and standard deviation values for the search for meaning in life among young ages (30-40 years), middle ages (40-50 years), and later ages (50-60 years), with scores of 52.14, 47.95, and 49.23, respectively. Notably, the middle age group exhibits the lowest score on the search for meaning in life compared to the young age and later age groups. Although a mean difference exists among all three groups, whether this difference is statistically significant or not is elucidated in Table 3(a).

Table 3(a). One Way ANOVA scores table

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P-Value
Between Groups	922.087	19394.500	461.043	7.060	.001**
Within Groups	19394.500	297	65.301		
Total	20316.587	299			

** significant at .05 level of significance

* significant at .01 level of significance

Table 3(a) provided above details the F value and P value, signifying the significance level concerning the meaning in life across

three age groups: young ages (30-40 years), middle ages (40-50 years), and later ages (50-60 years). The calculated F value among the three groups is 7.060, with a corresponding P value of .001, clearly indicating a significant difference among the age groups in their perspectives on meaning in life at the .05 level of significance. This suggests that each age group holds distinct viewpoints about the meaning in life. Various factors, such as success and failure in different life areas, satisfaction in various spheres of life, psychological well-being, and professional stability, may contribute to these differing perspectives.

While the scores mentioned in the above table unmistakably indicate a significant difference among the three age groups regarding meaning in life, the specific details of this difference between groups can be discerned from Table 3(b).

Table 3(b). Significance of mean differences based on Tukey test

Age groups	Young age	Middle age	Later age
Young age		.001**	.031*
Middle aged			.502
Later age			

** significant at .05 level of significance

* significant at .01 level of significance

The Tukey test was applied to assess the significance of mean differences among groups. In the table above, the mean difference value between the young age and middle age groups of women is .001, signifying a significant difference in their perspectives on meaning in life. This suggests that young age and middle age women hold different viewpoints regarding the meaning in life. Similarly, the mean difference value between the young age and later age groups of women is 0.03, indicating a significant difference and suggesting differing perspectives on meaning in life

between later age and young age women. Conversely, the mean difference value between the middle age and later age groups of women is .502, which does not significantly differ regarding meaning in life. This implies that the perspectives of middle age and later-age individuals are almost the same concerning the meaning of life.

Discussion

It is very clear from obtained results that all three age groups have different opinions and views about presence and search for meaning in life. There are few studies that prove the same thing. A study conducted by Nicole Fung & Helene Fung in 2021 on Age differences in experiencing meaning in life: A multidimensional approach found that younger and older adults have different absolute levels of meaning facet. However, they are somewhere similar in the relative levels of meaning facet.

Implications

The study underscores the significance of forgiveness in the lives of working women. It provides valuable insights for future researchers undertaking similar investigations. Moreover, the findings have practical implications for counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists in effectively addressing and treating their clients. In the realm of Positive Psychology, particularly in the field of school psychology, where many female teachers are actively engaged, this research holds relevance. Additionally, the research findings are applicable to patients, as enhancing forgiveness can potentially contribute to the swift alleviation of certain

mental disorders such as stress, depression, and anxiety.

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