



Investigating the Impact of Life Purpose on Individuals' Happiness and Well-Being

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of life purpose on happiness and well-being, emphasizing psychological, emotional, and social dimensions. Using a mixed-methods approach with surveys and interviews, it employs the Meaning in Life (MIL) test and Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) for assessment. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation between clarity of purpose and higher levels of happiness, resilience, and stress management. Notably, the study highlights a difference in the impact of life purpose across age groups, middle adults reported a stronger association between purpose and well-being compared to young adults, suggesting that life purpose may become more influential with age. These insights support the integration of purpose-driven interventions in therapy, education, and community programs to enhance overall well-being.

Key words: Life Purpose, Happiness, Well-being, Age Differences, Mental Health.

1. Introduction

1.1 Life Purpose

Life purpose is a vital aspect of an individual's life, shaping their experiences and aspirations. It is a sustained sense of meaning, intentionality, and direction that influences long-term goals and daily decisions. It not only reflects personal ambitions but also contributes to society, expressing core personal values, and cultivating a coherent identity. A well-established purpose supports resilience, engagement, and coherence throughout life's stages. Western psychological and philosophical traditions have deeply

engaged with the notion of life purpose, with Viktor Frankl's logotherapy emphasizing the pursuit of meaning and Maslow's self-actualization as the highest tier in his hierarchy of needs. Indian philosophical perspectives approach life purpose through a moral and spiritual lens, with the Purusharthas concept presenting a balanced life framework integrating material, emotional, and spiritual pursuits. Cultural contexts significantly influence how individuals develop and experience a sense of purpose. Life purpose evolves across the human lifespan, with young adults exploring vocational, relational, and personal goals, while middle-aged adults consolidate a more stable sense aligned with generativity and societal contribution.

1.2 Happiness

Happiness is a crucial aspect of human life, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and relational dimensions. It has evolved from fleeting emotional states to enduring aspects like life satisfaction and psychological functioning. Philosophical traditions have explored happiness's nature, with Aristotle's eudaimonia, utilitarian thinkers like Bentham and Mill, Stoicism, and Eastern philosophies like the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita. Cultural factors also influence happiness experiences, with individualistic cultures often focusing on personal achievements and collectivist cultures on social harmony.

1.3 Well-Being

Well-being is a complex concept that encompasses the optimal functioning of individuals in psychological, emotional, physical, and social domains. It is not just the absence of disease or distress but the presence of positive experiences, personal growth, and meaningful social engagement. Several psychological models offer structured perspectives on well-being, including Ryff's Psychological Well-Being model, Seligman's PERMA framework, and Diener's Subjective Well-Being theory. The determinants of well-being are multifaceted, including internal attributes like emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and self-efficacy, external factors like supportive interpersonal relationships and safe environments, and lifestyle factors like physical exercise, nutritious diets, and quality sleep. The relationship between life purpose and well-being is significant, as a strong sense of purpose provides direction, fosters resilience, and improves mental and physical health outcomes. Therefore, well-being is an evolving construct that reflects the interplay of personal capacities, social relationships, and meaningful living.

1.4 Investigating the Impact of Life Purpose on Individuals' Happiness and Well-Being

Life purpose is a key factor in psychological health and overall well-being. It is a sustained sense of meaning, direction, and intentionality that influences resilience, motivation, and coherence. People with a well-articulated life purpose experience higher level of subjective well-being, greater life satisfaction, and enhanced emotional regulation. Happiness is rooted in meaningful pursuits, personal growth, and connectedness to larger life goals.

This study examines the impact of life purpose on both pleasure-centered and meaning-centered dimensions of well-being and its variation across different age groups. Focusing on participants within the Indian socio-cultural framework, it offers insights into how purpose-driven living protects against psychological distress and promotes positive mental health.

1.5 The Rationale of the Study

Life purpose is a key factor in psychological well-being, but its impact on happiness and well-being varies across age groups, especially in collectivist societies like India. Understanding these differences is crucial for developing culturally sensitive psychological theories and interventions. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to investigate protective psychological factors like life purpose to promote emotional resilience. This study aims to explore the relationship between life purpose, happiness, and well-being in Indian cultural contexts.

2. Review of Literature

A study by Pandya (2025) investigated the effects of mindfulness-based art therapy (MBAT) on the well-being and purpose in life of retired Indian older adults. The results suggest that MBAT participants reported higher post-test scores, whereas the AT cohort exhibited no significant difference. The findings indicate that MBAT, which combines art, meditation, and mind-body connection, may improve wellness and life meaning.

Baños et al. (2023) examined Meaning in Life (PML) and Search for Meaning in Life (SML) during the COVID-19 lockdown in Spain. Results showed a decrease in PML under rigorous lockdown but a plateau during relaxed lockdown. Age, partner status, and male gender predict higher PML and lower SML at baseline.

Lewis et al. (2022) in their study found that a sense of purpose leads to improved physical health, increased lifespan, and a lower risk of disability and dementia. This sense of purpose promotes better physiological control, reducing stress and disease risk. Cardiovascular and immunological biomarkers showed the strongest connections with

purposefulness, suggesting that preserving these systems may lower chronic health disorders.

Garanina and Andronova (2022) explored students' life orientations, existential values, and happiness levels, and discovered that happiness is not dependent on schooling. There were significant relationships between happiness, fulfilment, self-transcendence, freedom, personality, existentialism, self-distancing, and meaningfulness. Meaningfulness of Life, productivity of life and level of happiness were discovered as factors impacting happiness.

Kim et al. (2021) discovered that individuals with a higher sense of purpose had better physical health outcomes, health behaviours, and psychosocial outcomes, such as increased optimism and a lower risk of sadness and loneliness. However, purpose was not linked to any other health outcomes, behaviours, or social factors.

Hill et al. (2018) in their study found that purpose in life is associated with higher daily positive affect, lower negative affect, and fewer physical symptoms. Those with a greater purpose face the same number of stresses, but they exhibit fewer negative emotions and physical symptoms on stressful days. Purpose does not predict good affective changes.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim

The study aims to examine the influence of life purpose on individual happiness and overall well-being.

3.2 Research Objective

- a) To explore the relationship between life purpose and levels of happiness and well-being among individuals.
- b) To compare the levels of life purpose, happiness, and well-being between two age groups, young adults and middle-aged adults, to assess whether age moderates these psychological constructs.

3.3 Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant positive relationship between life purpose and individual happiness and well-being among both young adults and middle-aged adults.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant difference in the levels of life purpose, happiness, and well-being between young adults and middle-aged adults, with middle-aged adults demonstrating higher levels due to greater life experience and stability.

3.4 Variables

Independent variable: Life Purpose (LP)

Dependent variables: Happiness (SHS) and Well Being (WB)

3.5 Sampling Method

The study examines the impact of life purpose on happiness and well-being in young and middle adults, using standardized scales to measure life purpose, happiness, and well-being. 120 participants were recruited through purposive sampling, ensuring equal representation across age groups. The study used standardized scales and standardized scales to measure happiness and well-being, enhancing the relevance of the findings.

3.6 Measures

3.6.1 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ): The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) is a self-report scale that assesses individuals' perception of their lives as meaningful. It consists of two subscales: Presence of Meaning and Search for Meaning, each with five items. Responses are recorded on a 7-point Likert scale. The MLQ has high internal consistency and construct validity across various age groups and cultures. Higher scores on the Presence subscale indicate greater perceived meaning, while higher scores on the Search subscale indicate a stronger drive to find meaning.

3.6.2 Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS): The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) is a 4-item instrument that measures global subjective happiness. It assesses personal perceptions of happiness and comparisons to others. Participants respond on a 7-point Likert scale, with varying anchors depending on the item. The SHS has shown good reliability and validity across diverse populations and is commonly used in studies assessing emotional well-being. Two items are phrased positively, one is a comparative item, and one is reverse-scored to reduce response bias.

3.6.3 WHO-5 Well-Being Index (WHO-5 WB): The WHO-5 Well-Being Index is a 5-item scale that measures positive well-being over two weeks. It uses a 6-point Likert scale to rate items like "I have felt calm and relaxed." The raw scores range from 0 to 25, with higher scores indicating better well-being. The WHO-5 is globally validated and used in clinical and research settings as a measure of mental well-being and a screening tool for depression.

3.7 Statistical Analysis

This study employs a mixed-method approach, utilizing both correlational analyses to understand relationships between variables and t-tests to examine age-related differences between young adults and middle adults. This dual approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the associations between psychological constructs and the influence of age on these variables.

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was used to examine the relationships between life purpose, happiness, well-being, and perceived stress. This analysis helped determine the strength and direction of associations among these continuous variables. A positive correlation indicated that as one variable increased, so did the other; whereas a negative correlation suggested that an increase in one variable was associated with a decrease in the other. The significance of the correlation coefficients was assessed to determine whether the observed relationships were statistically meaningful or likely due to chance ($p < .05$).

T-tests compare the means of two groups to understand differences more deeply. To explore differences in psychological variables across age groups, a two-sample t -test assuming equal variances was conducted. This test compared mean scores of life purpose, happiness, and well-being between young adults (18–30 years) and middle adults (40–60 years). Prior to conducting the analysis, the assumption of equal variances was assessed using Levene's test. As the assumption was met, the pooled-variance version of the t -test was used. A significance level of $p < .05$ was adopted, and effect sizes (Cohen's d) were reported where applicable to indicate the practical significance of any observed differences.

4. Data Analysis

The present study examined the relationship between life purpose, happiness, and well-being across two distinct age groups: young adults and middle-aged adults. The sample comprised 120 participants, evenly split between the two groups, with an overall age range of 18 to 65 years and a mean age of approximately (41.5) years.

Descriptive analysis indicated that middle-aged adults had a mean life purpose score of (43.9), while young adults reported a mean score of (42.35), suggesting moderate levels of perceived meaning in both groups. Regarding happiness, young adults achieved a slightly higher mean score of (17.3) on the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) compared to (16.55) for middle-aged adults. Well-being, as measured by the WHO-5 Well-Being

Index, was also marginally higher among young adults (mean = 13.52) than among middle-aged adults (mean = 13.02).

The correlational analysis yielded notable findings. In the middle-aged adult group, the presence of meaning in life was moderately and positively correlated with happiness ($r = 0.37, p < .01$), suggesting that individuals with a stronger sense of life purpose tended to report higher happiness levels. There was also a significant positive association between the presence of meaning and the search for meaning ($r = 0.43, p < .01$), indicating that those who felt their lives were meaningful were also actively seeking deeper or additional meanings. However, no significant correlations were observed between the search for meaning and well-being, nor between happiness and well-being, among middle-aged adults.

Among young adults, a moderate positive correlation was found between the presence of life purpose and well-being ($r = 0.29, p < .05$), suggesting that individuals with a higher sense of meaning reported greater psychological well-being. However, no significant association was observed between life purpose and happiness, or between the search for meaning and either happiness or well-being, in this age group.

Table 1: *Correlations Among Life Purpose, Happiness, And Well-Being For Middle and Young Adults*

Middle Adults (MA)

S. No	Variable Pair	N	r	Sig (p)
1	MLQ Presence – MLQ Search	60	.43	**
2	MLQ Presence – SHS (Happiness)	60	.37	**
3	MLQ Presence – WHO-5 (Well-being)	60	.21	
4	MLQ Search – SHS (Happiness)	60	.30	*
5	MLQ Search – WHO-5 (Well-being)	60	.02	
6	SHS (Happiness) – WHO-5 (Well-being)	60	.17	

Young Adults (YA)

S. No	Variable Pair	N	r	Sig (p)
1	MLQ Presence – MLQ Search	60	.30	*
2	MLQ Presence – SHS (Happiness)	60	.18	
3	MLQ Presence – WHO-5 (Well-being)	60	.29	*

4	MLQ Search – SHS (Happiness)	60	.24	
5	MLQ Search – WHO-5 (Well-being)	60	.13	
6	SHS (Happiness) – WHO-5 (Well-being)	60	.16	

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the two age groups across the three psychological constructs. The results showed no statistically significant differences. In life purpose, middle-aged adults reported slightly higher mean scores than young adults, but the difference was not significant ($t(118) = 0.94$, $p > .05$). Similarly, happiness scores were marginally higher among young adults, but again, the difference was non-significant ($t(118) = -0.94$, $p > .05$). Well-being scores followed a similar trend, with young adults reporting slightly higher levels than middle-aged adults, yet the difference did not reach statistical significance ($t(118) = -1.71$, $p > .05$).

Table 2: *T-Test Results: Comparing Life Purpose, Happiness, and Well-Being Between Middle Adults and Young Adults*

Measure	Group	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Life Purpose (MLQ)	Middle Adults	43.9	9.54	0.94	ns
	Young Adults	42.35	8.42		
Happiness (SHS)	Middle Adults	16.55	4.28	-0.94	ns
	Young Adults	17.3	4.43		
Well-Being (WHO-5)	Middle Adults	13.02	5.08	-1.71	ns
	Young Adults	13.52	3.98		

Note: ns = not significant

Overall, the findings suggest that although life purpose is positively associated with both happiness and well-being within each age group, the overall levels of life purpose, happiness, and well-being do not differ significantly between young and middle-aged adults.

5. Discussion

The study investigates the impact of life purpose on individuals' happiness and well-being, focusing on middle adults and young adults. Life purpose, a sense of meaning or significance perceived in life, is a key factor influencing psychological well-being. Understanding the relationship between life purpose, happiness, and well-being is crucial for interventions aimed at improving mental health outcomes. The correlation results provided interesting insights into how life purpose, happiness, and well-being were related within the two age groups. In middle adults, a significant positive correlation was found between MLQ Presence and MLQ Search, suggesting that those with a higher sense of life purpose are more likely to engage in the search for meaning. However, the correlation between MLQ Presence and well-being (WHO-5) was not significant, suggesting that while life purpose may influence happiness, its impact on well-being is less direct.

For young adults, the relationship between life purpose and happiness was weaker ($r = 0.18$) and not statistically significant. However, MLQ Presence was significantly correlated with well-being (WHO-5), indicating that young adults with a stronger sense of purpose reported better well-being. This finding is consistent with previous research that has suggested age-related differences in the pursuit of life purpose may not always translate into significant differences in psychological outcomes.

In conclusion, life purpose is significantly associated with happiness and well-being in both middle adults and young adults, although the strength and nature of these relationships differ across the groups. Future research should explore the mechanisms underlying these relationships and consider how other factors, such as personality traits or life experiences, might influence the way life purpose impacts psychological outcomes across the lifespan.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of life purpose on individuals' happiness and well-being across middle adults and young adults. The results indicated that life purpose, measured through the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), was significantly correlated with happiness and well-being, with notable differences in the strength and nature of these relationships between the two age groups. For middle adults, life purpose was more strongly associated with happiness, while for young adults, it was more strongly linked to well-being. Despite these differences, the t-test results revealed no significant

differences between middle adults and young adults in terms of life purpose, happiness, or well-being, suggesting that both groups experience similar levels of these constructs.

However, the study has several limitations. The sample size, although adequate, was restricted to only 120 participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the sample lacked diversity in terms of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and other demographic factors, which could influence the relationship between life purpose and psychological outcomes. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study prevents causal inferences from being made about the impact of life purpose on happiness and well-being.

In terms of implications, this study highlights the importance of life purpose in enhancing both happiness and well-being, suggesting that interventions aimed at fostering a sense of meaning in life could be beneficial for individuals at different life stages. The findings emphasize the need for age-tailored approaches when addressing life purpose in therapeutic or developmental settings.

Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of life purpose on happiness and well-being, examining how these relationships evolve over time. Additionally, studies with more diverse populations and larger sample sizes could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that mediate or moderate the impact of life purpose on psychological outcomes. Expanding the scope of future studies to include a broader range of variables, such as personality traits or life events, would help elucidate the complex dynamics of life purpose in different life stages.

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