

Research Paper**Investigating the Meaning of Life and Psychological Well-being, in Youth, Adults, and Elderly (A Comparative Study of Three Age Groups)*****Soheila Orang¹, Hadi Hashemi Razini², Maryam Ramshini³, Tooba Orang⁴**

1. Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Education, International Campus, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.
2. Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Education, International Campus, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.
3. Department of Psychology, Faculty of Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.
4. Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran.

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ABSTRACT**Objectives** The present study aimed to examine the meaning in life and well-being of young, middle-aged, and older adults.**Methods & Materials** In this research, a total of 215 participants including 84 young (aged 17-25 years), 59 middle-aged (aged 26-46 years), and 72 older adults (aged 65-80 years) were selected from Tehran city via purposive sampling. The instruments used in this study consisted of the meaning of life questionnaire and Ryffs Scales of Psychological Well-being.**Results** The results of Mancova analyses showed significant differences between the three age groups. The older people had the most ability in the meaning in life, self-acceptance, positive relation with others, personal growth and purpose in life.**Conclusion** Research findings indicate that age affects the meaning in life and well-being. So, elderly can be known as a self-awareness, development and relaxation.**Key words:**

Elderly, Youth, Adults, The meaning of life, Psychological well-being

Extended Abstract**1. Objectives**

Finding meaning in life and psychological well-being are considered as the most important factors in mental health and happiness. Given the negative attitudes and schemas regarding old age, it seems that young age and adulthood are preferred to the old age in terms of intelligence and finding meaning in life, mental health, the quality of

life, and psychological well-being. Therefore, the present study has been conducted with the aim of comparing the meaning of life and psychological well-being of the elderly with those of young people and adults. Comparing these variables, this study tried to find out if old age limitations have led to reduced meaning of life and psychological well-being and whether young people and adults who are not bound by these restrictions have more meaning of life and psychological well-being. According to this, the main question of the present study is whether the age factor plays a role in

*** Corresponding Author:****Soheila Orang, MSc.****Address:** Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Education, International Campus, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.**Tel:** +98 (912) 6968611**E-mail:** orang.soheila@gmail.com

the meaning of life and psychological well-being of individuals in different age groups?

2. Methods and Materials

The present study is a causal-comparative study, and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used for data analysis while observing the assumptions. Statistical population consisted of all elderly people between the ages of 65 and 80 years, adults aged 26 to 46 years, and the youth between 17 and 25 years of age. In this study, 215 people were selected through non-random sampling, including 3 groups of youth, adults and elderly people. Data collection was carried out in the summer and autumn of 2016 in public places of Tehran. Inclusion criteria for the study were as follows: education level of diploma or above, the abovementioned age range, informed consent to answer the questions in the questionnaire, and the ability to understand questions. Exclusion criteria were

refusal to continue participation and the inability to understand the questions. This study is a research type. Instruments used in this research were Reef's Psychological Well-being Scale and the Stareg's Meaning in Life Scale. In order to standardize the well-being scale in Iran, the coefficient of test-retest reliability for Reef's Psychological Well-being Scale was obtained to be 82%. The reliability coefficients of its subscales of acceptance, the positive relationship with others, self-determination, objective life, personal growth, and environmental domination were 71%, 77%, 78%, 70%, 77%, and 78%, respectively. The validity of this scale for life assessment was 86% for the sub-scale of the existence of meaning and 87% for the subscale of finding meaning in life. The reliability of sub-scales of existence of meaning and finding meaning in life were 70% and 73%, respectively. Test-retest reliability of this scale in Iran was obtained to be 84% and 74% for subscales of existence of meaning and finding meaning in life, respectively, by Eshtehard (2009) with a two-

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation

Components	Age	Mean	Standard Deviation
Finding meaning	17-25	28.320	6.372
	26-46	27.849	4.959
	65-80	27.683	7.663
Existence of meaning	17-25	23.615	3.661
	26-46	23.150	3.575
	65-80	27.000	11.514
Self-acceptance	17-25	11.551	1.904
	26-46	12.132	1.605
	65-80	13.450	3.175
Positive relationship with others	17-25	8.294	3.338
	26-46	9.264	3.274
	65-80	12.300	3.646
Autonomy	17-25	13.205	2.414
	26-46	13.434	2.349
	65-80	12.850	2.735
Domination on environment	17-25	13.102	2.035
	26-46	13.905	1.86
	65-80	13.550	3.20
Purposeful life	17-25	9.897	2.515
	26-46	10.018	2.872
	65-80	12.266	3.085
Personal growth	17-25	12.448	1.951
	26-46	12.434	1.704
	65-80	14.466	7.729

Table 2. Scheffé's follow-up test results

Components	Age	Age	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Level of Significance
Existence of meaning	17-25	26-46	0.4644	1.266	0.935
		65-80	-3.3846	1.221	0.023
	26-46	17-25	-0.4644	1.266	0.935
		65-80	-3.8991	1.341	0.018
	65-80	17-25	3.3846	1.221	0.023
		26-46	3.8491	1.341	0.018
Self-acceptance	17-25	26-46	-0.5880	0.4122	0.373
		65-80	-1.8987	0.3976	0.001
	26-46	17-25	0.5808	0.4122	0.373
		65-80	-1.3179	0.4365	0.012
	65-80	17-25	1.8987	0.3976	0.001
		26-46	1.3179	0.4365	0.012
Positive relationship with others	17-25	26-46	-0.9693	0.6077	0.283
		65-80	-4.0051	0.5862	0.001
	26-46	17-25	0.9693	0.6077	0.283
		65-80	-3.0358	0.6435	0.001
	65-80	17-25	4.0051	0.5862	0.001
		26-46	3.0358	0.6435	0.001
Purposeful life	17-25	26-46	-0.1214	0.49911	0.971
		65-80	-2.3692	0.48146	0.001
	26-46	17-25	0.1214	0.49911	0.971
		65-80	-2.2478	0.52853	0.001
	65-80	17-25	2.3692	0.48146	0.001
		26-46	2.2478	0.52853	0.001
Personal growth	17-25	26-46	0.0148	0.87179	0.0001
		65-80	-2.0179	0.7890	0.040
	26-46	17-25	-0.0148	0.8179	0.0001
		65-80	-2.0327	0.86617	0.066
	65-80	17-25	2.0179	0.7890	0.040
		26-46	2.0327	0.86617	0.066

weeks interval. Cronbach's alpha for finding meaning in life sub-scale was 75% and for the sub-scale of having meaning was 78%. The scale seems to have a good internal consistency. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 18 and using ANOVA.

3. Result

The results obtained showed that the dependent variables have normal distribution. One of the presuppositions of the MANOVA test is Leven's test. The Leven's test showed that F error level for all components in the Leven's test was higher than 0.01. Therefore, there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of the error variance of the components of finding meaning in life, existence of meaning, self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental domination, purposeful life, and personal growth. Results obtained from multivariate analysis of variance based on the scale of the Wilks' Lambda ($P=0.01$, $F<6.84$) showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the linear mean of attempts for meaning, existence of meaning, self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental domination, purposeful life, and individual growth of the three age groups. Given the values of F, there was a statistically significant difference between the means of existence of meaning, self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental domination, purposeful life, and individual growth of the three age groups. But there was no significant difference between age groups in terms of the mean scores related to finding meaning in life, autonomy, and environmental domination.

The findings of the present study showed that there was a significant difference between the age groups of 25-46, 17-25 and 65-80 years in terms of the component of the existence of meaning. The findings indicate that the mean score of the existence of meaning in age group of 65-80 years was more than the two other age groups. There was a significant difference between groups of 17-25, 25-46 with 65-80 in terms of self-acceptance. The mean score of the age group of 65-80 years for the component of self-acceptance was more than two other age groups. There was a significant difference between the age groups of 17-25 and 25-46 years compared to the age group of 65-80 years for the component of positive relationships with others. The mean score of the age group of 65-80 years for the positive relationship component was more than that of the two other age groups. There was a significant difference between the age groups of 17-25 years and 25-46 years with 65-80 years in terms of the component of purposeful life. The mean score of purposeful life for the age group of 65-

80 years was more than two other age groups. There was a significant difference between the age groups of 17-25 years with the age group of 25-46 years in terms of the individual growth component. Mean score of age group of 65-80 years for the individual growth component was more than the age group of 17 to 25 years. Based on the findings obtained, the elderly people have a higher ability in terms of the existence of meaning, self-acceptance, positive relationship with others, individual growth and purposeful life (Tables 1 and 2).

4. Conclusion

From the present study, it can be concluded that the attitude towards life continued growth in different directions and dimensions. Based on the findings of this study, which indicates a significant difference in individual growth, purposeful life, positive relationship, self-acceptance, existence of meaning, and finding meaning in life for old age period, age can be an important factor in regulating emotions and reducing negative emotions. Therefore, it seems that the age factor increases the meaning of life and psychological well-being. Therefore, old age can be considered as the review and evaluation period and time of growth and prosperity and calm period in the remaining part of life. On the other hand, due to negative schemas for old age, these studies can be effective in changing the attitude of the community and in the promotion of mental health and hope for the future in different periods of life.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

The ethics committee of Kharazmi University has confirmed this article.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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