

A Comparative Study between Women of Different Age Groups: Meaning of Life and Positive Life Orientation

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ABSTRACT

As the struggle for a sense of significance and purpose in life, meaning of life is a prime motivational principle, which can be defined as a personal experience consisting the cognizance of purpose, order, and coherence of one's pursuit, existence and attainment of valuable goals. Along with meaning of life the positive orientation towards life is closely related to optimism, emotional vitality, generation of positive emotions, and emotional wellbeing. The current paper aims to explore the life orientation and meaning of life in women, it samples a total of 60 women from two different age groups, ranging from 20 to 40 and 40 to 60. The meaning of life and life orientation is examined with regard to the whole sample in general. Standardized test scales were used to measure the variables. The results of the study conducted showed that there was no co-relation in life orientation and meaning of life, it was also found that there was no difference in meaning of life and life orientation in young adult women and older adult women. Optimism and gratitude are known to play a crucial role in the search and presence of meaning in life and also in gaining a positive orientation in life.

Keywords: *Women, Life orientation, Meaning of life, Optimism*

The context of positive life orientation and meaning of life has become prominent in today's time, mainly as a result of a falling in traditional religious beliefs and rise existentialist way of thinking. It has been long argued that meaning and meaninglessness are two attributes of the same branch that have the capability to influence human emotions, thoughts and actions. Existentialists emphasize on the importance and seriousness of the question of life's meaning in the human existence. As the struggle for a sense of significance and purpose in life, meaning of life is a prime motivational principle, which can be defined as a personal experience consisting the cognizance of purpose, order, and coherence of one's pursuit, existence and attainment of valuable goals. Along with meaning of life the positive orientation towards life is closely related to optimism, emotional vitality, generation of positive emotions, and emotional wellbeing. Positive life orientation is to selectively focus on the positive aspects of any life situations and act upon them accordingly. Little is known about this concept and is relatively undefined. When women

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Received: March 10, 2021; Revision Received: April 03, 2021; Accepted: April 25, 2021

A Comparative Study between Women of Different Age Groups: Meaning of Life and Positive Life Orientation

from two distinct age groups are compared, one may find a significant gap in their views, morals, values, and ethics. As the world today aims to motivate women to excel in every walk of life and stand equal to a man. Thus, women from a younger age group (20 years to 40 years) are presumed to have a present optimistic view for life and search for meaning, when compared to women from the older age group (40 years to 60 years).

Meaning of life

The subject of life's meaning has played a prime role in the studies conducted in various fields like philosophy and psychology. In psychology, it is known to hold a peripheral position along the existentialist-humanistic views like self-actualization. Abraham Maslow proposed meaning of life as a property existent within a person itself (intrinsic emergent). According to Maslow's theory meaning in life is a need for growth, which requires fulfilment for a healthy functioning. These needs can't be completely satisfied as some components can't be completely perfect, although the outcomes can be healthier when an individual chooses meanings that would help then satisfy their intrinsic values to the closest proximity. Maslow's theory believes in the importance of a framework of values and that non fulfilment of values can result in illness.

Research suggests a distinguishing difference between the two components of meaning of life; Presence of meaning and Search for meaning. (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). The aspect of presence of meaning indicates the presence of some kind of outcome like perceiving one's life as purposeful or significant. Whereas, search for meaning indicates towards an ongoing and process-oriented activity of an individual to establish an understanding of the purpose and meaning of his/her life.

Positive life orientation

Positive life orientation is a set state of mind in which the reality is constructed such that one tends to derive a positive or optimistic view out of any situation. Here one's attention is selectively focused on the brighter side of any circumstance. Positive life orientation predicts good survival and health of an individual. Optimism and satisfaction are known to be prominent part of positive orientation. Research in this field suggests the importance of efficient psychological well-being and functioning, it emphasises focusing on the positive potentials in problematic areas of an individual's life, that may result in enhanced quality of life.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of meaning of life is relatively new to the field of research in psychology and due to in difficulties in conceptual understanding, the study in this area is limited and ongoing. Some of the recent works in the area showcase a variety of information, Mac Kenzie and Baumeister (2014), explained the nature of meaning of life with the help of three broad functions of meaning and two levels of meaning, their study broke down the need for meaning in life into four basic needs of values, efficacy, purpose and self-worth, they stated that these four needs can be seen as unique motivations which facilitate finding meaning in life. In another recent study on meaning of life, emphasises on three ways in which meaning in life act as resources for coping, it concludes that high life meaningfulness can act as a buffer against negative effects of stress and meaning based coping (Halama, 2014). In studies previously conducted mentioned that the concept of life orientation has been primarily studied in reference to optimism and pessimism and the study on positive life orientation has not been conducted in depth until recently. The recent studies

A Comparative Study between Women of Different Age Groups: Meaning of Life and Positive Life Orientation

on the topic of life orientation have shown results, of significant correlations between self-esteem presence of meaning, optimism and pessimism. the study also revealed that presence of meaning, search for meaning, optimism and pessimism significantly predicted self-esteem it also reflected that female students reported higher self-esteem as compared to male students (Asagba, Agberotimi, & Wimberly, 2017). Most of the studies conducted have mentioned the need for further and in-depth research on the topics of positive life orientation and meaning of life.

Hypothesis

There will be no correlation in life orientation and meaning of life, also there will be no difference in meaning of life and life orientation in young adult women and older adult women.

Purpose

The present research aims to study the meaning of life and positive life orientation in young adult women and older adult women.

METHODOLOGY

Measures

The primary measures used to measure meaning of life and positive life orientation were Meaning of Life Scale and Life Orientation Scale. Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R), by Scheier et al. (1994), is a 10-item questionnaire used for measuring optimism with a five-point answer scale: six items are diagnostic and four are masking positions. The scale has sufficient internal consistency and Cronbach's α is between .72 and .78

Sample

Scores of adult women (ages ranging from 20 years to 60 years) were collected before the investigation and were divided into two groups of young adult women (20 years to 40 years) and older adult women (40 years to 60 years), resulting in a data pool of 60 adult women, 30 being young adult women and 30 older adult women.

Procedure

The participants taking part in the research were informed about its purpose. 'Google Forms' were used as a medium for data collection using questionnaire method. The participants were informed of the confidentiality of their responses. Standardized psychological testing was administered to the participants.

RESULTS

The responses given by the participants were analyzed with the help of correlation to study the significant anxiety among the samples taken from older and younger adult women respectively.

A Comparative Study between Women of Different Age Groups: Meaning of Life and Positive Life Orientation

Tables given below show the data collected and tested, in the form of group statistics.

Correlation Matrix

| | Search for meaning | Presence of meaning | LOT |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----|
| Search for meaning | — | | |
| Presence of meaning | 0.049 | — | |
| LOT | 0.000 | 0.099 | — |

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Independent Samples T-Test

Independent Samples T-Test

| | | statistic | df | p |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------|------|-------|
| Search for meaning | Student's t | 1.35 | 58.0 | 0.183 |
| Presence of meaning | Student's t | 1.17 | 58.0 | 0.246 |
| LOT | Student's t | -1.39 | 58.0 | 0.171 |

Independent Samples Test

Group Descriptive

| | Group | N | Mean | Median | SD | SE |
|---------------------|--------------|----|------|--------|------|-------|
| Search for meaning | Young adults | 30 | 24.1 | 25.5 | 9.14 | 1.669 |
| | Older adults | 30 | 21.3 | 21.5 | 6.75 | 1.233 |
| Presence of meaning | Young adults | 30 | 27.2 | 28.0 | 5.40 | 0.986 |
| | Older adults | 30 | 25.4 | 25.5 | 6.85 | 1.251 |
| LOT | Young adults | 30 | 14.6 | 14.5 | 3.71 | 0.677 |
| | Older adults | 30 | 16.1 | 15.0 | 4.62 | 0.844 |

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A Comparative Study between Women of Different Age Groups: Meaning of Life and Positive Life Orientation

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DISCUSSION

The results state there was no co-relation in life orientation and meaning of life, it was also found that there was no difference in meaning of life and life orientation in young adult women as to older adult women.

CONCLUSION

The areas of positive life orientation and meaning of life have become prominent in today's time, and optimism and gratitude are known to play a crucial role in the search and presence of meaning in life and also in gaining a positive orientation in life. The outcomes of the present study on women of different age groups was that, there was no difference in meaning of life and life orientation in young adult women as to older adult women. In spite of high levels of positive life orientation found in women it may also be suggested that there is still a scope for development in women's search and presence for life's meaning and life orientation, where self-actualization and discovery of one's true goals can play a major role.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Poopal T. (2021). A Comparative Study between Women of Different Age Groups: Meaning of Life and Positive Life Orientation. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(2), 151-155. DIP:18.01.018.20210902, DOI:10.25215/0902.018