The Relationship Between Students' Perceived Meaning of Life and Their Self-Worth

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between students' perceived meaning in life, life plans, life goals, and their self-worth. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory and Positive Psychology, the research investigates these constructs and their implications for psychological well-being and resilience among university students in Shaanxi and Henan provinces. Employing an explanatory, cross-sectional research design, the study utilised a purposive sample of 150 university students. Data were collected via self-

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administered online questionnaires measuring meaning in life, perceived subjective significance of life, perceived life goals, and self-worth. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression through SPSS. The findings indicate that self-worth is positively associated with a sense of purpose, perceived life significance, and perceived life goals. The overall analysis demonstrates that these constructs collectively predict self-worth with approximately 79 per cent accuracy. The results highlight the importance of fostering a sense of purpose and life goals to enhance students' self-worth and resilience. This study contributes to the existing literature by emphasising the role of meaning-making in students' psychological development. The findings offer valuable implications for educational practices and interventions aimed at promoting academic engagement, psychological well-being, and a sense of purpose in life.

Keywords: Self-Worth; Perceived Life Significance; Life Goals; Sense of Purpose; Resilience

Introduction

Background

Exploring the interrelationship between perceived meaning in life and self-worth constitutes a compelling area of psychological research, particularly in the context of young learners. Siwek et al. (2017) posited that understanding how these constructs manifest can provide insights into the broader dynamics through which students navigate their academic, social, and personal lives. The concept of meaning in life has long been a central theme in existential psychology, with numerous scholars, notably Viktor Frankl, addressing this issue. Oxford (2016) analysed Frankl's theory, which asserts that the fundamental drive in human existence is the will to meaning, and that identifying meaning enables individuals to overcome challenges and enhance their quality of life. For students, the notion of life's meaning is often intertwined with their goals, aspirations, and beliefs, which may be shaped by personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, or demographic factors. Schippers and Ziegler (2019) clarified that when students cultivate a purposeful life perspective, they are more likely to identify a clear direction to pursue. This sense of meaning fosters perseverance, enhances self-improvement, and reduces engagement in detrimental behaviours, thereby facilitating their navigation through the complexities of adolescence and young adulthood. Conversely, students who struggle to develop a sense of meaning may experience existential dysphoria, characterised by confusion, emptiness, and a perceived lack of purpose in life.

Students with a strong sense of purpose tend to exhibit confidence in acquiring new skills or performing tasks and are less likely to succumb to minor setbacks. This sense of purpose fosters a positive self-concept, enabling them to approach challenges proactively, thereby increasing their likelihood of success in both academic and

personal spheres (Rehman et al., 2023). Conversely, low self-worth and self-efficacy are often associated with feelings of incompetence, fear, and avoidance, which can result in poor academic performance and hindered personal development. These constructs are closely interconnected with perceived meaning in life, as students who possess a strong sense of purpose tend to exhibit higher levels of self-worth. A strong life purpose reinforces self-worth, as individuals who perceive their lives as valuable are more likely to experience a sense of worthiness and capability (Hurd et al., 2018). For example, a student aspiring to pursue a specific academic discipline may derive significant meaning from their studies, believing that their chosen field is essential for their personal and professional fulfilment. Additionally, self-worth itself plays a crucial role in fostering a deeper sense of meaning in life.

Furthermore, Nepon et al. (2016) suggested that students can maintain a sense of meaning even in the face of adversity, provided they remain resilient and confident. However, the absence of meaning in life or low self-worth has detrimental consequences, as it implies that human existence lacks inherent value. In addition, Omoponle (2023) emphasised that low self-worth is often accompanied by a sense of aimlessness, as students with low self-worth struggle to identify or pursue meaningful personal goals within society. Similarly, perceived meaninglessness can diminish self-worth, as students who perceive their lives and efforts as purposeless may experience feelings of worthlessness.

Problem Statement

Adolescence and young adulthood represent developmental stages in which the pursuit of meaning in life and the cultivation of self-worth are crucial. The existential psychological theories advanced by Viktor Frankl can offer valuable insights for students navigating the challenges of academic life and personal experiences. Self-worth, as a fundamental aspect of an individual's self-evaluation, is a key determinant of resilience and overall well-being. However, there remains a notable research gap regarding the role of life purpose, perceived meaning, and life goals in shaping students' self-worth (Moneta et al., 2017). Understanding this relationship is essential for promoting students' mental health, academic success, and personal development during these critical formative years.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

- To assess the impact of students' sense of purpose on their self-worth.
- To examine the influence of students' perceived life significance on their self-worth.
- To explore the relationship between students' perceived life goals and their self-worth.

Research Questions

- How does students' sense of purpose impact their self-worth?
- What is the influence of students' perceived life significance on their self-worth?
- What is the relationship between students' perceived life goals and their self-worth?

Significance of the Research

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the crucial relationship between students' sense of meaning in life and self-worth, which profoundly influences psychological and social well-being, academic performance, and personal development. These insights will be valuable to educators, counsellors, and policymakers seeking to enhance students' positive development, academic engagement, and psychological well-being, thereby equipping students to navigate the challenges of adolescence and young adulthood with greater self-assurance and purpose.

Literature Review

Overview

Building on previous chapters, this chapter explores the relationship between perceived life significance and self-worth, focusing on intrinsic motivation, resilience, and social connections. It draws on Self-Determination Theory and Positive Psychology to highlight gaps in the literature that this study aims to address.

Impact of a Student's Sense of Purpose on Self-Worth

Purpose is a key factor in shaping a student's self-identity, influencing both their academic and personal life. When students develop a clear sense of purpose—understanding what they wish to achieve and believing in its importance—it enhances their self-worth, making them feel more fulfilled compared to those without such a purpose. The connection between purpose and self-acceptance is crucial for fostering students' resilience, motivation, and self-schema.

Motivation, Academic Achievement, and Self-Worth

A clear sense of direction significantly influences self-motivation, which drives students to engage in activities for intrinsic satisfaction rather than external rewards. Ferradás et al. (2019) noted that students with a strong sense of purpose are more likely to set long-term goals and demonstrate persistence. Their commitment to learning, driven by the belief that their work holds greater significance than superficial rewards, leads to improved performance. Additionally, Kahu and Nelson (2018)

explained that as students achieve their sense of purpose or recognise the connection between their tasks, their self-worth is reinforced. This creates a positive feedback loop where increased self-worth boosts academic performance, further enhancing their sense of purpose. Moreover, students who have identified a clear purpose are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement with their studies, approaching their education as a means to fulfil broader life goals, making their learning process purposeful.

Resilience, Coping with Challenges, and Social Connections

In essence, students with a sense of purpose in their learning are better equipped to cope with adversity. They view obstacles and failures as temporary setbacks in a larger context, worth striving through, which reduces the likelihood of becoming discouraged. This is closely tied to self-worth, as students who can manage challenges without losing focus are more likely to maintain a positive self-image (McArthur et al., 2017). When failures are seen as opportunities for growth, they enhance self-worth by reinforcing students' belief in their abilities. Consequently, a sense of purpose provides a sense of stability, enabling individuals to navigate daily challenges. It also fosters positive relationships with entities such as communities, causes, or values, which in turn boosts self-worth due to feelings of acceptance and social connection (Jetten et al., 2015). These purposeful relationships foster a sense of belonging, making students feel that their actions are meaningful and, consequently, enhancing their self-worth. Moreover, purposeful connections with others contribute to the development of a positive self-attitude, as students recognise the broader impact of their actions on both themselves and their communities.

The Link Between Perceived Life Significance and Self-Worth

Robinson et al. (2017) demonstrated that when students perceive their actions and existence as significant, their self-worth increases. This sense of significance provides direction, especially for students in the process of developing their identity and finding meaning in their efforts and future pursuits. Achieving these goals serves as a reminder of their worth and dignity. Those who view their lives as meaningful are more likely to engage in actions that align with their personal values and goals. Additionally, Adams et al. (2017) suggested that this sense of significance leads to higher intrinsic motivation. These students are driven not by external rewards, such as grades or approval, but by internal motivations tied to self-worth, as they pursue goals that they personally deem meaningful. Furthermore, Ümmet (2015) indicated that students are motivated when they succeed in areas they consider important, which further boosts their self-worth. They view themselves as competent and worthy individuals, enhancing their confidence. Conversely, when faced with challenges or failure, the belief in the meaning of their life helps them maintain a positive self-image despite adversity.

Resilience and Social Connections

Another key factor influencing the development of resilience and the preservation of self-worth is the concept of perceived life significance. Individuals who find meaning in their lives are better equipped to cope with adversity, as they view challenges as part of a meaningful process rather than as reflections of their personal value (Akin & Radford, 2018). As a result, their self-worth remains intact despite the obstacles they face. Furthermore, self-accepting students, who find meaning in their lives, are more likely to establish and maintain healthy relationships. These social connections provide valuable support, reinforcing their value systems and, in turn, reaffirming their sense of identity. When students receive positive regard from others and feel that they contribute meaningfully to their communities, their self-worth is further enhanced (Kronborg et al., 2017). The positive interaction between social connections and the perception of life's meaning creates a reinforcing cycle that continually strengthens students' perceptions of their self-worth.

The Connection Between Perceived Life Goals and Self-Worth

The relationship between perceived life goals and self-worth is reciprocal, with students viewing both aspects as closely linked. Fernández-Castillo et al. (2022) found that meaningful life goals provide direction, purpose, and self-image, which foster self-worth. Achieving these goals strengthens self-belief, boosting self-worth. Additionally, Erdvik et al. (2020) emphasised the importance of intrinsic motivation in developing self-worth, as it stems from the individual's core values. When students set goals aligned with their self-identity, their efforts towards these goals enhance confidence and self-worth. Their commitment helps maintain a positive self-view, seeing adversity as part of the process of achieving something significant. Furthermore, the alignment between students' actions and personal purposes impacts the development of their academic identities.

Resilience and Personal Growth

Students with clear life goals tend to be more reliable, and the process of goal achievement contributes to their overall self-worth. Their well-defined goals help them maintain a positive attitude toward both successes and failures, viewing setbacks as learning opportunities rather than failures (DoĞRusever et al., 2022). This mindset protects their self-worth, as overcoming challenges enhances their value rather than diminishing it. Additionally, achieving life goals leads to self-fulfillment, which further bolsters self-worth. As students accomplish their objectives, they acquire new skills and knowledge, which increases their perceived self-efficacy (Sharma et al., 2021). Each accomplishment, no matter how small, reinforces their ability to achieve goals, positively impacting their self-worth and motivating further growth.

Theoretical Framework

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) asserts that individuals have fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When students perceive their life goals and sense of purpose as fulfilling these needs, their intrinsic motivation increases, thereby enhancing their self-worth (Kaplan & Madjar, 2017). Satisfying these needs fosters personal efficacy and self-worth, as students feel more in control of their lives and capable of achieving meaningful goals. Positive Psychology, particularly the concept of Purpose in Life (PIL), supports this framework by highlighting that a clear sense of purpose and perceived life significance promote well-being and resilience (Seligman, 2019). According to Positive Psychology, when students view their lives as meaningful, they experience greater self-worth, as this belief strengthens their sense of value and importance within both social and academic contexts.

Research Hypothesis

The research hypothesis and the null hypothesis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Research Hypothesis

Research Hypothesis (H1)	Null Hypothesis (H0)
H1a: Students with a strong sense of purpose have higher self-worth than those with a weak sense of purpose.	H0a: There is no significant difference in self-worth between students with a strong sense of purpose and those with a weak sense of purpose.
H1b: Students who perceive their life goals as meaningful have higher self-worth than those who do not.	H0b: There is no significant difference in self-worth between students who perceive their life goals as meaningful and those who do not.
H1c: Students who perceive their lives as significant are more resilient, leading to higher self-worth.	H0c: There is no significant relationship between perceived life significance, resilience, and self-worth among students.

Literature Gap

While existing literature extensively examines the relationship between a sense of purpose, intrinsic motivation, and academic achievement, there is a gap in understanding the nuanced connection between students' perceived life significance, resilience, and self-worth. Previous research has mainly concentrated on the effects of goal setting and motivation on academic outcomes, often neglecting their contribution to broader aspects of students' psychological well-being. Furthermore, limited studies have explored how social connections and perceived life significance specifically interact to enhance self-worth. This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating how a sense of purpose and perceived life significance impact self-worth and resilience within educational contexts.

Methodology

Research Method

This study adopts a quantitative approach to explore the participants' experiences of feeling socially valuable and leading a purposeful life, while also examining their resilience and self-worth. The use of a quantitative method is justified as it facilitates the measurement of variables in numerical terms and allows for the testing of hypothesised relationships through statistical analysis. As Bryman (2018) notes, quantitative research centres on numerical data and computational elements, enabling the researcher to generalise results to broader populations. This method is particularly suited when sufficiently large sample sizes are needed to increase the accuracy and precision of the findings. Data are collected using structured questionnaires, with the results presented through statistical summarisation.

Research Design

This research employs a primary research approach, wherein data are collected directly from participants to ensure relevance and specificity to the research questions. The study utilises a cross-sectional design, gathering data at a single point in time to provide a snapshot of the status of the variables under investigation. This design is appropriate for identifying the relationships or associations between perceived life significance, resilience, and self-worth among students from universities in the Shaanxi and Henan regions. According to Rahi (2017), primary research design entails the collection of primary data tailored to a specific research question, using methods such as questionnaires, interviews, controlled experiments, and observation. To ensure the data's accuracy and reliability, researchers design the study to collect up-to-date, credible primary data, allowing flexibility in responding to emerging topics and specific research objectives.

Data Collection

The study utilised self-administered questionnaires containing structured statements. The scales included in the questionnaire were the Perceived Meaning in Life Scale, Psychological Resilience Scale, Self-Worth Questionnaire, and a Personal Information Form. The questionnaire was distributed online through social networks and email to facilitate prompt and convenient responses from participants across ten specialised universities. Participants were guided through the questions and assured that their responses would remain anonymous, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data collected.

Sampling Technique

The study sample included 150 students from 10 universities in Shaanxi and Henan, selected through purposive sampling based on their enrolment in higher education.

Efforts were made to ensure diversity across faculties, courses, and years to improve external validity.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Initial data screening and cleaning processes were conducted to address any missing or inconsistent responses. Descriptive statistics were employed to examine demographic variables, as well as the central tendency and distribution of the main variables. To explore the relationships and predictive impact of perceived life significance on resilience and self-worth, simple and multiple correlation coefficients, along with multiple regression analysis, were used. All hypotheses were tested at a 95% confidence level to ensure a robust assessment of the relationships between the variables.

Ethical Considerations

High ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully informed of the study's procedures and their rights. Identities were anonymised, and data stored securely. Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw without consequence. The research protocol was submitted for ethical approval to ensure compliance with participant welfare and autonomy.

Data Analysis

Overview

This chapter on data analysis presents detailed discussions on demographic distributions, normality, reliability, correlation, and regression analyses. Preliminary findings indicate satisfactory demographic distributions, including age and gender, alongside a notable degree of non-normality in the variables. The scales demonstrate high internal reliability, and significant relationships were identified with Self-worth. Additionally, the regression model adequately predicts Self-worth based on life goals, significance, and purpose.

Descriptive

The statistics in Table 2 reveal that the sample comprises 150 valid responses for each category—age, gender, and field—with no missing data. This indicates that the number of students who participated in the survey is complete across all demographic and academic variables, ensuring an adequate and reliable analysis of each variable. In addition to this, the age distribution of the 150 participants in Table 3 is relatively even, with a notable representation in the 22-30 age bracket. Specifically, 24.7% of respondents are aged 18-21, 26% are 22-25, 24.0% are 26-30, and 25% are 31-35. Only 3% of participants are aged 31 or older. This indicates a fairly dispersed age range, with no single age group forming the majority.

Table 2: Descriptive

Statistics		Age	Gender	Field of Study
N	Valid	150	150	150
	Missing	0	0	0

Table 3: Age

Age		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	18-21	37	24.7	24.7	24.7
	22-25	39	26.0	26.0	50.7
	26-30	36	24.0	24.0	74.7
	31 and above	38	25.3	25.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

The gender distribution in Table 4 shows that 56.0% of the respondents are male, while 44.0% are female. This slight male dominance suggests that the gender distribution is reasonably balanced, although males are somewhat more represented in this sample. Moreover, the field of study is well-represented across diverse disciplines. Table 5 shows 24.7% of the respondents are studying humanities, 24.7% are in sciences, 22.7% in engineering, and 28.0% in business. This distribution reflects the diversity of academic interests among the participants, with business being the most popular field.

Table 4: Gender

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	84	56.0	56.0	56.0
	Female	66	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Field of Study

Field of Study		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Humanities	37	24.7	24.7	24.7
	Sciences	37	24.7	24.7	49.3
	Engineering	34	22.7	22.7	72.0
	Business	42	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Normality Analysis

The results of the normality tests reveal significant deviations from normal distribution for the variables in Table 6. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were used to assess normality. For Sense of Purpose, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was .121 (p < .001) and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic was .930 (p < .001). For Perceived Life Significance, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was .128 (p < .001) and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic was .914 (p < .001). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic for Perceived Life Goals was .128 (p < .001) and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic was .914 (p < .001). For Self-Worth, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was .130 (p < .001) and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic was .920 (p < .001). Both tests indicate that all the variables deviate significantly from normality, which may present challenges for the application of parametric statistical techniques on the data.

Table 6: Normality Analysis

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Sense of Purpose	.121	150	.000	.930	150	.000
Perceived Life Significance	.128	150	.000	.914	150	.000
Perceived Life Goals	.128	150	.000	.920	150	.000
Self-Worth	.130	150	.000	.920	150	.000
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

Reliability Analysis

This study achieved a highly satisfactory Cronbach's Alpha of .834 for the 5-item Sense of Purpose scale in Table 7, indicating acceptable internal consistency. This value suggests that the items are reliably measuring the same construct of sense of purpose. With a Cronbach's Alpha of .855, the reliability for the five items of the Perceived Life Significance scale is excellent. This high alpha value in Table 8 indicates that the items are consistently measuring the perceived significance of life. The Perceived Life Goals scale, consisting of five items, has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .846, indicating good internal consistency. This value in Table 9 confirms that the items effectively measure the concept of perceived life goals. With five items, the scale Self Worth yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.844, demonstrating good internal consistency. Table 10 suggests that the items are valid in assessing the concept of self-worth.

Table 7: Reliability Statistics of Sense of Purpose

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.834	5

Table 8: Reliability Statistics of Perceived Life Significance

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	**No. of Items**
.855	5

Table 9: Reliability Statistics of Perceived Life Goals

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	**No. of Items**
.846	5

Table 10: Reliability Statistics of Self-Worth

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	**No. of Items**
.844	5

Correction Analysis

The Pearson correlations between Self-Worth and the other scales are all highly significant. The correlation between Self-Worth and Sense of Purpose is 0.842 ($p <$ 0.001), indicating a strong positive relationship. Self-Worth is also strongly positively correlated with Perceived Life Significance, with a correlation of 0.805 ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, Self-Worth shows a very strong positive correlation with Perceived Life Goals, at 0.868 ($p < 0.001$). All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting that higher levels of self-worth are consistently associated with higher scores across Sense of Purpose, Perceived Life Significance, and Perceived Life Goals as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Correlations

Correlations				
		Sense of Purpose	**Perceived Life Significance**	**Perceived Life Goals**
Self-Worth	Pearson Correlation	.842**	.805**	.868**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	150	150	150
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis in Table 12 reveals that the model effectively predicts Self-Worth, with an R-squared of 0.796 and an adjusted R-squared of 0.792, explaining 79.6% of the variance. The predictors—Perceived Life Goals, Perceived Life

Significance, and Sense of Purpose—account for this substantial variance. The standard error is 0.53841, indicating minimal error in predictions. The F-change statistic of 189.705 (p < 0.001) confirms the model's overall significance, and the Durbin-Watson value of 1.939 suggests acceptable levels of autocorrelation.

Table 12: Model Summary

Model Summary [b]									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.892[a]	.796	.792	.53841	.796	189.705	3	146	.000	1.939
a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Life Goals, Perceived Life Significance, Sense of Purpose										
b. Dependent Variable: Self-Worth										

The ANOVA findings in Table 13 demonstrate that the regression model significantly forecasts Self-Worth. The regression sum of squares is 164.979, with 3 degrees of freedom, and the mean square is 54.993. The F-statistic of 189.705 (p < 0.001) underscores the model's substantial relevance. The residual sum of squares is 42.324, with 146 degrees of freedom, and the mean square is 0.290. The cumulative sum of squares is 207.302, accompanied with 149 degrees of freedom. These data indicate that the model adequately explains the variance in Self-Worth.

Table 13: ANOVA

ANOVA [a]						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	164.979	3	54.993	189.705	.000b
	Residual	42.324	146	.290		
	Total	207.302	149			
a. Dependent Variable: Self-Worth						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Life Goals, Perceived Life Significance, Sense of Purpose						

The coefficients presented in Table 14 highlight the significant role of each predictor in forecasting Self-Worth. Sense of Purpose has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.331 (standard error = 0.081) and a standardized coefficient of 0.324, demonstrating a statistically significant effect (t = 4.109, p < 0.001). Similarly, Perceived Life Significance shows an unstandardized coefficient of 0.311 (standard error = 0.073) and a standardized coefficient of 0.116, with a significant contribution (t = 4.510, p < 0.001). Perceived Life Goals, with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.489 (standard error = 0.079) and a standardized coefficient of 0.495, emerges as the strongest predictor (t = 6.187, p < 0.001). The constant term, at 0.185 (standard error = 0.124), is not statistically significant (t = 1.490, p = 0.138). These findings

underscore the substantial explanatory power of the predictors, particularly Perceived Life Goals, in accounting for the variance in Self-Worth.

Table 14: Coefficients

Coefficients [a]					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.185	.124		1.490	.138
Sense of Purpose	.331	.081	.324	4.109	.000
Perceived Life Significance	.311	.073	.116	4.510	.000
Perceived Life Goals	.489	.079	.495	6.187	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Self-Worth					

The residual statistics for predicting Self-Worth in Table 15 show that the predicted values range between 1.2928 and 4.7305, with a mean of 2.9280 and a standard deviation of 1.05226. The residuals themselves range from -1.32612 to 1.51566, with a mean of 0, indicating no systematic prediction bias, and a standard deviation of 0.53296. Standardized predicted values span from -1.554 to 1.713, with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.00. Standardized residuals vary from -2.463 to 2.815, with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 0.990, illustrating the spread of prediction errors.

Table 15: Residual Statistics

Residuals Statistics [a]					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.2928	4.7305	2.9280	1.05226	150
Residual	-1.32612	1.51566	.00000	.53296	150
Std. Predicted Value	-1.554	1.713	.000	1.000	150
Std. Residual	-2.463	2.815	.000	.990	150
a. Dependent Variable: Self-Worth					

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that life goals, perceived life significance, and a sense of purpose are the most significant predictors of self-worth. This aligns with the broader psychological literature, which suggests that these constructs play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's functioning and identity. For instance, Rothers and Cohrs (2022) argue that individuals with a well-defined identity and a strong sense of calling and values tend to experience higher levels of psychological well-being, characterised by self-worth. Additionally, Van Tongeren et al. (2018) elaborate on how life goals serve as a major source of meaning, with

meaningfulness being a key component of self-worth. These findings support theoretical perspectives that propose a close connection between self-worth and an individual's sense of purpose and direction in life. Moreover, Schippers and Ziegler (2019) note that life goals help construct a meaningful framework within which individuals can organise their lives according to their priorities. This alignment of goals with life significantly enhances one's perceived well-being, self-efficacy, and personal sense of worth.

The analysis reveals significant positive correlations between self-worth and key predictors, such as direction in life, life goals, and perceived meaning. These findings align with previous research highlighting the individual and combined impact of these factors on self-worth. For example, Sortheix and Schwartz (2017) found that individuals whose goals align with their values and calling report higher self-worth and well-being. Similarly, Marttinen (2017) argued that self-worth is closely linked to the pursuit and perception of personal life goals, supporting the notion that enhancing self-worth involves teaching individuals to achieve meaningful goals. Additionally, Winston et al. (2017) emphasised the strong connection between life meaning and self-primacy, noting that fulfilling meaningful goals fosters confidence, self-respect, and a positive self-image. The study demonstrates high internal consistency in the scales used to assess life goals, life's meaning, and purpose, which enhances the credibility of the findings. This reliability is crucial as it indicates that these constructs are measured consistently across different contexts. Vaske et al. (2017) noted that a high alpha value suggests the items on a scale adequately capture the intended construct, reducing the likelihood of measurement errors influencing the results. As evidenced by the Cronbach's alpha values of .855, the findings align with literature emphasising the importance of standardised measurements in psychological research, particularly when investigating concepts like life goals and self-worth.

Discussion of Hypotheses

The findings of the study confirm the three hypotheses proposed, namely that students' sense of purpose, perceived life goals, and perceived life significance positively predict self-worth.

H1a: Students with a strong sense of purpose have higher self-worth.

The findings further support this hypothesis. The correlation coefficient revealed a significant positive relationship between sense of purpose and self-worth, with a value of 0.842 ($p < .001$). Additionally, regression analysis indicated that sense of purpose has a significant direct effect on self-worth, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.324 ($p < .001$). These results align with Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that when intrinsic psychological needs, such as a sense of purpose, are fulfilled, self-worth is enhanced. Consequently, Hypothesis H1a is accepted.

H1b: Students who perceive their life goals as meaningful have higher self-worth.

Among all the variables, the coefficient value of perceived life goals and mean self-worth was the highest (r = 0.868, p < 0.001). The regression analysis further revealed that, of the three variables, perceived life goals had the strongest relationship with self-worth, with a standardized beta of 0.495 (p < 0.001). This finding is consistent with prior research on the impact of life goals on psychological well-being, highlighting that clarity in life goals is crucial for enhancing self-worth, provided these goals align with personal values.

H1c: Students who perceive their lives as significant are more resilient, leading to higher self-worth.

The study also supports this hypothesis. Perceived life significance and self-worth were positively correlated (Pearson's correlation = 0.805, p < 0.001), and the multiple regression analysis further revealed that perceived life significance was a significant predictor of self-worth (Beta = 0.116, p < 0.001). The findings indicate that students who perceive meaning in life are better equipped to maintain a positive self-image, even in the face of challenges, thereby enhancing their self-esteem.

Overall, the results support the hypotheses (H1a, H1b, H1c), highlighting a sense of purpose, meaningful life goals, and perceived life significance as key factors in boosting students' self-worth.

Conclusion

This research explores how students perceive meaning in their lives, goals, and purpose, and how these perceptions influence their self-worth. The study demonstrates a strong positive relationship between these constructs, showing that students with a clear sense of purpose and life goals are more likely to have higher self-worth. This aligns with established psychological theories such as SDT and Positive Psychology, which suggest that intrinsic needs like autonomy, competence, and relatedness contribute to overall well-being and self-worth. These findings support the idea that self-worth is not an isolated concept but is intricately connected to life meaning and perceived life significance. The reliability indices in this study further validate the results, indicating high reliability of the scales used to measure these constructs across different settings. The regression analysis suggests that purpose in life, life significance, and life goals account for 79% of the variance in self-worth, highlighting their importance during the developmental stages of adolescence and young adulthood, when individuals are shaping their identity. Students with clear goals and life significance are better able to navigate challenges, viewing setbacks as temporary and unrelated to their worth. This resilience enhances their self-worth, creating a reinforcing cycle where self-worth and life purpose support one another. Educators, counsellors, and policymakers can work together to cultivate these attributes in students, ultimately enhancing their self-worth, psychological well-being, academic success, and personal development.

Recommendations

The recommendations derived from this research are as follows:

1. Integrate Purpose-Driven Learning: Academic institutions should incorporate activities and curricula that encourage students to define their life goals and sense of meaning, thereby enhancing their self-esteem.
2. Promote Goal Setting: Encourage students to set and work towards realistic and purposeful goals in both their personal and academic lives, contributing to an improved sense of self-worth.
3. Resilience Training: Offer courses focused on teaching students how to overcome adversity, develop coping strategies, and recover from setbacks without diminishing their self-value.
4. Mentorship Programs: Create opportunities for experienced peers to provide guidance, helping students define their purpose and set challenging, yet attainable, goals.
5. Supportive Environment: Foster a school environment that encourages individual engagement, personal development, and students' exploration of their identities.
6. Psychological Support Services: Provide career and personal guidance that aims to enhance self-worth by helping students identify and pursue a fulfilling life purpose.
7. Social Connections: Organise group events and community activities to help students develop positive interpersonal relationships, thus strengthening their sense of acceptance and approval from peers.

Limitations and Future Direction

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the following limitations of this study. First, the research is geographically limited to universities in the Shaanxi and Henan provinces, which constrains the generalisability of the findings to other regions or cultural contexts. Second, the study employs a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions between the variables, as it only captures data at a single point in time. Third, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may provide answers they believe to be socially acceptable rather than reflecting their true feelings or thoughts. Finally, while the sample size is sufficient for statistical analysis, it may not be sufficiently diverse or representative of all educational institutions and student experiences.

Future Directions

Future research should consider expanding the sample to include a more diverse cultural and geographical range to enhance the generalisability of the findings to a

broader student population. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable to explore how purpose, life goals, and self-worth evolve over time and whether these constructs can predict long-term academic and personal outcomes for students. Additionally, future studies could investigate the effectiveness of specific programmes designed to enhance students' sense of meaning in life and evaluate their impact across various contexts. Finally, qualitative research could provide deeper insights into individual student experiences, shedding light on the effects of meaning-making processes on self-worth.

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