



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



A study on meaning in life in relation to family closeness, strength of faith, community involvement and social media activity

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Abstract

Having experienced a great deal of social isolation due to the pandemic health restrictions, this study sought to discover what factors now influence Filipino respondents' meaning in life. It attempted to ascertain whether relationships between family closeness, strength of faith, community involvement and social media activity and meaning in life exist. 105 volunteer respondents from Quezon City, Marikina City in Metro Manila and Antipolo City, San Mateo, Rodriguez in the Province of Rizal took part in this study. The MLQ questionnaire and researcher made items were administered through Google Forms. The study found that Meaning in Life had moderate positive correlations with family closeness, strength of faith, community involvement and a low positive correlation with social media activity.

Keywords: Meaning in life; Family closeness; Strength of faith; Community involvement; Social media activity

1. Introduction

Meaning in life echoes the sense that one's existence possesses significance, coherence and purpose. Individuals who see their lives as filled with meaning live longer, healthier, and happier lives than those less inclined to perceive their lives as meaningful. This meaning has significant social and economic implications, chiefly when societies are facing major existential threats such as the present COVID-19 pandemic.¹

Some studies have attempted to address the question whether the current pandemic and the negative conditions, such as suffering, isolation, economic hardship, extinguish any hope of attaining meaning in life.²

Research likewise suggests that personality may also play a role in meaning in life. Certain individuals have a predisposition for specific sources of meaning, dependent on their personality. Persons with the potential of self-transcendence as well as extraverted individuals are predisposed to to experience their lives as meaningful.³ This finding was confirmed by another study that demonstrated that self-actualization and self-transcendence are decisive factors which have an impact on the meaning in life.⁴

Other factors could also affect an individual's meaning in life. In one study, family cohesion was found to fully mediate the relationships between stress, meaning in life, and emotion-oriented coping on one hand and family satisfaction on the other.⁵ Researches have found that relationships with family are cited as the most significant source of meaning in people's lives in all cultures and age groups.⁶

One study aimed to investigate whether religiousness and spirituality are linked with meaning in life. It was shown that the religious meaning system was positively related with meaning in life, with more robust connections for presence of

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meaning than for search. It concluded that overall spirituality was positively linked with search for meaning and personal meaning.⁷

With respect to community involvement, one study attempted to test the theory that predicts that people identify more strongly with the volunteer role as reward for the absence of other productive roles. The study was able to establish that for older volunteers, the volunteer role becomes a more vital part of who they are.⁸

Since the lockdown imposed on a global scale by the COVID-19 pandemic has made people rely more on the Internet-based communication, one study focused on investigating the relationship between addictive beliefs, core beliefs, meaning in life, generalized problematic Internet use, problematic Facebook use, and problematic Instagram use. This research was motivated by how beliefs and a lack of meaning in life may function as a motive for developing addictions, especially towards Internet use. The study found that problematic Internet use, problematic Facebook use, and problematic Instagram use were correlated with meaning confusion.⁹

Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler, M. developed The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) designed to measure two dimensions of meaning in life: (1) Presence of Meaning (the degree to which respondents feel their lives have meaning), and (2) Search for Meaning (the degree to which respondents endeavor to discover meaning and understanding in their lives).¹⁰

Based on the foregoing, this study sought to determine whether relationships exist between meaning in life and family closeness, strength of faith, community involvement and social media activity. In particular, it aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What is the level of Meaning in Life of the respondents as measured by the MLQ in terms of
 - Presence of meaning subscale
 - Search of meaning subscale and
 - Overall meaning in life?
- What is the respondents' perception of their
 - Family closeness,
 - Strength of faith,
 - Community involvement and
 - Social media activity?
- Is there a significant relationship between presence of meaning subscale and the respondents' perception of their
 - Family closeness,
 - Strength of faith,
 - Community involvement and
 - Social media activity?
- Is there a significant relationship between search for meaning subscale and the respondents' perception of their
 - Family closeness,
 - Strength of faith,
 - Community involvement and
 - Social media activity?
- Is there a significant relationship between overall meaning in life and the respondents' perception of their
 - Family closeness,
 - Strength of faith,
 - Community involvement and
 - Social media activity?

2. Methodology

This study obtained voluntary respondents through social media invitation for a period of 3 days. A total of 105 volunteers anonymously answered. 22 were males and 83 were females residing in Quezon City, Marikina City in Metro Manila and Antipolo City, San Mateo, Rodriguez in the Province of Rizal. The mean age of the respondents was 22.55.

The instrument utilized was The Meaning in Life Questionnaire, a 10-item, 7-point Likert scale instrument, which consists of a Presence of Meaning subscale (items 1, 4, 5, 6 and 9) and a Search for Meaning subscale (items 2, 3, 7, 8 and 10).¹⁰ The MLQ's convergent validity has been fully established as well as its superior discriminant validity against other measures of meaning in life, and the incremental validity of the presence subscale in predicting life satisfaction has been recognized.¹¹

On the other hand, 4 researcher-made items on family closeness, strength of faith, community involvement and social media activity was incorporated. Each item also made use of a 7-point Likert scale for uniformity. An online Google Forms version of the entire instrument was posted online for the volunteers to answer.

3. Results

The following are the tables showing the data obtained and the statistical treatments necessary to answer the research questions.

Table 1 Meaning in Life Questionnaire Items and Means

	Item	Mean	Rank
1.	I understand my life's meaning.	5.419047619	8
2.	I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.	5.923809524	1
3.	I am always looking to find my life's purpose.	5.819047619	2
4.	My life has a clear sense of purpose.	5.295238095	9
5.	I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.	5.447619048	7
6.	I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.	5.180952381	10
7.	I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.	5.733333333	3
8.	I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.	5.666666667	4
9.	My life has no clear purpose. (reverse scored)	5.60952381	5
10.	I am searching for meaning in my life.	5.542857143	6

Table 2 Presence of Meaning Subscale

	Item	Mean	Rank
1.	I understand my life's meaning.	5.419047619	3
4.	My life has a clear sense of purpose.	5.295238095	4
5.	I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.	5.447619048	2
6.	I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.	5.180952381	5
9.	My life has no clear purpose. (reverse scored)	5.60952381	1

Table 3 Search for Meaning Subscale

	Item	Mean	Rank
2.	I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.	5.923809524	1
3.	I am always looking to find my life's purpose.	5.819047619	2
7.	I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.	5.733333333	3
8.	I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.	5.666666667	4
10.	I am searching for meaning in my life.	5.542857143	5

Table 4 Items Measuring Family Closeness, Strength of Faith, Community Involvement and Social Media Activity

Item	Possible Responses with corresponding points assigned						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Family Closeness							
I would describe my family relationship (closeness, openness, warmth and acceptance) as	Extremely distant	Very distant	Somewhat distant	Not close and not distant	Somewhat close	Very close	Extremely close
Strength of Faith	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would describe my faith (prayerfulness, church-going, practice of my beliefs in life) as	Extremely weak	Very weak	Somewhat weak	Not strong and not weak	Somewhat strong	Very strong	Extremely strong
Community Involvement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would describe my face-to-face community participation (barangay, subdivision, organization, social service) as	Extremely uninvolved	Very uninvolved	Somewhat uninvolved	Not involved and not uninvolved	Somewhat involved	Very involved	Extremely involved
Social Media Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would describe my social media interaction (chats, group chats, posting, liking, commenting, sharing posts) as	Extremely inactive	Very inactive	Somewhat inactive	Not active and not inactive	Somewhat active	Very active	Extremely active

Table 5 Family Closeness and Presence of Meaning Subscale Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 2830$ Mean = 26.952 $\Sigma(X - Mx)^2 = SSx = 3066.762$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - Mx)(Y - My) = 364.952$
Y Values $\Sigma = 545$ Mean = 5.19 $\Sigma(Y - My)^2 = SSy = 230.19$	R Calculation $r = \Sigma((X - My)(Y - Mx)) / \sqrt{((SSx)(SSy))}$
	$r = 364.952 / \sqrt{((3066.762)(230.19))} = 0.4344$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) r = 0.4344

The value of R is 0.4344; This indicates a moderate positive correlation.

Table 6 Strength of Faith and Presence of Meaning Subscale Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 2830$ Mean = 26.952 $\Sigma(X - Mx)^2 = SSx = 3066.762$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - Mx)(Y - My) = 452.81$
Y Values $\Sigma = 521$ Mean = 4.962 $\Sigma(Y - My)^2 = SSy = 267.848$	R Calculation $r = \Sigma((X - My)(Y - Mx)) / \sqrt{((SSx)(SSy))}$
	$r = 452.81 / \sqrt{((3066.762)(267.848))} = 0.4996$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) r = 0.4996

The value of R is 0.4996; This indicates a moderate positive correlation.

Table 7 Community Involvement and Presence of Meaning Subscale Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 2830$ Mean = 26.952 $\Sigma(X - Mx)^2 = SSx = 3066.762$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - Mx)(Y - My) = 402.286$
Y Values $\Sigma = 405$ Mean = 3.857 $\Sigma(Y - My)^2 = SSy = 268.857$	R Calculation $r = \Sigma((X - My)(Y - Mx)) / \sqrt{((SSx)(SSy))}$
	$r = 402.286 / \sqrt{((3066.762)(268.857))} = 0.443$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) r = 0.443

The value of R is 0.443; this indicates a moderate positive correlation

Table 8 Social Media Activity and Presence of Meaning Subscale Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 2830$ Mean = 26.952 $\Sigma(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 3066.762$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 186.429$
Y Values $\Sigma = 534$ Mean = 5.086 $\Sigma(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 204.229$	R Calculation $r = \Sigma((X - M_x)(Y - M_y)) / \sqrt{(SS_x)(SS_y)}$ $r = 186.429 / \sqrt{(3066.762)(204.229)} = 0.2356$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) r = 0.2356

The value of R is 0.2356; This indicates a low positive correlation.

Table 9 Summary of Presence of Meaning Relationships

	Pearson r	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Relationship with Family Closeness	0.4344	moderate positive correlation	3
Relationship with Strength of Faith	0.4996	moderate positive correlation	1
Relationship with Community Involvement	0.443	moderate positive correlation	2
Relationship with Social Media Activity	0.2356	low positive correlation	4

Table 10 Family Closeness and Search for Meaning Subscale Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 3012$ Mean = 28.686 $\Sigma(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 2194.629$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 60.286$
Y Values $\Sigma = 545$ Mean = 5.19 $\Sigma(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 230.19$	R Calculation $r = \Sigma((X - M_x)(Y - M_y)) / \sqrt{(SS_x)(SS_y)}$ $r = 60.286 / \sqrt{(2194.629)(230.19)} = 0.0848$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) r = 0.0848

The value of R is 0.0848; this indicates a low positive correlation.

Table 11 Strength of Faith and Search for Meaning Subscale Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 3012$ Mean = 28.686 $\Sigma(X - Mx)^2 = SSx = 2194.629$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - Mx)(Y - My) = 75.743$
Y Values $\Sigma = 521$ Mean = 4.962 $\Sigma(Y - My)^2 = SSy = 267.848$	R Calculation $r = \Sigma((X - My)(Y - Mx)) / \sqrt{((SSx)(SSy))}$ $r = 75.743 / \sqrt{((2194.629)(267.848))} = 0.0988$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) $r = 0.0988$

The value of R is 0.0988; this indicates a low positive correlation.

Table 12 Community Involvement and Search for Meaning Subscale Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 3012$ Mean = 28.686 $\Sigma(X - Mx)^2 = SSx = 2194.629$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - Mx)(Y - My) = 142.286$
Y Values $\Sigma = 405$ Mean = 3.857 $\Sigma(Y - My)^2 = SSy = 268.857$	R Calculation $r = \Sigma((X - My)(Y - Mx)) / \sqrt{((SSx)(SSy))}$ $r = 142.286 / \sqrt{((2194.629)(268.857))} = 0.1852$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) $r = 0.1852$

The value of R is 0.1852; This indicates a low positive correlation.

Table 13 Social Media Activity and Search for Meaning Subscale Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 3012$ Mean = 28.686 $\Sigma(X - Mx)^2 = SSx = 2194.629$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - Mx)(Y - My) = 84.829$
Y Values $\Sigma = 534$ Mean = 5.086 $\Sigma(Y - My)^2 = SSy = 204.229$	R Calculation $r = \Sigma((X - My)(Y - Mx)) / \sqrt{((SSx)(SSy))}$ $r = 84.829 / \sqrt{((2194.629)(204.229))} = 0.1267$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) $r = 0.1267$

The value of R is 0.1267; This indicates a low positive correlation.

Table 14 Summary of Search for Meaning Relationship

	Pearson r	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Relationship with Family Closeness	0.0848	low positive correlation	4
Relationship with Strength of Faith	0.0988	low positive correlation	3
Relationship with Community Involvement	0.1852	low positive correlation	1
Relationship with Social Media Activity	0.1267	low positive correlation	2

Table 15 Family Closeness and Meaning in Life Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 5842$ Mean = 55.638 $\Sigma(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 6986.248$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 425.238$
Y Values $\Sigma = 545$ Mean = 5.19 $\Sigma(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 230.19$	R Calculation $r = \frac{\Sigma((X - M_x)(Y - M_y))}{\sqrt{(SS_x)(SS_y)}}$ $r = 425.238 / \sqrt{(6986.248)(230.19)} = 0.3353$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) r = 0.3353

The value of R is 0.3353; This indicates a moderate positive correlation.

Table 16 Strength of Faith and Meaning in Life Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 5842$ Mean = 55.638 $\Sigma(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 6986.248$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 528.552$
Y Values $\Sigma = 521$ Mean = 4.962 $\Sigma(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 267.848$	R Calculation $r = \frac{\Sigma((X - M_x)(Y - M_y))}{\sqrt{(SS_x)(SS_y)}}$ $r = 528.552 / \sqrt{(6986.248)(267.848)} = 0.3864$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) r = 0.3864

The value of R is 0.3864; This indicates a moderate positive correlation.

Table 17 Community Involvement and Meaning in Life Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 5842$ Mean = 55.638 $\Sigma(X - M_x)^2 = SS_x = 6986.248$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - M_x)(Y - M_y) = 544.571$
Y Values $\Sigma = 405$ Mean = 3.857 $\Sigma(Y - M_y)^2 = SS_y = 268.857$	R Calculation $r = \frac{\Sigma((X - M_x)(Y - M_y))}{\sqrt{(SS_x)(SS_y)}}$ $r = 544.571 / \sqrt{(6986.248)(268.857)} = 0.3973$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) r = 0.3973

The value of R is 0.397; This indicates a moderate positive correlation.

Table 18 Social Media Activity and Meaning in Life Pearson r calculation

X Values $\Sigma = 5842$ Mean = 55.638 $\Sigma(X - Mx)^2 = SSx = 6986.248$	X and Y Combined N = 105 $\Sigma(X - Mx)(Y - My) = 271.257$
Y Values $\Sigma = 534$ Mean = 5.086 $\Sigma(Y - My)^2 = SSy = 204.229$	R Calculation $r = \Sigma((X - Mx)(Y - My)) / \sqrt{(SSx)(SSy)}$ $r = 271.257 / \sqrt{(6986.248)(204.229)} = 0.2271$
	Meta Numerics (cross-check) $r = 0.2271$

The value of R is 0.2271; This indicates a low positive correlation.

Table 19 Summary of Meaning in Life Relationships

	Pearson r	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Relationship with Family Closeness	0.3353	moderate positive correlation	3
Relationship with Strength of Faith	0.3864	moderate positive correlation	2
Relationship with Community Involvement	0.3973	moderate positive correlation	1
Relationship with Social Media Activity	0.2271	low positive correlation	4

4. Discussion

As can be seen in Table 1, the mean for each item of the MLQ was calculated. In Table 2, the means in the Presence of Meaning Subscale are shown and of all 5, and the highest mean of 5.60952381 was obtained in item 9, which is reverse-scored. In Table 3, the means for Search for Meaning subscale are indicated and the highest mean of 5.923809524 was obtained in item 2.

The Pearson r calculation between Family Closeness and Presence of Meaning Subscale is shown in Table 5. An r value of 0.4344 was obtained indicating a moderate positive correlation between Family Closeness and Presence of Meaning Subscale. In Table 6, The Pearson r calculation between Strength of Faith and Presence of Meaning Subscale is shown. An r value of 0.4996 was obtained indicating a moderate positive correlation between Strength of Faith and Presence of Meaning Subscale. The Pearson r calculation between Community Involvement and Presence of Meaning Subscale is shown in Table 7. An r value of 0.443 was obtained indicating a moderate positive correlation between Community Involvement and Presence of Meaning Subscale. In Table 8, The Pearson r calculation between Social Media Activity and Presence of Meaning Subscale is shown. An r value of 0.2356 was obtained indicating a low positive correlation between Social Media Activity and Presence of Meaning Subscale.

As can be seen in Table 9, with a Pearson r value of 0.4996, Strength of Faith has the strongest correlation with Presence of Meaning Subscale.

The Pearson r calculation between Family Closeness and Search for Meaning Subscale is shown in Table 10. An r value of 0.0848 was obtained indicating a low positive correlation between Family Closeness and Search for Meaning Subscale. In Table 11, The Pearson r calculation between Strength of Faith and Search for Meaning Subscale is shown. An r value of 0.0848 was obtained indicating a low positive correlation between Strength of Faith and Search for Meaning Subscale. The Pearson r calculation between Community Involvement and Search for Meaning Subscale is shown in Table 12. An r value of 0.1852 was obtained indicating a low positive correlation between Community Involvement and Search for Meaning Subscale. In Table 13, The Pearson r calculation between Social Media Activity and

Search for Meaning Subscale is shown. An r value of 0.1267 was obtained indicating a low positive correlation between Social Media Activity and Search for Meaning Subscale.

As can be seen in Table 14, with a Pearson r value of 0.1852, Community Involvement has the strongest correlation with Search for Meaning Subscale.

The Pearson r calculation between Family Closeness and Meaning in Life is shown in Table 15. An r value of 0.4344 was obtained indicating a moderate positive correlation between Family Closeness and Meaning in Life. In Table 16, The Pearson r calculation between Strength of Faith and Meaning in Life is shown. An r value of 0.4996 was obtained indicating a moderate positive correlation between Strength of Faith and Meaning in Life. The Pearson r calculation between Community Involvement and Meaning in Life is shown in Table 17. An r value of 0.443 was obtained indicating a moderate positive correlation between Community Involvement and Meaning in Life. In Table 18, The Pearson r calculation between Social Media Activity and Meaning in Life is shown. An r value of 0.2356 was obtained indicating a low positive correlation between Social Media Activity and Meaning in Life.

As can be seen in Table 19, with a Pearson r value of 0.3973, Community Involvement has the strongest correlation with Meaning in Life.

The Philippine population is more than 86 percent Roman Catholic.¹² The isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic did not hinder the Filipino Catholic faithful from expressing their faith but made it sturdier.¹³ This could explain the finding that Strength of Faith has the strongest correlation with Presence of Meaning Subscale.

With respect to Search for Meaning subscale and overall Meaning in Life, Community Involvement was found to have the highest correlation. This could be based on the effect of the pandemic lockdown that gave rise to insufficient social relations and interactions.¹⁴ Having been socially isolated for over 2 years, the respondents' need for deeper community involvement has perhaps become the primary source of their meaning in life. This contradicts the findings of the study that found the family as the most significant source of meaning in people's lives.⁶ It is entirely possible that having been confined to their family homes for over 2 years has made the respondents yearn for alternative social interaction in the form of community involvement. Further study is recommended in order to verify this.

5. Conclusion

The findings are supported by the studies that have established family closeness, strength of faith, community involvement as clear areas from where individuals derive meaning in life. But it is noteworthy that community involvement was found to have the strongest positive correlation. It is also interesting to note that even social media activity has a positive correlation with meaning in life. It would appear that social connectivity through the Internet may have become another source of life's meaning given the isolation that the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought upon society in general. It is therefore possible, that human meaning is constantly evolving. Similar studies in the future could yield results that might show stronger positive correlations between other novel factors and meaning in life.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

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Approval of conflict of interest

The author declares that no conflict of interest exists in the authorship of this study, that the respondents' informed consent was obtained, that their identities were kept anonymous and that they were not exposed to any physical, psychological or social harm and were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

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