

A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY AND MEANING IN LIFE AMONG NURSES

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ABSTRACT

Nurses often face demanding work environments that challenge their emotional and psychological well-being. Psychological flexibility, the ability to adapt to difficult situations while staying committed to personal values, may significantly shape their sense of meaning in life. Meaning in life consists of three dimensions: coherence (a sense of comprehensibility), purpose (having direction and goals), and significance (the perceived value of one's existence). This study examines the relationship between psychological flexibility and meaning in life among nurses. Using the Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (PFQ) to assess psychological flexibility and the Three-Dimensional Meaning in Life scale (3DM) to measure meaning in life, data were collected and analyzed through correlation analysis. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between psychological flexibility and all three dimensions of meaning in life. Nurses with higher psychological flexibility reported greater coherence, purpose, and significance in their lives. These findings suggest that psychological flexibility plays a crucial role in how nurses perceive meaning in life, influencing their overall well-being and professional fulfillment.

Keywords: Psychological flexibility, Meaning in life, Coherence, Purpose, Significance, Nurses

INTRODUCTION

Aim:

- This study aims to determine the relationship between psychological flexibility and meaning in life among nurses.

Psychological Flexibility

Definition

Kashdan and Rotterburg (2010) defined psychological flexibility as the measure of how a person: 1) adapts to fluctuating situational demands, 2) reconfigures mental resources, 3) shifts perspective, and 4) balances competing desires, needs, and life domains.^[1]

Domains of psychological flexibility

The psychological flexibility questionnaire used in this study measures five domains. They are,

- Positive Perception of Change – Psychological flexibility enables individuals to see change as a growth opportunity rather than a threat, helping them adapt and remain resilient.
- Characterization of Self as Flexible – Identifying one as a flexible person encourages adaptive coping strategies, allowing individuals to adjust their thoughts and behaviours in challenging situations.
- Characterization of Self as Open and Flexible – Openness to new ideas and experiences fosters psychological flexibility by promoting creativity, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace different perspectives.
- Perception of Reality as Dynamic and Changing – Recognizing that reality is ever-changing helps individuals remain adaptable, reducing resistance to uncertainty and enhancing their ability to cope with evolving situations.
- Perception of Reality as Multifaceted – Understanding that multiple perspectives exist encourages flexible thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to adjust approaches based on different circumstances.

Meaning in life

Definition

Steger (2009) defined meaning in life as comprised of two pillars: comprehension and purpose. Comprehension refers to an individual ability to recognize patterns, consistency and significance in life events, integrating key experiences into coherent understanding of themselves and the world. Purpose involves the pursuit of highly-motivating, long term goals that individuals are passionate about and committed to, often aligning with their comprehension of life.^[2]

Dimensions of Meaning in Life

The three-Dimensional Meaning in Life scale measures three dimensions. It includes,

- Coherence – The ability to understand life events and perceive life as structured and meaningful, helping individuals navigate experiences with clarity.
- Purpose – Having core goals and direction that provide motivation, connecting past experiences with future aspirations to create a meaningful and fulfilling life.

- Significance – The perceived value and worth of one's life, reflecting the belief that one's existence matters and has an impact beyond oneself.^[3]

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Hypothesis:

H1 - There will be a significant relationship between Psychological Flexibility and Meaning in Life among nurses.

Variables

- Independent variable - Psychological Flexibility
- Dependent variable - Meaning in Life

Sample size

A total of 150 nurses from Thoothukudi district participated through the purposive sampling method.

Procedure

All participants were provided information about the purpose of the study before getting their informed consent. The participants were instructed to fill out a series of questionnaires. It included self-reported assessments of psychological Flexibility and meaning in Life as well as demographic information following their consent to take part in the study. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and asked to complete each item according to the instructions that were provided. The scores were evaluated according to the scoring key and were interpreted using the author's norms.

Tool Description

The following tools were used in the study:

- Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (PFQ) - Bluvstein and Maya Maor in 2014
- Three-Dimensional Meaning in Life scale (3DM) - Martela and Steger in 2022

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics viz., mean and standard deviation was performed for all the variables. To test the relationship between the variables, Correlation analysis (Pearson) was conducted. The analysis was performed with a statistical package for the social sciences software version 23 (SPSS).

Review Of Literature

Modzelewska, K. (2025) conducted a study on the topic “Psychological Flexibility, Meaning in Life, Spirituality, and Age” This study aimed to evaluate two new measures namely the Personalized Psychological Flexibility Index (PPFI) and Comprehensive Measure

of Meaning (CMM), and also offer psychometric information on those concepts. About seventy-three participants completed the online survey. They found that the two new measures, the PPF and CMM, revealed a significant positive relationship between psychological flexibility and life meaning. The study found no significant correlation between psychological flexibility, spirituality, or age.^[4]

Dlfard, S. S., Toosi, M. R. S., and Jafari, F. (2024) analyzed the effectiveness of positive cognitive behavioural therapy on psychological flexibility and the meaning of life among single women. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test assessments, incorporating a control group and a follow-up phase. Researchers purposively sampled forty participants, split into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group underwent eight bi-weekly sessions, guided by Bannink's protocol. The findings indicated that positive cognitive behavioural therapy significantly increased psychological flexibility and enhanced the meaning of life among the participants, and these effects were maintained during the follow-up phase.^[5]

Li, X., Han, J., and Lin, H. (2024) conducted a study to assess the mental health and well-being of Chinese nurses, as well as investigate the impact of psychological flexibility and night shifts on this relationship in the later stages of COVID-19. A total of four hundred and twenty-two Chinese nurses were chosen using multistage stratified cluster random sampling. The high night shifts, being youth, and limited psychological flexibility, were found to directly impact mental health. Additionally, the combination of low psychological flexibility and deteriorating mental health contributed directly to reduced well-being. Furthermore, psychological flexibility influenced wellbeing indirectly by mediating the effects of mental health.^[6]

Aydın, L., and Yıldız, E. (2024) investigated the association between psychological flexibility and the professional quality of life of nurses working in a mental clinic. One hundred and fifty-one nurses working in an eastern Turkish mental health facility participated in this study. The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between empathy, fatigue, psychological flexibility, and professional satisfaction. Burnout, however, did not show a significant correlation. They concluded that the psychological flexibility of psychiatric nurses positively affected their professional quality of life.^[7]

Arslan, G., and Allen, K. A. (2022) explored the association between coronavirus stress, meaning in life, psychological flexibility, and subjective well-being. About four hundred and seventeen students from public university participated in this study with ages

ranging from 18 to 40 years. The study's findings revealed that meaning in life and psychological flexibility moderated the effect of coronavirus stress on student well-being and that psychological flexibility also reduced the effect of stress on meaning in life. [8]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological Flexibility	145	79	120	101.9	9.438
Coherence	145	7	28	19.39	5.204
Purpose	145	8	28	21.01	4.871
Significance	145	5	21	16.86	4.257

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the measured variables. The total number of samples was 145.

The mean and standard deviation values for psychological flexibility were 101.9 and 9.438 respectively, with 79 as the minimum score and 120 as the maximum score. The mean and standard deviation values for coherence were 19.39 and 5.204 respectively, with 7 as the minimum score and 28 as the maximum score. The mean and standard deviation values for purpose were 21.01 and 4.871 respectively, with 8 as the minimum score and 28 as the maximum score. The mean and standard deviation values for significance were 16.86 and 4.257, respectively with 5 as the minimum score and 120 as the maximum score.

Table 2

Relationship between psychological flexibility and meaning in life among Nurses

Variables	Meaning in life		
	Coherence	Purpose	Significance
Psychological Flexibility	0.326**	0.270**	0.219*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 1 shows the relationship between psychological flexibility and meaning in life among nurses.

The correlation value (r) for psychological flexibility with coherence, purpose and significance was found to be 0.326 ($p \leq 0.01$), 0.270 ($p \leq 0.01$) and 0.219 ($p \leq 0.05$) respectively. Therefore, the hypothesis (H1) stating that **“There will be a significant relationship between psychological flexibility and meaning in life among nurses”** is accepted. It is important to note that all the variables are positively correlated.

Discussion

Relationship between psychological flexibility and meaning in life:

From Table 2, it is evident that psychological flexibility and meaning in life were significantly correlated. The results suggest a significant positive relationship between psychological flexibility and the three key dimensions of meaning in life—coherence, purpose, and significance—among nurses. This connection helps to understand how the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and manage stress effectively can contribute to a deeper and more structured understanding of life experiences. Nurses who stay open to new experiences, even in tough or uncertain situations, can make better sense of their challenges and find meaning in them. Instead of avoiding difficulties, they face them head-on while staying true to their core values, like providing compassionate care. This helps them stay motivated and find satisfaction in their work, even when things get stressful. When nurses see challenges as chances to learn and grow, they gain a deeper appreciation for their profession and the difference they make in people's lives. Realizing the impact of their care brings a sense of fulfillment and reinforces the value of their work and purpose in life.

Overall, these findings emphasize that psychological flexibility is a fundamental trait that shapes how individuals construct and perceive meaning in their lives.^[4] By fostering adaptability, acceptance, and a values-driven approach to challenges, psychological flexibility enables nurses to develop a coherent understanding of their experiences, maintain a strong sense of purpose, and appreciate the significance of their roles.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the present study was to examine the role of psychological flexibility and meaning in life among nurses. The independent variable used in our study was psychological flexibility and the dependent variable used in our study was meaning in life. A purposive sampling method was used to select 145 nurses from different areas in and around the Thoothukudi District. The standardized tools used in the study are the Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (PFQ) - Bluvstein and Maya Maor in 2014 and the Three-Dimensional Meaning in Life scale (3DM) - Martela and Steger in 2022. Demographic data

was also collected using the tools given. The following conclusions were drawn from the study.

- There exists a significant relationship between Psychological Flexibility and Meaning in Life among nurses.

Implications

- Enhancing psychological flexibility can help nurses cope with stress and find greater meaning in their work.
- By fostering psychological flexibility, organizations may reduce burnout and turnover rates, ensuring a more engaged and committed nursing workforce.
- Creating support programs based on psychological flexibility can help nurses handle work and emotional challenges better.

Limitations

This study has limitations, including the use of self-report measures, which may introduce social desirability bias. The small sample size (N=145) and limited geographic scope (Thoothukudi District) affect generalizability. Additionally, some findings lack supporting research, requiring further investigation.

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