

EXPLORING THE MEANING OF LIFE OF LATE ADOLESCENTS THROUGH THE MODIFICATION OF MICHAEL F. STEGER'S THEORY SCALE

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Abstract

The search for meaning in life among late adolescents is a crucial factor in their identity development, especially in the midst of social and emotional challenges. Although many studies have been conducted on the meaning of life, the limitations of existing instruments are unable to reflect the complexity of the meaning of life experience in late adolescents, so modifications are needed to address this need. This study aims to modify the meaning of life scale to better fit the context and experiences of adolescents. Using a quantitative approach, 116 active students aged 18-21 years from various universities in three provinces participated in this study. The instrument used was a modified meaning of life scale based on Michael F. Steger's theory, including two dimensions, namely the existence of meaning and the search for meaning. The results of the analysis showed that the modified scale not only had high validity and reliability, but also effectively captured the complexity of adolescents' life experiences. The findings provide important insights in understanding the dynamics of adolescents' meaning in life and open up opportunities for the development of intervention programs that are more relevant and based on their needs.

Keywords: *Meaning of life, Late adolescence, Modified scale*

Introduction

One of the developmental periods that every human being will go through is adolescence (Rais, 2022; Tarwiyyah, 2022; Nasution et al., 2023). It is said that adolescence begins with puberty (Siregar et al., 2022; Fauziah & Yolanda, 2022). According to Santrock (2003) adolescence is a period when humans experience a transition from childhood to adulthood with changes such as biological, cognitive and social emotional changes. Adolescence can be said to be a unique and very important period in the formation of individuals (Mustamu et al., 2020; Masduki, 2021; Dewanto et al., 2023; Septa, 2023), because adolescence is a crucial period in life, both its development and the transition of children to adulthood (Pratama et al., 2023; Sianturi & Hotpascaman, 2024; Hairunnisa Putri et al., 2023; Oktrisia et al., 2021; Sinapoy & Putri, 2021; Putra et al., 2021; Lado et al., 2019).

Adolescence is closely related to a period of change (Simangunsong et al., 2024). These changes force adolescents to constantly adjust (Wardhani et al., 2024). However, adolescence is also a fragile period (Yulianti et al., 2024), as well as feelings of insecurity, anxiety and depression from various problems that arise in this phase (Pamungkas & Kamalah, 2021; Shidiqie et al., 2023; Laela et al., 2025). Adolescence is divided into three parts including early adolescence, middle adolescence and late adolescence (Jannah, 2017; Permata & Nasution, 2022).

Late adolescence is the peak stage before humans enter adulthood (Awang & Malelak, 2024). This stage begins at the age of 17-22 years so that it can be said to be a long process (Suryana et al., 2022). This period is the beginning of the formation of attitudes, thoughts, and other aspects of the life of every human being (Putri et al., 2020; A'ini et al., 2023). So that the main characteristics of late adolescents entering this period are the search for identity and freedom (Santrock, 2007).

In the late adolescence stage, individuals are generally at the end of secondary school and the beginning of college, which is a period of adjustment to the environment and behavioral adjustment (Hasya et al., 2023). At this stage, adolescents begin to try to position themselves as adults and occasionally begin to show their point of view of thinking and other maturity behaviors (Respati et al., 2006; Nisai, 2023), besides that, late adolescents begin to make decisions that are faced independently (Nuraisyah et al., 2024; Dahlia et al., 2022). Late adolescents can be likened to being at the gate and preparing to enter their world which is a vehicle to achieve their desired goals (Marzuqi & Yuniasanti, 2024), such as identity exploration, academic pressure, peer relationships, and the search for the meaning of life (Saleleubaja et al., 2023; Wigiyandiaz et al., 2020).

The meaning of life is something that has uniqueness and specificity, meaning that the meaning of life can only be obtained by those concerned in various ways to arrive at the meaning of the purpose of life for him (Satrio & Budiani, 2018; Wijayanti & Setyadi, 2024). When late adolescents have found the meaning of life, life can be lived with more enthusiasm and enthusiasm (Razkia et al., 2021; Raop et al., 2023), but in fact finding the meaning of life is not something that can be done easily and instantly, but goes through a long process of time and is full of effort (Akbar & Nurmina, 2024), the meaning of life is considered important and valuable thing, besides that it also provides special value so that it deserves to be used as a goal in life (Widianita et al., 2009). The meaning of life can be found in life itself, in a pleasant life or an unpleasant life such as suffering (Lestari & Engry, 2019).

If the meaning of life is found in a state of suffering, it does not depend on the physical, but the meaning of life is found by how to deal with various events that occur in life, even if it is a very excruciating suffering (Satyawardhana & Pitang, 2024). Supported by the results of Wintama's (2024) research that the meaning of life can be obtained through three stages, including experiencing suffering in the past and present, feeling emptiness and the meaning of life obtained from an inner pleasure. As God's creatures living in the world, individuals need three things in making meaning of life including, the need to understand the world around them, the need to find direction as an action, and the need to find values in life (Effendy & Widianingtanti, 2020).

The meaning of life was first introduced in psychology by Viktor Frankl (1985). Starting from victims of NAZI atrocities in concentration camps, the meaning of life theory developed by Viktor E. Frankl is rooted in existential philosophy which emphasizes a philosophical view of life. In his work "Man's Search for Meaning," Frankl explains how individuals can find meaning in life, even under the most difficult conditions (Nurismawan et al., 2023; Mostarac & Brajković, 2022). Viktor Frankl asserts that the meaning of life cannot be obtained in general, but individuals should realize that they are asked by life. Thus, everyone is responsible for finding and giving meaning to their own lives (Utomo & Hubertus, 2024; Puspitasari et al., 2023). People who have the meaning of life are considered as people who have full awareness of the main purpose of life and become the main drive to face life's challenges (Pranata & Suryanto, 2024).

Steger et al., (2006) revealed that the meaning of life is formed through two main interrelated components, namely the presence of meaning and the search for meaning. The presence of meaning refers to an individual's feeling that their life has meaning and a clear purpose. This is closely related to how well a person understands what makes their

life meaningful, and is often related to the level of life satisfaction. Regarding the meaning of life of late adolescents is found in Devi's research (2022), where late adolescents have problems with the meaning of life, namely related to the search for identity and the influence of the social environment. In the context of Korean Wave fans, adolescents often experience negative labeling from society, which can affect their view of self and the meaning of life. They have to face the negative stigma that states that interests their interests may are not valuable, which cause psychological discomfort. However, many of them manage to find positive meaning in these experiences, using negative labels as a means of introspection and motivation to stick to their interests, late adolescents' meaning of life often focuses on self development, emotional stability and identity strong, even if they face challenges from the surrounding environment.

In addition, there is research conducted by Yuliana et al., (2018) on late adolescents with cancer, the problems that arise have in common, namely the search for identity and purpose in life, especially in the midst of challenges such as serious illness, including cancer. Adolescents with cancer have difficulty finding the meaning of life due to a threatening disease diagnosis, which can lead to feelings of meaninglessness and depression.

In connection with the experiences and consequences of decisions taken at the developmental phase, there is research by Lestari & Engry (2019), the results of the study discuss the context of adolescents who experience unwanted pregnancy and decide to perform *abortus provocatus criminalis*, they face psychological dilemmas. which is complex. The decision to have an abortion is often accompanied by feelings of shame, guilt and emotional distress, which can affect their mental health. After an abortion, adolescents often search for meaning in life through reflection on their experiences, emerging values, and hopes for a better future. They need to find ways to rebuild self-esteem and purpose in life, although many experience trauma and difficulties in adapting after the event.

In the practice of measurement, there are problems that will arise, namely how well the instrument that has been made is valid and reliable. Therefore, it is necessary to test the validity and reliability of each scale used so that this measuring instrument becomes accurate and reliable (Utami & Setiawati, 2019). In this article, we will discuss the meaning of life scale instrument which will be reviewed based on exploratory factor analysis from the theory proposed by Michael F Steger (2006).

In this study, it is intended to modify the meaning of life scale for late adolescents on the grounds that the development of late adolescents is at a very dynamic stage of development, where they are building self-identity, values and life goals that have differences with adults and even early adolescents. As well as the theory of psychosocial development put forward by Erikson, namely adolescents are looking for a coherent self-identity, the social sphere of late adolescents is influenced by peers, social media, and unique cultural pressures (Tetty et al., 2023). Late adolescents often use slang, abbreviations or expressions that are different from older people, if late adolescents use formal or academic language there is a possibility that late adolescents will have difficulty understanding questions and giving honest answers, the varied lives of late adolescents start from social relationships, academic pressure and social media. These experiences shape the perspectives of late adolescents.

Other objectives of this study as adjusting the language and content of questions for late adolescents will ensure the instrument truly measures the concept of meaning of life that is relevant to late adolescents, modifying the instrument produces more consistent and stable data, instruments that are sensitive to individual differences will capture more subtle nuances in the understanding of the meaning of life experienced by late adolescents. So it is easy to identify more specific differences, the use of the same

instrument in different age groups and cultures will produce a variety of meanings of life that evolve with social and cultural changes, data from modified instruments provide more accurate information making it easier to provide intervention programs for late adolescents.

Method

This research design is a quantitative approach and uses a measuring instrument that is tested on a specific sample with statistical data analysis and aims to correlate the level of validity and reliability of the meaning of life measuring instrument for late adolescents. The participants of this study were 116 students from several campuses spread across three provinces including West Java, Central Java and Yogyakarta. Participant data were collected using purposive sampling technique, with the criteria that participants were male and female, active students aged 18-21 years. The measuring instrument used in this study is Michael F Steger's meaning of life scale which consists of 10 items with two dimensions, namely the existence of meaning and the search for meaning, where participants respond through a four-choice Likert scale (1 = "very unsuitable"; 4 = "very suitable"). The following is a modified lattice of the meaning of life instrument for late adolescents which is contained in table 1.

Table 1. Life Meaning Instrument Grid

Dimensions	Indicator	Item No.	Original grain	Modified
Existence then	The extent to which individuals feel they have meaning in their lives	1	I understand the meaning of my life	I understand my purpose in life
		4	I have a clear purpose in life	I have things that I love and that make my life worthwhile.
		5	I have thoughts that make my life meaningful	I have thoughts that make my life feel meaningful
		6	I have found my purpose in life	My relationships with friends make my life more meaningful
		9	My life has no clear purpose	Knowing who I am makes I am more meaningful
The search for meaning	The extent to which individuals have a drive to build and/or add meaning to their lives	2	I'm looking for something that can make my life meaningful	Having goals for the future makes my life more meaningful
		3	I am always looking for my purpose in life	I feel that my life has a clear direction
		7	I am is always looking for something that makes my life feel Important	I feel satisfied with my current life
		8	I am looking for a purpose or mission for my life	I feel connected to something bigger than me (e.g. natural community or faith).
		10	I'm looking for meaning My life	I feel like my life has meaning

Data were analyzed using the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) technique, which is an evaluation method that compares the theoretical model with the data, such as SRMR and RMSEA values .90, using Jamovi software.

Result and Discussion

Participant Demographic Data

Based on the results of the study, the participants presented in table 2, it is known that there are more male participants, namely 60 participants (51%), compared to 56 female participants (48.3%). Participants are all students whose ages range from 18-21 years, the most participants are 19 years old, namely 26 participants (22.4%) while the lowest age of participants is 18 years old. years with 22 participants (19%).

Table 2. *Demographic Data of Research Participants*

Demographic s		N	%
Gender	Male	60	51,7%
	Female	56	48,3%
Age	18	22	19%
	19	26	22,4%
	20	25	21,6%
	21	43	37%

Table 2 provides an important conception of the demographics of the participants involved in the study, fundamental data for understanding the social and cultural context in influencing late adolescents' search for meaning in life. Data regarding age, gender and educational background show diversity that may influence the results of the study. For example, the even age distribution between 18 to 21 years old indicates that the respondents are at a key transitional phase in their lives, where the search for identity and meaning is particularly intensive. In addition, the balanced proportion of genders reflects that the findings of this study are relevant to both genders, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis.

Table 3. *Participant Data Based on College Origin*

Campus	N	%
Universitas Amikom Yogyakarta	3	3%
Institut Teknologi Bandung	2	2%
Telkom University Purwokerto	2	2%
Politeknik Negeri Semarang	1	1%
Universitas Islam Indonesia	2	2%
UIN K.H. Saifudin Zuhri Purwokerto	32	28%
UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta	5	4%
Universitas Mercubuana Yogyakarta	1	1%
Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang	1	1%
Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto	16	14%
Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta	3	3%
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta	6	5%
Universitas Diponegoro	5	4%
Universitas Setia Budi Surakarta	1	1%
Universitas Negeri Semarang	8	7%
Universitas Sebelas Maret	5	4%
Universitas Jendral Soedirman	15	13%
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta	8	7%
Total	116	100%

Table 3 shows that there are 116 students from 18 universities spread across three provinces, namely D. I. Yogyakarta, Central Java and West Java, with the largest number of participants from UIN K.H. Saifudin Zuhri Purwokerto as many as 32 students (28%).

Content Validity

Content validity is an aspect of internal validity. Content validity testing is carried out to ensure the suitability of the questionnaire content and research objectives carried out by experts (W. D. Puspitasari & Febrinita, 2021). Expert judgment in this study is from people with a psychology background, with the results of content validity using Aiken's V formula can be seen in table 4. The Aiken's V value is an index of the assessor's agreement between the suitability of the item and the indicator that needs to be measured using the item (An Nabil et al., 2022). In this study using a 5% significance value with a minimum validity criteria value of 0.69. The coefficient that shows a number below 0.69 is said not to pass the content validity test.

Table 4. Content Validity Test Result Data

Aspects	Item	Value V	Summary
Existence of Meaning	1	1	Valid
	4	1	Valid
	5	0,92	Valid
	6	0,92	Valid
	9	0,83	Valid
The Search for Meaning	2	1	Valid
	3	0,83	Valid
	7	1	Valid
	8	1	Valid
	10	1	Valid

Based on Table 4, it is known that the 10 items have a validity value above 0.69, therefore it can be concluded that the 10 items are declared content valid, which means that according to Expert judgment this research is stated to be able to measure the attributes to be measured.

Items Validity

In this study, the analysis of item validity used a confirmatory analysis (CFA) approach. The process begins with testing 10 statement items that have been compiled, then analyzed based on the Goodness of Fit Indices (GoF), namely CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. Decision-making requirements in the CFA model are based on consideration of the value of factor loading and modification indices. From the output of these values, it shows items that have a significant contribution to the model that must be maintained. The estimated standardized loading value is the standardized estimate value which shows a value greater than 0.5 (Darimis et al., 2023).

After testing the 10 items, it was found that the 10 items had a good fit and were in accordance with the data collected. The Goodness of Fit Indices (GoF) analysis is shown in table 5.

Table 5. Goodness of Fit Indices (GoF)

X ²	df	P
Test for Exact Fit		
32.3	26	0.184

Table 6. CFA Criteria Results

Category	N	Conclusion
CFI	0,977	Fit
TLI	0,959	Fit
RMSEA	0,0456	Fit

Each item is said to be good if the CFI and TLI values are greater than 0.9 and the RMSEA value is less than 0.05 (Narimawati & Sarwono, 2022; Pratama et al., 2024). Based on the results in table 6, it shows that the average value of the three categories has an appropriate value so that it can be concluded that the significance is at a good level.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability is a list that illustrates the extent to which a measuring instrument can be trusted or relied upon. So that the reliability test can be used to understand the consistency of the measuring instrument, whether the measuring instrument is coherent when repeated testing is carried out (Tarigan et al., 2022). The high and low reliability, empirically seen from a number called the reliability coefficient value. High reliability is indicated by the r^{xx} value close to 1 and in general reliability is considered safe enough if the value is ≥ 0.700 (Sanaky, 2021). In this test, Jamovi produces a scale reliability statistics table as outlined in table 7.

Table 7. Instrument Reliability Test Results

	Cronbach's alpha	McDonald's ω
Scale	0.798	0.802

Based on the table presented, it can be seen that Cronbach's Alpha shows a fairly high value of 0.798 and McDonald's ω value of 0.802. These results emphasize that the instrument that has been tested can present consistent results in measuring the meaning of life in late adolescents. The following is a presentation of the reliability scale results presented for each item described in table 8.

Table 8. Items Reliability Statistic

Items Reliability Statistic	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω
KM1	0.785	0.789
KM2	0.754	0.759
KM3	0.773	0.777
KM4	0.790	0.794
KM5	0.779	0.783
PM1	0.794	0.797
PM2	0.781	0.784
PM3	0.782	0.786
PM4	0.789	0.792
PM5	0.777	0.781

The table above shows that the Cronbach's Alpha and Mc Donald's Omega values on each statement item are more than 0.7. This provides an explanation that each of the statement items on the instrument has a significant contribution to the overall measurement of the meaning of life of late adolescents.

The meaning of life is a conceptualized building regarding the point of view of an individual, situationally the meaning of life is interpreted in the direction of efforts in understanding values and goals in daily experiences (Wahidah, 2021). The formation of the meaning of life from the individual himself, the belief in himself that leads to the hard

struggle to actualize his potential (Gumelar et al., 2022). The meaning of life has a unique and personal character, which means that something that is considered important will not necessarily be felt the same by others, so that the meaning of life will appear to be a challenge or invite individuals to achieve it (Surjoseto & Sofyanty, 2023).

To find out late adolescents in making meaning of their lives, an instrument is needed that can measure. Therefore, this modified instrument of the meaning of life of late adolescents exists to be able to find out this. The indicators used in developing this instrument are based on the classification of the meaning of life according to Steger (2006) which consists of the existence of meaning and the search for meaning. The developed meaning of life instrument has been tested for validity and reliability. Based on the analysis of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) no indicator was deleted, so this instrument can be said to be feasible for practitioners to use to determine the meaning of life of late adolescents.

According to Heng et al., (2020) late adolescents who have the meaning of life can develop positivity and motivation in their directed lives. That way, late adolescents in carrying out their lives are able to carry out their roles as friends, siblings, children, students or students as well as their developmental tasks seriously and happily. The research is also supported by Victoriana et al., (2023) which states that late adolescents who can find and have the meaning of life will experience stability in their lives and high positive affect get happiness and even enthusiasm for life and low negative affective numbers will feel less sadness and even desperation. The meaning of life is obtained from experiencing values that are considered correct and knowing how to respond to something that should be done (Wijayanti & Setyadi, 2024).

Having a mature meaning of life will be easier to achieve happiness and life satisfaction, on the other hand, late adolescents will focus more on the things that are most important in their lives, so it is possible for late adolescents to see the positive part in every life experience faced, so they will continue to be enthusiastic about life (Izzami et al., 2023).

The development of this instrument has important implications, including that a valid and reliable instrument can help in identifying late adolescents related to the meaning of life more accurately. This provides opportunities for future researchers who can identify what factors contribute to late adolescents' understanding and attitudes towards the meaning of life.

Conclusion

This study successfully modified the meaning of life scale for late adolescents, demonstrating high validity and reliability in measuring the concept of meaning of life. Findings showed that the modified scale was able to effectively capture the nuances of late adolescents' dynamic life experiences, including identity search, social environmental influences, and challenges faced. The impact of this study is to provide a more sensitive and relevant instrument that can help in understanding adolescents' meaning of life more deeply. In addition, the results of this study also indicate the importance of adjusting the language and content of the questions to make them easier to understand by adolescents. Furthermore, this study opens up opportunities for further exploration of the factors that influence the meaning of life in diverse social and cultural contexts, as well as the importance of developing targeted intervention programs to support adolescents' mental well-being.

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The successful completion of this article would not have been possible without the valuable contributions of all authors involved, and the authors have accepted responsibility for the entire contents of this manuscript and have approved its submission to the journal. SR contributed to instrument validation, performed data analysis, and drafted the manuscript. RE and HW contributed to the concept, research design, and provided technical or material support.

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