



The Meaning of Life and Happiness in the Elderly: A Phenomenological Study

Hidayatul Faridah¹, Betsi Siti Nurhidayah², Ina Yustiana³, Melani Nur Cahya⁴

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Kuningan, Indonesia

Email: hidayatul@staiku.ac.id, betsisiti93@gmail.com, kurnia77@gmail.com,
mellanicahya285@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to explore the experiences of the elderly in meaning of life and building happiness in the old age phase. This study is important because the aging of the population not only presents physical health problems, but also demands a psychosocial understanding of life goals, self-acceptance, social relationships, and spirituality. Unlike prior studies that have generally examined the meaning of life and happiness of the elderly as separate constructs or have focused primarily on institutionalised elderly populations, this study addresses the gap by exploring how both constructs are subjectively interconnected among elderly individuals who live within family and community settings, thereby offering a more contextually grounded phenomenological account. The study used a phenomenological qualitative approach with semi-structured in-depth interviews with 10 elderly people aged 60 years and above who were selected purposively. Data were analyzed through the stages of transcription, repeated reading, meaningful code, thematic grouping, and synthesis of the essence of the experience, guided by the thematic-phenomenological analysis technique of Braun and Clarke. The results of the analysis show four main themes, namely: (1) the meaning of life as a sustainability of the role in the family; (2) happiness as a sense of self-sufficiency, gratitude, and inner peace; (3) social relations and spirituality as a source of psychological resilience; and (4) acceptance of physical limitations as a process of self-reconciliation. These findings show that the happiness of the elderly is not solely determined by material conditions, but is more strongly supported by the quality of relationships, the ability to accept change, and the feeling of still being useful to others. This study recommends strengthening elderly-friendly community programs, family psychosocial assistance, and social participation spaces that allow the elderly to continue to experience life as something meaningful.

Keywords: happiness; the elderly; meaning of life; phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

Population aging is a demographic phenomenon that increasingly demands multidisciplinary attention, especially in the fields of developmental psychology, public health, family, and social welfare. The data shows that aging is not only understood as a biological process, but also as a socio-psychological reality that affects the quality of life, social roles, family relationships, and mental well-being of the elderly. It also emphasized that the population aged 60 years and above continues to increase, so every country needs to prepare a health, social support, and environmental system that allows the elderly to experience healthy aging.

The elderly face various complex changes, both physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually. These changes can be in the form of decreased body function, reduced independence, loss of a partner or peers, changes in social status after retirement, economic adjustments, and the need to remain recognized and appreciated by family and the environment. Under certain conditions, these changes can lead to feelings of loneliness, helplessness, loss of role, and decreased self-esteem. However, on the other hand, the elderly who have family support, social involvement, self-acceptance, and spiritual orientation tend to be more able to interpret old age as a phase of life that remains meaningful.

In the perspective of positive psychology, the meaning of life is understood as a subjective experience that life has understanding, direction, and value. (Martela et al., 2016) explains that the meaning of life includes three main dimensions, namely coherence, purpose, and significance. Coherence refers to the feeling that life is understandable; goals related to the direction and orientation of life; while significance refers to the feeling that life is valuable and worth living. For the elderly, the meaning of life is often no longer placed on the achievement of formal productivity, but on the sustainability of family relationships, wisdom, spirituality, acceptance of life's journey, and the ability to benefit the next generation.

The meaning of life has an important position because it can help the elderly organize the experience of loss, limitations, and changes. Elderly people who are able to find meaning in their lives tend to be more receptive to their own condition, have hope, and maintain psychological balance. On the other hand, the elderly who lose the meaning of life have the potential to experience emptiness, loneliness, anxiety, and even a decrease in psychological well-being. Thus, the meaning of life is not only an abstract concept, but also a psychological mechanism that helps the elderly understand their life experiences more fully.

Happiness in the elderly also needs to be understood contextually. In psychological studies, happiness is often associated with life satisfaction, dominance of positive affects, low negative affects, health, and quality of social relationships (Diener et al., 1985) However, in the elderly, happiness is not always realized through material achievements or social status, but is often present in simple forms, such as feeling sufficient, close to family, having adequate health, being able to worship calmly, being accepted by the environment, and not feeling like a burden to others. Therefore, the happiness of the elderly is closer to emotional stability, gratitude, inner peace, and the ability to accept life realistically.

A number of previous studies have examined the meaning of life and happiness in the elderly. (Psikologi & 2016, 2016) researching the meaning of life and the meaning of happiness in the elderly at the Nirwana Puri Samarinda Nursing Home. The research shows that the meaning of life is an important element in helping the elderly find happiness, especially when the elderly have to adapt to changes in the social environment and life in the orphanage. (Studi Antropologi Sosial et al., 2020) through a study of elderly groups in Banyumanik Semarang, it was found that life experiences, family support, cultural values, and acceptance of the past play a role in shaping the concept of elderly happiness. Meanwhile, (Integratif & 2020, 2020) It shows that the happiness of the elderly in the nursing home is influenced by the way the elderly interpret life, social relations,

and acceptance of the condition of the elderly. Other research by (Indriana et al., n.d.) It also shows that religiosity, the existence of a partner, and social well-being are related to the success of the elderly in living old age.

Although previous research has made important contributions, there are still some research gaps. First, some studies place the meaning of life and happiness as two themes that are studied separately, so the relationship between subjective experiences between the two has not been elaborated in depth. Second, some previous studies have been conducted more on the elderly who live in orphanages, while the experiences of the elderly who live with their families or are in the social community still need to be explored further. Third, some studies still emphasize general descriptive aspects, while the psychosocial dynamics that shape the meaning of life and happiness of the elderly, such as family support, spirituality, self-acceptance, loss experiences, and changes in social roles, have not been fully explored through a phenomenological approach. Fourth, in the context of current social changes, the elderly face new challenges, such as changes in family relationship patterns, children's mobility, digitalization of social life, and increasing need for emotional support, so the experience of the meaning of life and happiness of the elderly needs to be reviewed contextually.

Based on this gap, the main problem in this study is how the elderly interpret life and happiness in the face of physical, psychological, social, economic, and spiritual changes in old age. This problem is important because the meaning of life and happiness are two psychological aspects that are closely related to the quality of life of the elderly. If the elderly do not have the space to interpret their lives, then changes in old age can be perceived as loss, burden, or alienation. On the other hand, if the elderly are able to find meaning and source of happiness, then old age can be understood as a phase of life that remains valuable, socially productive, and spiritually meaningful.

The study of the meaning of life and happiness of the elderly is important to be carried out with a phenomenological approach because the experience of the elderly is personal, contextual, and cannot always be explained through numbers. Phenomenology allows researchers to understand the world of elderly experiences as experienced, told, and interpreted by the subject. Through this approach, researchers can explore how the elderly give meaning to their daily lives, how they interpret happiness, and what factors strengthen or weaken both. The phenomenological approach also provides space for the voice of the elderly to be positioned not only as an object of social policy, but as a subject who has experience, reflection, and meaning of life.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of the meaning of life and happiness as two interrelated, rather than separately examined, subjective experiences among elderly individuals who live within family and community environments rather than institutional settings. By adopting a phenomenological lens that attends to the psychosocial dynamics of family support, spirituality, self-acceptance, loss, and changing social roles, and by situating these experiences within the context of contemporary social change, this study extends previous research that has tended to treat these constructs descriptively, separately, or within nursing-home populations alone.

Based on this description, this study aims to explore the meaning of life and happiness in the elderly through phenomenological studies. The focus of the research is directed at the subjective experiences of the elderly in the meaning of life, the sources of perceived happiness, and the psychosocial dynamics that shape both. In terms of research benefits and implications, these are stated separately below. This research is expected to provide theoretical benefits for the development of developmental psychology, positive psychology, and the psychology of the elderly. Practically, the results of this study can be considered for families, communities, health workers, social workers, elderly service institutions, and elderly welfare program managers in designing more humane, contextual, and oriented support to improve the quality of life of the elderly.

METHODS

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This approach was chosen because the main goal of the study is to understand the life experiences of the elderly in depth, not to measure the relationship between variables statistically. Phenomenology places participants' subjective experiences as the main source of knowledge, especially regarding the way they understand the meaning of life and happiness in daily life. In terms of research typology, this study is classified as applied qualitative research, as it is directed at generating a contextual understanding that can inform practical support for the elderly rather than testing a theoretical model. Methodologically, this study follows a descriptive phenomenological orientation in the tradition of Husserl, in which the emphasis is placed on describing the essence of participants' lived experience as narrated in their own words, rather than on the researcher's interpretive reconstruction of underlying meaning characteristic of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology.

Participants and Informant Selection Techniques

The study participants were 10 elderly people aged 60 years and above who were selected using purposive sampling techniques. Inclusion criteria include: (1) at least 60 years old; (2) able to communicate verbally well; (3) willing to share his life experiences; and (4) give approval after obtaining an explanation of the research. Exclusion criteria include severe cognitive impairment or health conditions that do not allow participation in in-depth interviews. The number of participants was determined based on considerations of data depth and adequacy of thematic information.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Participants

Code	Age	Gender	Residency Status	Brief Description
P1	63	Women	With children	Active in religious activities
P2	67	Male	With your partner	Retired and active gardener
P3	70	Women	With children	Babysitting grandchildren
P4	72	Male	With your partner	Environmental figures
P5	65	Women	Alone	Actively participating in the elderly posyandu

Code	Age	Gender	Residency Status	Brief Description
P6	74	Women	With family	Have a history of mild chronic illness
P7	69	Male	With children	Actively worship and socialize
P8	78	Women	With children	Widowed and active in the community
P9	61	Male	With your partner	Still helping the family business
P10	80	Women	With family	Do more activities at home

Source: Data Processed

Data collection techniques

In line with the nature of qualitative inquiry, the primary research instrument in this study was the researcher herself (the human instrument), whose role encompassed building rapport, probing meaning, and interpreting participants' narratives; the semi-structured interview guideline served as a supporting instrument to direct, rather than restrict, this process. Data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interview guidelines were compiled to explore the experiences of the elderly regarding the life journey, changes experienced in old age, sources of happiness, the role of family, spirituality, health, and hope for the future. The interview was conducted face-to-face in a comfortable place for participants with a duration of about 45–75 minutes. With the participant's permission, the interview is recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

Data Validity

The validity of the data is maintained through limited source triangulation, member checking, reflective recording of researchers, and trail audits. Member checking is carried out by confirming a summary of the results of the interview to the participant to ensure that the researcher's interpretation does not deviate from the participant's intention. Researchers also maintain reflexivity by recording initial assumptions, emotional responses, and potential biases during the data collection and analysis process.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out thematically-phenomenologically by adapting the stages of qualitative analysis. The analysis process includes data transcription, repeated reading, identification of meaningful statements, initial code, grouping of codes into themes, theme review, theme naming, and synthesis of the essence of the experience. Principles of thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2006) is used to maintain the regularity of the coding process, while phenomenological orientation is used to maintain the depth of the participant's subjective experience. Concretely, this analysis followed the six phases outlined by (Braun et al., 2006) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of verbatim transcripts; (2) generating initial codes by systematically labelling meaningful statements across the dataset; (3) searching for themes by collating related codes into candidate thematic categories; (4) reviewing themes by checking their coherence against the coded extracts and the dataset as a whole; (5) defining and naming themes by refining the specifics and scope of each theme; and (6) producing the report by weaving the analytic narrative together with participant excerpts and relevant theoretical literature.

Research Ethics

The study pays attention to the principles of voluntary consent, confidentiality of identity, and the right of participants to terminate involvement at any time without consequences. The identity of the participants was disguised using codes P1 to P10. Before the interview, participants received an explanation of the research objectives, interview procedures, data use, and information confidentiality protection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The data analysis yielded four main themes that describe the experience of the elderly in meaning in life and feeling happiness. The four themes are interconnected and form a unified experience that old age is not only a phase of decline, but also a space for reflection, acceptance, and sustainability of contributions.

Table 2. Summary of Themes, Subthemes, and Psychological Meanings

Main Themes	Subtheme	Psychological Interpretation	Example of Data Indicators
Sustainability of the role of the family	Nurturing grandchildren, giving advice, being a role model	Elderly find life useful	Stories about helping children and grandchildren
Happiness as a sense of sufficiency	Grateful, calm, not demanding much	Happiness is understood as inner peace	Expressions of feeling sufficient and calm
Social relations and spirituality	Community, neighbors, worship	Social-spiritual support strengthens psychological resilience	Religious activities and social gatherings
Acceptance of physical limitations	Adjusting activities, accepting mild pain	The elderly do self-reconciliation	Narrative about making peace with a changed body

Source: Data Processed

The Meaning of Life as Sustainability of Roles in the Family

Most of the participants interpreted life through the sustainability of their role in the family. Even though they are no longer actively working formally, the elderly feel that they still have an important function as advisors, caregivers of grandchildren, guardians of family values, and sources of experience for the younger generation. Feelings are still needed to be an important basis in building the meaning of life.

One participant stated: "I am happy that my children and grandchildren are still coming to ask questions. I feel like I'm still useful, not just sitting around waiting for old age." This statement shows that the meaning of life is born from the experience of being recognized and involved. For the elderly, contributions are not always in the form of economics, but can come in the form of presence, attention, prayer, and advice.

Happiness as Sufficiency, Gratitude, and Inner Peace

The second theme shows that the happiness of the elderly is widely understood as a sense of sufficiency. Participants no longer interpreted happiness as a great achievement, but rather as a state of calm mind, basic needs met, good family relationships, and not many conflicts. Happiness becomes a simple, yet profound experience.

One of the participants said, "Happiness is when the heart is calm, you can eat, you can worship, the children get along. It doesn't need to be a lot of luxury." The quote shows a shift in the orientation of happiness from ownership to peace. Gratitude acts as a psychological mechanism that helps the elderly see life more positively despite facing limitations.

Social Relations and Spirituality as a Source of Psychological Resilience

Social relations and spirituality are the main sources of psychological resilience for the elderly. Participants who were still involved in environmental activities, studies, posyandu for the elderly, or community activities showed a more positive narrative about daily life. Social activities provide opportunities to speak, be heard, and feel part of the group.

Spirituality also emerges as a powerful source of meaning. The elderly interpret worship, prayer, and surrender as a way to accept life's journey. In this context, spirituality functions not only as a religious practice, but also as a framework of interpretation that helps the elderly understand loss, illness, and limitations more calmly.

Acceptance of Physical Limitations as Self-Reconciliation

The fourth theme is related to acceptance of body changes. Participants realized that old age brought reduced energy, health complaints, and limited mobility. However, acceptance does not mean passivity. Some participants adjusted activities to the body's capabilities, such as reducing strenuous work, getting more rest, walking in the morning, or choosing light home activities.

Acceptance of physical limitations becomes a process of self-reconciliation. Elderly people who are able to come to terms with body changes tend not to interpret mild illness as a failure in life, but as a natural part of age. With this acceptance, the elderly are better able to maintain happiness and avoid feelings of uselessness.

Discussion

Integration of Findings with Related Theories

This discussion uses the term integration in a qualitative sense, namely the conceptual connection between empirical themes and relevant theoretical buildings, not statistical correlation. Thus, the relationship between the meaning of life and happiness in the elderly is understood through the suitability of participants' experience patterns with the theory of the meaning of life, psychological well-being, subjective well-being, socio-emotional selectivity, and psychosocial development of the elderly.

Sustainability of the Role of the Family

First, the findings regarding the sustainability of roles in the family are strongly correlated with Frankl's theory of the meaning of life and the framework of meaning in life of (Martela et al., 2016) In Frankl's view, humans are still able to find meaning through creative values, experiential

values, and attitudes towards living conditions that cannot always be changed. For the elderly, meaning no longer comes mainly from economic productivity, but from the feeling that they are still needed, able to advise their children and grandchildren, maintain family relationships, and set a moral example. This finding is also in line with the three dimensions of the meaning of life, namely coherence, purpose, and significance.

Happiness as Sufficiency, Gratitude, and Inner Peace

Second, the theme of happiness as a sense of self-sufficiency, gratitude, and inner peace is correlated with Ryff's theory of psychological well-being and the concept of eudaimonic happiness. The happiness of the elderly in this study is not solely in the form of momentary pleasure, but is closer to self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, mastery of the environment, and life goals. Elderly people who are able to accept the past, make peace with limitations, and still see themselves as useful show a form of welfare that is eudaimonic. That is, happiness arises because life is felt to be meaningful, not just because external conditions are pleasing. Therefore, the findings of this study reinforce Ryff's view that psychological well-being encompasses a broader range of positive functions than life satisfaction alone (Rahmati et al., 2023)

Social Relations and Spirituality as a Source of Psychological Resilience

Third, the findings about social relations as a source of happiness correlated with the socioemotional selectivity theory developed (Gerontologist & 2021, 2021) This theory explains that as individuals age and view their life time as more limited, motivational orientation tends to shift from the search for new experiences to relationships that have high emotional value. This can be seen in participants who prefer intimate, peaceful, and meaningful relationships to the expansion of formal social networks. The presence of children, grandchildren, close neighbors, study groups, or peer communities is a source of happiness because these relationships provide a sense of security, value, and not being abandoned. Thus, the happiness of the elderly cannot be separated from the quality of relationships, not just the number of social interactions.

Fourth, the theme of spirituality correlates with meaning-making and religious coping theories. Spirituality helps seniors interpret the experience of loss, illness, and limitations as part of a more calmly acceptable journey of life. In the meaning-making perspective, individuals seek to adapt situational meanings to broader belief systems so that difficult experiences are not seen as life failures, but rather as phases that can be accepted and responded to adaptively. In the context of the elderly Indonesia, spirituality is a source of psychological resilience because it provides an orientation of values, hope, gratitude, and acceptance of the uncertainties of old age (bulletin & 2010, 2010)

Acceptance of Physical Limitations and Meaningful Activities

Fifth, acceptance of physical limitations correlates with Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, especially the ego integrity versus despair stage. Older people who are able to look at the past with acceptance tend to achieve ego integrity, that is, the feeling that the life that has been lived has meaning, even if it is not entirely perfect. On the other hand, when seniors are caught up in regret, loss of role, and feelings of worthlessness, the risk of despair can increase. The findings of this study show that self-acceptance acts as a bridge between the meaning of life and

happiness. The more older the elderly are able to accept body changes and role changes, the greater their chances of experiencing inner peace and life satisfaction (Erikson & Erikson, 2013)

Sixth, findings regarding meaningful activities correlate with activity theory and continuity theory in gerontology studies. Activity theory views that involvement in social, physical, and productive activities can support the life satisfaction of the elderly. Meanwhile, continuity theory emphasizes that the elderly tend to maintain patterns of values, habits, and identities that have been built throughout their lives. In this study, activities such as worship, gardening, taking care of grandchildren, participating in social activities, or helping the family became a form of identity continuity. These activities do not have to be large, but they need to have a personal meaning in order to strengthen a sense of usefulness and happiness (gerontologist & 1961, 1961)

Based on this theoretical integration, the meaning of life and happiness in the elderly can be understood as two mutually reinforcing constructions. The meaning of life provides direction, value, and reason to continue living life positively; Meanwhile, happiness arises when the meaning is experienced through warm relationships, self-acceptance, spirituality, and activities that are in accordance with the capacity of the elderly. Thus, the discussion of this study emphasizes that the happiness of the elderly is not only the result of physical health or material availability, but the result of an interpretive process involving family, community, spiritual values, and acceptance of life's journey.

Positioned against prior research, these findings both affirm and extend earlier work. (Psikologi & 2016, 2016) found that the meaning of life was an important element in helping institutionalised elderly individuals achieve happiness as they adapted to nursing-home life; the present study affirms the centrality of meaning of life to happiness but shows that, among elderly individuals living within families and communities, this meaning is anchored less in adaptation to institutional life and more in the sustainability of family roles. (Studi Antropologi Sosial et al., 2020) reported that life experiences, family support, cultural values, and acceptance of the past shaped the concept of happiness among elderly groups in Banyumanik Semarang; the present findings corroborate the role of family support and acceptance, while further specifying the psychological mechanisms, namely sufficiency, gratitude, and inner peace, through which these factors translate into happiness. Ardhani & Kurniawan (2020) showed that the happiness of the elderly in a nursing home was shaped by how they interpreted life, social relations, and acceptance of their condition; the present study extends this by demonstrating that, outside institutional settings, spirituality operates alongside social relations as a distinct and complementary source of psychological resilience. Taken together, this comparison suggests that the meaning of life and happiness of the elderly are shaped similarly across settings in their reliance on relationships and acceptance, but differ in the specific pathways through which these constructs are enacted depending on whether the elderly live in institutional or family/community contexts.

Table 3. Integration of Research Findings with Related Theories

Key findings	Related theories	Conceptual connectedness
Sustainability of the role of the family	Frankl's Meaning of Life; Consistency, Purpose, Significance	The elderly feel that their lives are valuable when they still have a role, purpose, and real contribution to the family.
A sense of self-sufficiency, gratitude, and peace	Psychological well-being; Ryff; Eudaimonic Well-Being	Happiness arises from self-acceptance, life purpose, positive relationships, and inner peace.
Warm social relationships	Socioemotional selectivity theory	Seniors prioritize emotionally meaningful relationships over superficial relationship expansions.
Spirituality and surrender	Meaning-making; Religious Coping	Spirituality helps the elderly interpret illness, loss, and limitations as part of a meaningful life.
Acceptance of physical limitations	Ego integrity versus despair	Acceptance of the past and the condition of the body supports the integrity of the ego and reduces despair.
Meaningful activities	Activity theory; Continuity Theory	Simple activities that are consistent with old identities reinforce a sense of usefulness and life satisfaction.

Source: Data Processed

Integratively, the table shows that each research theme has a complementary theoretical footing. The theory of the meaning of life explains the source of personal value; Psychological well-being theory explains the quality of positive functioning; The theory of socioemotional selectivity explains changes in relational orientation; the theory of psychosocial development explains the acceptance of life; Meanwhile, the theory of activity and continuity explains the importance of involvement in accordance with the identity of the elderly. The integration of these theories strengthens the argument that the meaning of life is an important foundation for the happiness of the elderly.

The results of the study show that the meaning of life for the elderly is rooted in relational experiences. The elderly feel that their lives are meaningful when they still have warm relationships with their families and the environment. These findings are in line with the idea that the meaning of life includes purpose, coherence, and significance (Pratiwi et al., 2025) In the context of the elderly, life goals are not always related to ambitious future goals, but to the sustainability of social functions, such as giving advice, maintaining family harmony, and being a moral example.

The happiness of the elderly in this study appears as eudaimonic happiness, which is happiness that comes from self-acceptance, positive relationships, realistic independence, and inner growth. Psychological well-being framework (psychology & 1989, 1989) It is relevant to explain that the elderly can remain prosperous when they have self-acceptance, positive

relationships with others, mastery of the environment, and life goals. Thus, happiness is not only understood as a momentary pleasure, but as an inner quality formed through reflection and acceptance of life.

The findings on the importance of social relations are also in line with the global concern on social isolation and loneliness in the elderly. In this study, the elderly who had social and spiritual activities tended to have a more stable narrative of happiness. This shows that an elderly-friendly community not only functions as a space for activities, but also as a psychological infrastructure that maintains a sense of connection.

Spirituality is an important dimension in the experience of the elderly in Indonesia. Through spirituality, the elderly build a more peaceful perspective on age, illness, death, and loss. Spirituality helps the elderly put difficult experiences within the framework of acceptance, so suffering is not always interpreted as the end of happiness. In the context of Indonesian culture that emphasizes family values and religiosity, spirituality can be a source of meaning that complements each other with social support.

Acceptance of physical limitations shows a process of psychological adaptation. Seniors who can adjust expectations to their body conditions tend to be more able to maintain a sense of happiness. These findings are important because senior welfare programs are often too medically oriented, while the experience of the elderly suggests that physical health needs to be combined with emotional, social, and spiritual support. A holistic approach is needed so that the elderly are not only seen as a vulnerable group, but also as individuals who still have the capacity for meaning, wisdom, and social contribution.

Practically, this study confirms the need for family and community-based interventions. Families can provide space for the elderly to continue to take on roles according to their abilities, while communities can provide social activities, health education, spiritual support, and space for intergenerational dialogue. Social policies for the elderly need to be directed at creating an environment that allows the elderly to stay connected, valued, and feel empowered.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the meaning of life and happiness among older adults are shaped by the continuity of family roles, feelings of sufficiency and gratitude, social and spiritual relationships, and acceptance of physical limitations, with happiness being experienced primarily as inner peace rather than material satisfaction. The findings contribute theoretically to positive psychology, developmental psychology, and gerontology by demonstrating that meaning in life and happiness are interconnected constructs best understood through the integration of meaning in life theory, Ryff's psychological well-being, socioemotional selectivity theory, and Erikson's ego integrity versus despair framework within family and community contexts. Practically, the results highlight the need for holistic elderly care involving families, communities, health services, and spiritual support through psychosocial interventions, routine assessment of meaning in life, and intergenerational activities that enable older adults to maintain meaningful social roles. Future research is encouraged to examine diverse demographic and geographic contexts, apply

longitudinal and mixed-method designs, and evaluate interventions based on the themes identified in this study. Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted with caution because the study was limited by purposive sampling with only ten participants, data collection within a single community, and the use of limited triangulation procedures, which may restrict the transferability and generalizability of the findings.

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