

Does Perceiving the Authentic Self Affect the Meaning of Life?

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Abstract. Self-authenticity and the meaning of life are important for an individual's psychological well-being. Studies on the relationship between authenticity and the meaning of life using a quantitative approach have been largely carried out in Western countries, with minimum research being conducted in the Indonesian context. Several studies have found differences in self-authenticity among different social and cultural conditions. The goals of this study was to unveil the influence of perceived authenticity on the meaning of life by controlling for self-esteem and positive affect in Indonesian adults. These control variables were added to see the influence of the two variables more precisely. This study involved 369 adult Indonesians (aged 18 - 64 years old, $M = 32.2$ years). The instruments used were the Authenticity Scale, Multidimensional Existential Meaning Scale, Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Test. Data collection was carried out online, and multilevel regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The findings indicated that, by controlling for self-esteem and positive affect, feeling authentic influenced the person's meaning in life. Perceived authenticity in the 18 - 35 age group was lower than in the 36 - 45 and 46 - 55 age groups. The study also found that the married group perceives themselves as more authentic than the unmarried. The findings of this study can be a basis for future studies on authenticity in Indonesia and help build awareness about the importance of authenticity for Indonesian adults

Keywords: authenticity; meaning in life; perceived authenticity; positive affect; self-esteem

The meaning in life is a basic human need to achieve psychological well-being. Frankl (1959) viewed the meaning in life as a fundamental aspect of an individual's psychological well-being, a view agreed upon by psychologists, such as Maslow (1971), Maddi (1970), and Steger (2018). Meaning in life has continued to develop into an increasingly important topic in psychology, psychotherapy, medicine, and social sciences in recent years (Krok, 2017; Martela & Steger, 2022). It has shown predictive power not only for psychological well-being but also in a broader scope, including health and mortality (Costanza et al., 2019; DeZutter et al., 2013; Krok, 2017).

The meaning of life can be interpreted as the extent to which individuals consider their life experiences to be coherent, purposeful, motivated by valued goals, and important in the world

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(George & Park, 2016; Wilt et al., 2021). George and Park (2016) stated that the meaning of life has three dimensions: comprehension, purpose, and mattering. The comprehension dimension is a comprehension and the sense of coherence about life that the individual leads. Meanwhile, the purpose dimension refers to the presence of a life direction and purpose that is valuable to the individual. Then, mattering is the feeling that the individual's life is significant in the long term.

To achieve psychological well-being and happiness, a person needs to continue to reflect and make attempts to understand and evaluate their experiences and life goals. This process lasts throughout life and plays an important role in one's maturity. Empirically, the meaning in life is a crucial factor for psychological well-being (García-Alandete, 2015; Keyes et al., 2002; Krok, 2017). The meaning in life can help an individual develop a positive attitude towards oneself and others, move independently and be responsible for oneself, organize the environment to suit one's needs, have goals in life, and make efforts for personal growth. In patients with chronic illness, the meaning in life can help improve acceptance and the well-being of the patient (Dezutter et al., 2013). In addition, having the meaning of life can also protect a person from committing suicide, starting from the idea formation to the behavior that leads to suicide (Costanza et al., 2019; Kleiman & Beaver, 2013).

The presence of meaning in life has a stronger impact on adults than on younger populations, such as adolescents. Adolescence is the initiation period for the search for meaning in life (Steger et al., 2008), while the life-meaning crisis (existential crisis) that has a significant impact on self-condition occurs in adulthood. Several studies have shown that the presence of meaning in life impacts psychological well-being, health, and thoughts leading to death in adults from age 18 to elderly (Aftab et al., 2019; Dezutter et al., 2013; Hill & Turiano, 2014; Steger et al., 2008). Suicidal thoughts or urges caused by the absence of meaning in life are also more common in adults, from young adults (Kleiman & Beaver, 2013) to the elderly (Heisel et al., 2015). Therefore, studies related to the meaning of life are more crucial to be carried out in the adult population.

The influencing factors can be divided into two categories, i.e., internal factors and external factors. Internal factors include thinking style (Maddi, 1970; Steger et al., 2008), self-esteem (Steger, 2018), affect (Steger, 2018; Wilt et al., 2021), and personality (Lavigne et al., 2013; Schlegel et al., 2013; Steger, 2018). Meanwhile, external factors include religion or beliefs (Abeyta & Routledge, 2018; Van Tongeren et al., 2013), family ties (Lambert et al., 2010), social relationships (Hicks et al., 2010; Steger, 2018), routines (Heintzelman & King, 2018), and surrounding culture (Yu et al., 2016).

In this study, the source that will be highlighted is the internal factor of personality, because it is closely related to the process of forming the meaning of life. Of the many personality concepts that have developed, the concept of personality that has been widely studied in relation to the meaning of life is the Big Five Traits (Anglim et al., 2020; Lavigne et al., 2013). However, this study chose authentic personality because this personality tendency is quite different from the concept of personality that is more commonly used. Authentic personality does not only highlight certain traits (e.g., extroversion, neuroticism, or openness), but also the alignment of traits, interests, or capabilities with true self tendencies. Authentic personality is when a person's character is in harmony between the true self and the life they consistently live (Rogers, 1961; Wilt et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2008).

The theoretical view related to authentic personality has been studied for a long time by many figures in philosophy (e.g., Socrates, Plato, and Heidegger) and psychology (e.g., Horney, Maslow, and Harter) who believe that authentic personality is essential in finding meaning and achieving psychological well-being (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Sutton, 2020; Wilt et al., 2021). People who have authentic personality have authentic lives, so it is easy for them to feel that their life experiences are coherent and mattering. People who grow up with authentic personalities tend to see life's direction and goals more clearly because they are not busy pretending to always meet the expectations of the people around them. On the other hand, people who are not in harmony with their true selves will feel confused and consider this life difficult and have no clear goals. This confusion can trigger many negative thoughts and feelings, which result in increased anxiety, depression, and a sense of meaninglessness in life. Several empirical studies have shown that being authentic is important for the meaning of life. The more authentic someone feels, the greater their tendency to develop meaning in life (Moisseron-Baudé et al., 2022; Schlegel et al., 2016; Wilt et al., 2021).

One example of a case that illustrates the condition of an individual whose loss of authenticity affects the meaning of life leading to depression was a South Korean musician named Kim Jonghyun from the KPop group SHINee. In his daily life, Jonghyun was known as a cheerful person, easy to get along with, and had many friends (Welle, 2017). However, Jonghyun reportedly experienced high anxiety and hated himself because he often felt he failed to meet the expectations of his fans (Anggraini, 2022). This condition indicates a loss of authenticity or what is called self-alienation (Horney, 1950; Wood et al., 2008). He experienced depression for a long time and felt that his presence was not important or mattering. Tragically, he decided to end his life through suicide (Larasati, 2017).

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded being an authentic person is important in finding meaning in life, and the loss of authenticity can have a negative impact on the individual who experiences it. Conceptually, a person is said to be authentic when there is an alignment between thoughts, attitudes, and feelings in the true self and the visible direct experience (Lutz et al., 2022; Wood et al., 2008). An authentic person is described as someone honest with themselves, continues to explore self-understanding, and strives to consistently align their true self-motivation and important personal values (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Sutton, 2020).

A person's true self is described as their set of unique innate characteristics (e.g., temperament, interests, traits, intentions, and other self-tendencies) that are central to the self and always want to grow into a better one (Horney, 1950; Schlegel et al., 2016). The true self is a subtle drive within and is often not felt because the individual is too dominated by everyday general cognitive awareness that preoccupies their thoughts and feelings. A person's authentic tendencies can also easily fade and be stunted due to the influence of the social environment (Wilt et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2008), such as parenting (Harter, 2002), close relationships, social power, and social or cultural context (Chen, 2018).

Authentic people are described as always reflecting openly, deeply, and objectively (e.g., evaluating themselves as desired and not) to increase awareness and understanding of their true self and trying to maintain congruence between the true self and displayed behaviors (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In contrast, people who behave inauthentically find it difficult to connect with their true

selves. Their lives are driven by social expectations or ideal self-tendencies that are unrealistic for them. Individuals will also tend to experience anxiety and emptiness in their lives because their life experiences are not coherent with themselves (Harter, 2002; Lutz et al., 2022).

Wood et al. (2008) developed three dimensions that describe a person's authenticity: a sense of disconnection from the true self (self-alienation), authentic living, and the tendency to comply with the expectations of others (accepting external influences). This concept was then used by Wood et al. (2008) to describe authenticity through an individual's perception of themselves (perceived authenticity) with psychological measurements. Authenticity is a complex construct and is difficult to measure scientifically because it relates to many aspects of the individual; e.g., honesty, integrity, consistency, and other essential traits (Baumeister, 2019; Hicks et al., 2019; Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2016). Feeling authentic does not always reflect the authentic self, so measuring how authentic an individual feels does not necessarily measure a person's true authenticity (Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2016). Nevertheless, perceived authenticity remains important to study because subjective feelings of authenticity have been shown to play an important role in life satisfaction and individual functioning (Boyratz et al., 2014; Rivera et al., 2019; Sutton, 2020).

The perception of the authentic self is important because humans tend to consider true self-expression as valuable. This tendency makes someone believe that following their true self is an effective way to navigate uncertain situations and bring them closer to a good life. This can reduce stress and negative feelings in the person, thereby contributing to increased life satisfaction (Boyratz et al., 2014; Sutton, 2020). Feeling authentic can also help someone build resilience when facing life's difficulties (Rivera et al., 2019).

As research examining the concept of perceived authenticity has grown, several studies have found that to obtain an accurate picture, self-reported authenticity should be distinguished from variables involving the process of perceiving others, especially self-esteem and positive affect (Lutz et al., 2022; Rivera et al., 2019; Wilt et al., 2021).

Self-esteem is an individual's overall self-evaluation, both positive and negative, or how individuals feel about themselves (MacDonald, 2012). Affect is emotional and can be divided into three derivatives: emotional states, moods, and traits. The difference between the three lies in the intensity and consistency of their occurrence. Emotional states are felt temporarily/episodically and are relatively short, while moods are more stable and lower in intensity than emotional states. If the mood persists, the feeling will change into a trait. Positive affect is the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert (Tran, 2020; Watson & Naragon, 2009). Several empirical studies have consistently shown that the more individuals assess themselves as valuable or feel a strong positive affect, the more they perceive themselves as authentic (Nartova-Bochaver et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2008). This is why previous researchers recommend that studies about perceived authenticity be carried out more precisely by showing that perceived authenticity can be distinguished from self-esteem and positive affect (Lutz et al., 2022; Rivera et al., 2019; Wilt et al., 2021).

The variables of self-esteem and positive affect are also constructs that are inseparable from the meaning of life. Individuals who feel valuable or experience strong positive affect usually have

meaning in life (Steger, 2018; Steger et al., 2006; Wilt et al., 2021). Based on this explanation, it is important to consider self-esteem and positive affect as controlled covariates to see the effect of perceived authenticity, as a single factor, on the meaning of life accurately and precisely.

In previous studies, discussions pertaining to perceived authenticity involving cultural groups from Eastern countries were still relatively few (Slabu et al., 2014). Several cross-cultural studies comparing Western and Eastern cultures have found differences in the perception of the construct of authenticity (Chen & Murphy, 2018; Slabu et al., 2014; Xia & Xu, 2022). This indicates that the concept of perceived authenticity has different characteristics in different cultures, so the findings from the Western culture that have been explained previously may not be necessarily similar with studies in the Eastern culture.

In the Indonesian context, social influence on individuals is dominant in daily life because Indonesian culture prioritizes social relationships (Puspitasari & Masud, 2018). The tendency to behave according to social expectations is considered more important than showing the true self. Culture influences how individuals express themselves in public spaces such as social media (Kwon et al., 2013), so individuals in Indonesia may find it more difficult to feel authentic or may have different authenticity tendencies. In Indonesia, studies about perceived authenticity associated with the meaning of life are relatively few compared to studies in Western countries. For instance, a Google Scholar search (February 7, 2024) with keywords such as 'authenticity and meaning of life' (32 articles) and 'authenticity and meaning in life Indonesia' (9,710 articles) yielded fewer results than searches for 'authenticity and meaning in life United States' (39,400 articles) and 'perceived authenticity and meaning in life United States' (26,900 articles).

An experimental study conducted by Adhandayani and Takwin (2018) found that individuals who have authentic experiences and high self-enhancement are better at predicting their future than those who are not authentic. This suggests that authenticity has a positive impact on individuals in Indonesia. Differences in social and cultural conditions and the lack of studies related to perceived authenticity and the meaning of life in individuals in Indonesia make this study important to conduct.

The research question to be answered was: Is there an influence of perceived authenticity on the meaning of life, by controlling self-esteem and positive affect, in adults in Indonesia? The purpose of this study was to reveal the influence of perceived authenticity on the meaning of life by considering self-esteem and positive affect in Indonesian adults. The results of this study are expected to be the initial basis for research about perceived authenticity and the meaning of life in Indonesia. Additionally, this study is expected to be used by various parties in the clinical field and the wider community to develop better knowledge related to authenticity, meaning of life, and psychological well-being among Indonesian adults.

Methods

Design & Sampling

This study is a non-experimental quantitative study. Data collection was carried out with one contact (cross-sectional study). The research sample consisted of adult individuals aged 18 to 65 years old, who lived in Indonesia, with a minimum of high school education or equivalent. The research sample criteria were determined after the ethical review process and readability tests were conducted. The minimum adult age restriction of 18 years refers to several psychology experts (Arnett, 2014; Santrock, 2011; Steger et al., 2009), and the maximum age restriction of 65 years was related to the online data collection method. Technically, filling out online questionnaires is more difficult for individuals over 65.

This study used a non-probability sampling method with a convenience sampling/accidental sampling technique, which is sampling according to the availability and accessibility of the population. Data collection was carried out online using a Google Form. The results of the GPower calculation show that the total sample required is 119 participants (Linear multiple regression analysis technique: Fixed model, R^2 increase with medium effect size = 0.15, alpha level $\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.95, tested predictors of 3, and total predictors of 3). At the beginning of data collection, this study involved 403 participants. Three participants were eliminated because they did not match the research criteria. Data selection was then conducted to remove outliers in multivariate data using Mahalanobis Distance Analysis, with the criteria of outlier category participants being eliminated at $p < 0.01$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). This analysis resulted in 31 outlier participants being eliminated, leaving 369 participants whose data were analyzed further.

To measure perceived authenticity, the meaning of life, self-esteem, and positive affect, this study used valid and reliable instruments in the Indonesian language. For instruments that go through the Confirmatory Factor Analysis process, the determination of instrument validity uses the fit index criteria: $CFI > 0.90$; $RMSEA < 0.08$; and $SRMR < 0.08$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In item analysis, the determination of valid and proper items has a factor load value criterion of ≥ 0.3 (Field, 2013). Meanwhile, the determination of reliability uses reliable criteria of a Cronbach's α value ≥ 0.6 (Ghozali, 2016), and good item discrimination criteria use the correlation coefficient value in the item validity index ≥ 0.2 (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). The instruments used in this study were as follows:

a. Authenticity Scale

The Authenticity Scale, developed by Wood et al. (2008), consists of 12 items divided into three subscales: authentic life, self-alienation, and acceptance of external influences. This scale was adapted into Indonesian by Febrianti et al. (2023). Each subscale is represented by four items. The scale ranges from 1 (very inappropriate) to 7 (very appropriate). The adaptation to the Indonesian language and culture by Febrianti et al. (2023) showed that the measuring instrument was valid and fit the factor structure of the original version $\chi^2 = 103.930$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = (1181.965/66)$, $CFI = 0.95$, $RMSEA = 0.07$, $CI [0.05; 0.09]$, $SRMR = 0.05$). The factor loads of all items ranged from 0.408 to 0.887, indicating

good item quality. The reliability test value per subscale ($\alpha = 0.640-0.873$) shows that each subscale is reliable, and the overall reliability value of the items is also satisfactory ($\alpha = 0.878$). The correlation coefficient value in the validity index for this item shows good item discrimination power, with values ranging from 0.262 to 0.732.

b. Multidimensional Existential Meaning Scale (MEMS)

The Multidimensional Existential Meaning Scale (MEMS) was constructed by George and Park (2016) to measure the tripartite components of the meaning of life: comprehension, purpose, and mattering. This scale was adapted into Indonesian by Elfida (2021). The instrument consists of 15 items, with each subscale represented by five items. It uses a scale of degrees of agreement from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Psychometric testing of the Indonesian version by Elfida (2021) demonstrated its validity ($\chi^2 = 290.12$, $p < 0.001$, $df = 81$, $CFI = 0.98$, $RMSEA = 0.077$, $SRMR = 0.042$) and reliability (composite reliability = 0.846-0.911, $\alpha = 0.831-0.920$). The factor loading test results showed high item factor loadings, all above 0.6, indicating that this instrument is valid and reliable for use.

c. Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)

In this measurement, participants respond to 10 items of the positive affect subscale of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988) on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Seldom) to 5 (Almost all the time). Scores on this scale have shown reliability and validity for assessing affective states across time frames in many studies (Tran, 2020). The scoring technique used is to add up the 10 positive affect items. The total score can be interpreted as the higher the score, the more it indicates that the individual has felt a positive affect recently or during the past week. In this study, the measuring instrument used was the Indonesian version of PANAS after its measurement was evaluated by Akhtar (2019). The results of the PANAS Indonesian Language evaluation test by Akhtar (2019) showed valid and reliable results (positive affect dimension $\alpha = 0.861$; and the negative affect dimension $\alpha = 0.853$). All items also have a fairly high factor loading (0.469-0.794).

d. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Test (RSET)

Self-esteem measurement using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Test (RSET) from Rosenberg (1965) has been widely accepted to measure self-esteem (Steger et al., 2006). This measuring instrument consists of 10 items with a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). RSET has shown reliability and validity in a large number of studies (Steger et al., 2006; Wilt et al., 2021). The scoring technique on this instrument is by adding up the scores of all items. The higher the total score, the higher a person's self-esteem, and vice versa. The Indonesian RSET test with Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted by Maroqi (2019). The results were interpreted as valid for measuring self-esteem using seven items. The factor loading values of the items are between 0.30-0.74. The reliability test using Cronbach's α also showed satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = 0.833$) with a coefficient value in the item validity index between 0.497-0.605 (Febrianti et al., 2023), which shows that this instrument is valid and reliable for use in measuring self-esteem.

Demographic data analysis using descriptive statistical analysis and comparison tests was performed on JASP version 0.16.4.0. Meanwhile, for the analysis of the influence of authenticity and meaning of life by controlling the covariate variables of positive affect and self-esteem, hierarchical regression analysis was used. The analysis process used the SPSS version 25 application.

Result

Demographic Characteristics Overview

Of the 369 participants involved, there were more women (55.8%) than their male counterparts (44.2%). Participants were between 18 and 64 years old, with an average age of 32.2 years ($SD = 8.5$). Most participants had a bachelor's degree or equivalent (66.7%), with education levels ranging from high school to doctoral degrees. Participants in this study were predominantly employed in the private and government sectors (79.7%). There were more married participants (56.1%) than unmarried (42%) and divorced ones (1.9%). In terms of ethnic origin, participants in this study came from various tribes or ethnicities in Indonesia, dominated by the Javanese (35.2%). Regarding their domiciles, the majority of participants lived in West Java Province (37.7%), with participants' domiciles spread across 24 provinces in Indonesia.

The Influence of Perceived Authenticity on the Dimension of Meaning of Life by Controlling Self-Esteem and Positive Affect

Table 1

Multilevel Regression of the Influence of Perceived Authenticity on the Meaning of Life by Controlling for Self-Esteem and Positive Affect

Dependent Variable	Step	Independent Variable	B	t	F	R ²	Adj R ²	R ² Change	F Change
Comprehension	1	Self-Esteem	0.145	8.519***	92.39***	0.335	0.332		
		Positive Affect	0.036	5.191***					
	2	Perceived authenticity	0.445	7.198***	87.42***	0.418	0.413	0.083	51.817***
		Self-Esteem	0.096	5.526***					
Purpose	1	Self-Esteem	0.093	5.931***	68.27***	0.272	0.268		
		Positive Affect	0.039	5.975***					
	2	Perceived authenticity	0.257	4.333***	53.98***	0.307	0.302	0.036	18.777***
		Self-Esteem	0.064	3.879***					
Mattering	1	Self-Esteem	0.173	8.385***	93.45***	0.338	0.334		
		Positive Affect	0.046	5.434***					
	2	Perceived authenticity	0.309	3.924***	69.88***	0.365	0.360	0.027	15.401***
		Self-Esteem							

Table 1 (Continued)*Multilevel Regression of the Influence of Perceived Authenticity on the Meaning of Life by Controlling for Self-Esteem and Positive Affect*

Dependent Variable	Step	Independent Variable	B	t	F	R ²	Adj R ²	R ² Change	F Change
		Self-Esteem	0.139	6.315***					
		Positive Affect	0.037	4.289***					

Note: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$

The results of the multilevel regression analysis can be seen in Table 1. In steps 1 and 2, the ANOVA results show that both perceived authenticity, as well as the covariates self-esteem and positive affect in each step, can predict the meaning of life across three dimensions ($F(3,365) = 53.98-93.45$, $p < 0.001$) together. The covariates were entered in step 1 for all analyses with the dependent variables of comprehension, purpose, and mattering. The results show that self-esteem and positive affect explain 33.5% of the comprehension dimension, 27.2% of the purpose dimension, and 33.8% of the mattering dimension. In step 2, the variable of perceived authenticity was entered, and there was an increase in the R^2 value or total variance explained. When statistically controlling for self-esteem and positive affect, in the dependent variable model, the comprehension dimension had a value of R^2 Change = 0.083, the purpose dimension had R^2 Change = 0.036, and the mattering dimension showed R^2 Change = 0.027. These results mean that perceived authenticity significantly contributes to explaining the meaning of life variables: the comprehension dimension by 8.3%, the purpose dimension by 3.6%, and the mattering dimension by 2.7%. These results also show that perceived authenticity makes a unique contribution to the three dimensions of the meaning of life: comprehension ($B = 0.445$, $p < 0.001$), the purpose dimension ($B = 0.257$, $p < 0.001$), and the mattering dimension ($B = 0.309$, $p < 0.001$). The B value is interpreted as every one-point increase in the perceived authenticity score will be followed by an increase of 0.445 in the comprehension dimension, 0.257 in the purpose dimension, and 0.309 in the mattering dimension. All B values are positive, indicating that perceived authenticity positively influences the meaning of life.

Based on the findings above, the test results indicate that the research hypothesis can be accepted. It is proven that perceived authenticity is a predictor of the meaning of life in Indonesian adults when controlling for self-esteem and positive affect. Based on finding interpretation, regardless of the condition of the individual's self-esteem and positive affect, the tendency to feel authentic affects the meaning of a person's life, including a comprehension of their life experiences, valuable goals they are fighting for, and the sense of significance in the world.

Other Findings Related to Perceived Authenticity

This section describes perceived authenticity based on basic demographic characteristics, i.e., gender, age, education, and marital status. This analysis was conducted to enrich the findings related to perceived authenticity and to see its tendency in different demographic characteristic groups.

The non-parametric analysis techniques used were Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis with

Dunn's Post Hoc because the data did not meet the normality requirements (Goss-Sampson, 2019). Based on the analysis, there was no significant difference between men and women ($U = 18352.5$, $p = 0.124$) and people of different education levels ($H = 7.39$, $p = 0.193$) when it comes to perceived authenticity. These findings suggest that the gender and education of the participants tend not to affect their view of their own authenticity.

When viewed from age, this study found a significant difference in perceived authenticity ($H = 27.15$, $p < 0.001$) among age groups. The 18-35 age group showed a significantly lower mean rank of perceived authenticity than the 36-45 age group ($p < 0.001$) and the 46-55 age group ($p < 0.001$). These results suggest that age tends to affect participants' view of their own authenticity, with participants aged 18-35 viewing themselves as less authentic than older participants (aged 36-45 and 46-55).

When viewed based on marital status, the analysis found significant differences in participant groups based on marital status ($H = 9.26$, $p < 0.05$). The married group had a significantly higher mean rank than unmarried participants ($p < 0.05$). The findings indicate that marital status influences participants' perceptions of their authentic selves, with married participants feeling more authentic than unmarried participants.

Discussion

The study found that perceived authenticity uniquely impacts an individual's meaning of life. This means that feeling authentic is beneficial for the development of the meaning of life, regardless of the individual's self-esteem and positive affect. The findings of this study more specifically found that perceived authenticity can help individuals develop a comprehension and feelings connected to their life experiences. Perceived authenticity is also useful for achieving goals that are valuable to the individual and help increase the sense of importance. Conversely, self-alienation leads to difficulty in understanding one's life experiences, confusion about the direction of life, and thoughts that one's presence has no significant impact on the world. Although this study reveals that perceived authenticity as assessed by experts does not necessarily describe the authenticity of the individual as a whole (Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019; Rivera et al., 2019), these findings can strengthen the conceptual view of experts that authenticity also determines the meaning of an individual's life (Horney, 1950; Jung, 1983).

In the cultural context, this study confirms the findings of perceived authenticity and meaning in life from Western countries, where perceived authenticity has been found to be a predictor of meaning in life (Moisseron-Baudé et al., 2022; Schlegel et al., 2016; Wilt et al., 2021). The differences in perceived authenticity between Western and Eastern cultures (Chen & Murphy, 2018; Slabu et al., 2014; Xia & Xu, 2022) do not alter the findings of this study in comparison to studies the Western context when examining the impact of this variable on life's meaning. This study captures that perceived authenticity occurs in Indonesian individuals, but further research is needed to explore the similarities and differences in the concept of perceived authenticity between Indonesian culture and others.

To increase understanding regarding perceived authenticity, this study conducted an analysis

based on demographic data, i.e., gender, age, education level, and marital status. From this analysis, two prominent findings emerged related to age and marital status. The results showed that the 18-35 age group felt the least authentic compared to older groups. This finding aligns with previous authenticity studies (Ito et al., 2009; Nartova-Bochaver et al., 2021).

When viewed based on generational differences, the young adult group aged 18-35 in this study grew up in the era of globalization and significant digital development across various sectors (Arnett, 2014; Dalessandro, 2018). Individuals of this age, while searching and developing themselves, are exposed to more choices of identities and cultures (Dalessandro, 2018) than older individuals. Being exposed to more options, changes, and different conditions without rooted principles and values makes individuals at that age tend to feel unstable and confused about themselves (Arnett, 2014).

In the Indonesian context, prioritizing social relationships is highly respected (Matsumoto & Juang, 2013; Puspitasari & Masud, 2018), adding to the difficulty for young individuals to feel authentic because they are pressured to meet social expectations. The sense of inauthenticity makes it challenging for them to develop the meaning of life, so this age group should receive attention to increasing authenticity for a better meaning of life.

Additionally, this study found that married participants felt more authentic than those who were not married. This finding might be caused by differences in individual orientations in seeing themselves when they are not married and when they are married (Swann, 2012; Swann et al., 1994). Unmarried people tend to be oriented towards positive assessments that benefit themselves, making them more motivated to appear good and fulfill others' wishes, which makes it difficult for them to feel authentic. Meanwhile, married people tend to see themselves as being in a committed relationship without a time limit and must focus on helping each other achieve mutual goals in the household. In the process of achieving these shared goals, married individuals prefer self-verifying based on their true selves rather than seeking positive assessments from partners or others, making them tend to present themselves more authentically (Swann, 2012; Swann et al., 1994). These interesting additional findings can be developed into further studies in the future.

Conclusion

The findings of this study supported the researcher's hypothesis: perceived authenticity predicts the meaning of life in adult individuals in Indonesia after controlling for self-esteem and positive affect. Additionally, the analysis of perceived authenticity with participant characteristics shows that age and marital status can influence how a person perceives their authenticity. The findings in this study can serve as a basis for knowledge to develop counseling interventions to help individuals achieve their psychological well-being. Furthermore, the results of this study can be disseminated to increase awareness of the importance of authenticity and the meaning of life for individuals. The initial steps individuals can take to increase authenticity are practicing open, deep, and objective self-reflection and aligning true self-tendencies with daily behaviors.

Recommendation

There are some limitations of this study. First, this study did not apply random sampling, resulting in an uneven proportion of sample representation, especially in age characteristics, which are more dominated by early adults (78% for ages 18-35) and very minimal in older adults (2.2% for ages 55-65). Future studies should strive for a more even sample representation. Second, this study did not examine the effect of perceived authenticity on the meaning of life in the same individual at different times (within-person level). Future studies should apply a within-person level design to see whether the tendency is situational (state) or a tendency that persists in the individual (trait). Further studies can also explore perceived authenticity in the Indonesian context with variations in research design to enrich findings related to authenticity and explore other variables, e.g., subjective life satisfaction and psychological well-being. This can enrich findings related to these variables in the Indonesian context.

Declaration

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Conflict of Interest

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