



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NURSES' WAY OF EXPRESSING THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF LIFE AND THEIR BELIEF IN THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SUFFERING

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Abstract: This study aims to present the relationship among nurses' expressions of the meaning and purpose of life and their belief in the transformative power of suffering. 446 nurses working in two separate hospitals participated in the study. In the data collection, the Transformative Power of Suffering Scale and the Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale were employed. The study concluded that the nurses working in a city hospital, married, and working in the profession for four years or more, find life more meaningful. There was no statistical difference between the transformative power of suffering and demographic variables. A moderate positive relationship between the Meaning of Life scale sub-dimension and the Transformative Power of Suffering Scale and a weak relationship in the negative direction with the meaninglessness of life sub-dimension was discovered. It can be concluded that all of the nurses believe that pain has a transformative power and that the institution they work in and their working time are effective in their outlook on life.


Keywords: Nurse, Meaning of life, Purpose of life, Transformative power of suffering, Hospital, Life


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1. Introduction

Human beings have made sense of the world they live in, the universe, and life surrounding them throughout life. The concept of "Meaning" is an intelligent expression that this life is worth living (Şentürk and Yakut, 2014). The term meaning is explained as the cognitive and emotional content that a shape, sign, expression, theory carries, and qualifies (Demir and Acar, 1997). The concept of meaning can vary from person to person, from time to time and according to the region of residence. Hence, many authors have expressed the meaning in many ways (Latetan, 1990; Frankl, 2014; Bahadır, 2000). The concept of meaning primarily expresses the positive answers that can be given when faced with the questions whether life is worth living, whether life is lived in a way that is proper for human dignity as a perfect being, and whether a person fulfills what is required of him (Bahadır, 2000).

The search for meaning brings together the paths people follow towards their goals and objectives. Simultaneously, the search for meaning is dynamic; it is a process that includes the efforts to discover, protect, and recreate essential goals and values (Pargament, 2005). Human beings seek to make sense of their life within the

experiences they have gained during their lives. When we look at the history of defining the meaning of life by human beings, it is observed that it emerged in the first days of childhood. The pursuit is a manual and challenging one for the babies. After five, we observe a consistent and stable example in their behavior and a unique style in addressing problems and assignments. The child interprets the events that occur in his/her life before attributing it to himself/herself, and this interpretation plays an active role it imposes on life (Aldler, 2014).

The desire to have a general understanding system that can recognize human life events is one of the basic human needs (Akıncı, 2005). Human beings contemplate the purpose of their existence and desire to reach adequate information and comments. Besides, human beings are after the values and principles that will guide their life (Akıncı 2005). Nietzsche's quote also sums up the meaning and purpose of life: "One who has a reason to live can endure in almost any way." (Tanrıverdi and Ulu, 2018). If there is no meaning in the individual's life, the individual may be prone to end his life (Frankl, 1998). Hence, the meaning and purpose of life are significant to one's life. However, the inability to fully satisfy the



meaning and purpose of life, which is the psychosocial requirement of humans, carries the risk of facing many permanent and destructive problems for the person (Şentürk and Yakut, 2014). While positive changes are seen in the person who appreciates the meaning and purpose of life or has reached an answer, if there is no meaning and purpose of life, negative feelings and behaviors can be observed in the individual. Herein, the person may be adversely affected or will become more durable and more robust in the face of events that occur in one's life. In the literature, this situation emerges as the transformative power of suffering.

The concept of the transformative power of suffering is the belief that individuals will undergo a positive transformation and change in the face of the suffering they encounter in their lives (Uğurluoğlu et al., 2018). In other words, the transformative power of suffering is the belief that the individual will come out of this negative situation stronger despite the difficulties they face. While the difficulties that occur in some people's lives strengthen them and make them question the meaning of life better, some people become even more powerless in similar situations. Consequently, the meaning of life for these people also loses its significance.

Throughout one's life, a person faces many stressful circumstances that make life meaningless. Some occupational groups encounter these stressful situations more. Nursing is one of these professions. Nurses are exposed to many stress factors such as intense workload, stress, the obligation to provide emotional support, care for severe and fatal patients, disturbed sleep patterns, and a high number of shifts (Canbaz 2005; Arıkan 2006). Nevertheless, problems in additional professional relationships, dealing with patients challenging to diagnose and treat, insufficient hospital resources, dealing with patients' relatives, economic concerns and not being able to devote enough time to themselves and their private life while trying to cope with these problems cause burnout and despair in nurses (Canbaz 2005; Arıkan 2006; Şahin 2008). These conditions alter nurses' views on the meaning and purpose of life. Nursing philosophy addresses the meaning in human life, supporting the importance of helping patients and their families cope with illness and suffering and find meaning from these experiences. However, finding meaning in life is also a subjective and unique process for the individual. Nurses can contribute to the meaning-making process through empathic listening and questioning (Starck, 2008; Reed, 2008). Therefore, nursing care and nurse-patient interaction can act as sources of meaning enhancement by promoting positive emotions and moods. This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between the way nurses, who are in close contact with patients and witnessing their suffering, express the meaning and purpose of life and the transformative power of suffering.

1.1. Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between the transformative power of suffering between nurses' expressions of meaning and purpose in life?
2. Is there a statistical difference between demographic variables and the meaning and purpose of life?
3. Is there a statistical difference between the demographic variables, the meaninglessness of life, and the lack of purpose?
4. Is there a statistical difference between demographic variables and the transformative power of suffering?

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Research Objective

This study aims to examine the relationship between nurses' expressions of the meaning and purpose of life with the transformative power of suffering.

2.2. Population and Sample

For this descriptive study, the study population consists of 446 nurses working in Yozgat Bozok University Research and Practice Hospital (n=200) and Yozgat City Hospital (n=246). In the research, it was planned to reach the whole population instead of choosing samples.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

In the research, the "Transformative Power of Suffering Scale (TPSS)", "The Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale (MPLS)" were used as data collection tools.

The Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale (MPLS): Scale (MPLS)" consisting of 17 expressions developed by Aydın et al. (2015), were used as data collection tools. The MPLS consists of two subscales: (1) the meaning and purpose of life (MPL) and (2) the lack of meaning and purpose in life (LMPL). The items are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ("1 = Strongly Disagree" to "5 = Strongly Agree"). The total score ranges from 17-85, with higher scores indicating more meaning and purpose in life. The MPLS has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 (Aydın et al., 2015).

Transformative Power of Suffering Scale (TPSS): In the research, the "Transformative Power of Suffering Scale (TPSS)" consisting of five expressions developed by Joshalloo (2014) (cronbach alfa=0.84) and adapted into Turkish by Dinçer et al. (2015) and (cronbach alfa=0.69-0.73). The lowest score that can be obtained from the Transformative Power of Suffering Scale is 5, and the highest score is 35.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

SPSS 21.0 (The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences-PC Version 21.0) package program was used for the statistical analysis of the data. Number (n), percentage (%), mean and standard deviation (SD) were used as descriptive statistical methods. The compatibility of the data for normal distribution was evaluated using the Shapiro-Wilk test and QQ graphics. The t-test was used to compare two independent groups according to the distribution characteristics of the data.

3. Results

The distribution of the nurses participating in the study according to their socio-demographic data is given in Table 1. When the descriptive characteristics given in Table 1 are examined, it is observed that 52.7% of the nurses are at the ages of 19-26, 72.4% are female, and 53.1% are single. In the study, 44.8% of the nurses work in the university hospital and 55.2% in the city hospital. It was discovered that 65.2% of the participants had a bachelor's degree and above, and 50.2% had been working for 1-3 years. It was reported that 69.1% of the participants did not experience losing a first-degree relative, and 30.9% lost a first-degree relative (Table 1). Table 2 shows distribution of scores for Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale and sub-dimensions. Nurses'

Meaning and Purpose of Life score was determined to be minimum 13, maximum 55, and Meaninglessness of Life and the Lack of Purpose score as minimum 6 and maximum 30 (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the distribution of TPSS scores. When we evaluate the averages of the expressions of the transformative power of Suffering, they believe that Suffering has a transformative power above the medium level. The expression with the highest average was found to be "If suffering is faced with patience and gratitude, it turns into happiness (4.95)". The lowest average expression is "Sadness can become a transcendent state that has some beneficial aspects or brings the person to a higher level of perfection and happiness (4.67)".

Table 1. According to sociodemographic variables transformative power of suffering scale and distribution of meaning and purpose of life scale scores ($\bar{X} \pm SD$)

Variables	n (%)	Meaning and purpose of life	The meaninglessness of life and the lack of purpose	Total scale score	Transformative power of suffering scale
Age					
19-26 age	235 (52.7)	41.98±7.14	14.77±5.00	56.76±5.95	4.82±1.23
27 years and older	211 (47.3)	42.50±7.52	15.22±4.97	57.72±6.75	4.73±1.28
Test*		-0.741	-0.938	-1.594	0.759
P value		0.459	0.349	0.112	0.448
Gender					
Female	323 (72.4)	42.33±7.15	14.91±4.88	57.24±6.52	4.80±1.25
Male	123 (27.6)	41.95±7.76	15.19±5.27	57.14±5.90	4.72±1.26
Test*		0.497	-0.538	0.150	0.630
P value		0.619	0.591	0.881	0.529
Institution of employment					
University Hospital	200 (44.8)	41.20±7.87	14.88±4.89	56.09±6.73	4.74±1.17
City hospital	246 (55.2)	43.06±6.73	15.07±5.07	58.13±5.88	4.82±1.32
Test*		-2.686	-0.396	-3.424	-0.682
P value		0.007	0.693	0.001	0.495
Marital Status					
Married	209 (46.9)	43.21±7.10	14.51±5.22	57.72±6.10	4.82±1.29
Single	237 (53.1)	41.36±7.41	15.40±4.74	56.77±6.55	4.75±1.22
Test*		2.685	-1.901	1.586	0.566
P value		0.008	0.058	0.113	0.572
Have children					
Yes	157 (35.2)	42.95±7.47	14.89±5.04	57.84±6.83	4.85±1.25
No	289 (64.8)	41.83±7.21	15.04±4.96	56.87±6.06	4.75±1.25
Test*		-1.542	0.302	-1.539	-0.818
P value		0.124	0.762	0.125	0.414
Education level					
High school - associate degree	155 (34.8)	42.30±7.70	15.21±5.06	57.51±7.47	4.94±1.25
Undergraduate and graduate	291 (65.2)	42.19±7.12	14.86±4.95	57.06±5.67	4.70±1.25
Test		0.152	0.692	0.718	1.899
P value		0.879	0.489	0.473	0.058
Working year					
1-3 year	224 (50.2)	41.93±7.54	14.57±4.90	56.51±6.30	4.84±1.24
4 years and above	222 (49.8)	42.52±7.09	15.40±5.05	57.93±6.34	4.73±1.26
Test*		-0.850	-1.759	-2.369	0.912
P value		0.396	0.079	0.018	0.362
Losing a first degree relative					
Yes	138 (30.9)	41.31±7.57	15.08±4.99	56.40±7.20	4.64±1.25
No	308 (69.1)	42.63±7.18	14.94±4.99	57.58±5.91	4.85±1.25
Test*		-1.765	0.278	-1.815	-1.589
P value		0.078	0.781	0.070	0.113

Table 2. Distribution of scores for Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale and sub-dimensions

Meaning and purpose of life scale and sub-dimensions	n	Min	Max	\bar{X}	SD
Meaning and purpose of life	446	13	55	42.23	7.32
The meaninglessness of life and the lack of purpose	446	6	30	14.98	4.99
Total scale score	446	23	77	57.21	6.35

Table 3. Distribution of the scores of the items of the Transformative Power of Suffering Scale

Items	n	Min	Max	\bar{X}	SD
1. Sometimes sadness and suffering can lead us to happiness.	446	1	7	4.72	1.63
2. Sadness can be a transcendent state with some benefits for one's ultimate perfection and happiness.	446	1	7	4.67	1.46
3. It is necessary to go through sadness, hardship, and misfortune to achieve happiness	446	1	7	4.88	1.56
4. Without sadness and suffering one cannot become perfect.	446	1	7	4.69	1.67
5. If suffering is taken with patience and gratitude, it gets converted to happiness.	446	1	7	4.95	1.66
Total scale score	446	1	7	4.78	1.25

According to sociodemographic variables Transformative Power of Suffering Scale and Distribution of Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale Scores is shown in Table 1. There was no statistical difference according to age, gender, education level, having children, and the experience of losing a first-degree relative in terms of the meaning of life, the meaninglessness of life, total MPLS and TPSS score averages ($P>0.05$).

When the table was examined, it was discovered that there was a significant relationship between the meaning of life sub-dimension and the total score of MPLS ($P<0.05$) with the institution they worked, and the score of city hospital employees (43.06 ± 6.73) was higher than the scores of the university hospital workers (41.20 ± 7.87).

There was no statistically significant difference between the marital status and MPLS total scale score, the meaninglessness of life sub-dimension, and the TPSS score ($P>0.05$) in the study. In contrast, a significant relationship was found between the MPLS meaning of life sub-dimension. It was discovered that married people found life more meaningful than single ones ($P<0.05$).

When we look at the meaning of life, the meaninglessness of life, the total scale score, and the transformative power of suffering in the working year variable, a statistical difference was observed only in the total score scale score ($P<0.05$).

The relationships between the sub-dimensions of the meaning and purpose of life scale and the scale of the transformative power of suffering are given in Table 4. While there was a weak positive relationship between the transformative power of suffering in the meaning and purpose of life sub-dimensions, a moderate positive relationship was observed between the meaning of life sub-dimension of the scale and the transformative power of suffering, and a weak relationship on the contrary direction with the meaninglessness of life sub-dimension ($P<0.05$).

Table 4. The relationship between TPSS and MPLS

Scales	TPSS	
	r*	P
Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale (MPLS)	Total scale score	0.279 <0.001
	Meaning and purpose of life	0.419 <0.001
	The meaninglessness of life and the lack of purpose	-0.232 <0.001

*Pearson correlation analysis, TPSS= transformative power of suffering scale.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In the study, the effect of nurses' expressions of the meaning and purpose of life on the transformative power of suffering was examined. In the study conducted by Kızılkaya and Kalgı (2021) with different occupational groups, the total scores of the nurses' meaning and purpose of life scale were found to be 67.72 ± 8.68 . This total score is higher than the values obtained in this study. There was no statistically significant difference between the other occupational groups (teachers, police, religious officials and academics) in the study group of Kızılkaya and Kalgı (2021) and the nursing profession group. The limitation of this study is that there is no comparison with different occupational groups in this study.

The meaning given to life by individuals can be influenced by several factors such as age, gender, position in society, education. In this study, it was discovered that female nurses had higher scores than men in the meaning of life scale sub-dimension. Still, this difference was not statistically significant. In the literature, there are various results in the studies conducted to determine the meaning of life. Öztürk's (2018) study discovered that women found life more meaningful than men, similar to the results of this study, but there was no statistical difference. In Yılmaz (2018)

study conducted with people who will perform Umrah worship, no statistically significant difference was found between the gender variable and the meaning and purpose of life. In a study conducted by Asiloğulları (2020) and Tanriverdi and Ulu (2018) with high school students, no statistical difference was found between the gender variable and the meaning and purpose of life. In Aydın (2017) study on students, it was seen that women found life more meaningful than men, and a statistically significant difference was noticed. In Karşlı (2020) study with university students, the total scores of the meaning and purpose of life scale were found to be statistically significantly higher in women than in men. In the study of Ünlü et al. (2021) on sports science students, no statistically significant difference was found in terms of gender. In the study of Kaya et al. (2021) with 1264 people aged 18-65, no statistically significant difference was found between gender and MPLS scale total score.

When looking at the meaning and purpose of the age variable in the study, it was concluded that nurses over the age of 27 found life more meaningful than nurses aged 19-26. However, no statistical difference was found. In Öztürk (2018) study, it was observed that people under the age of 25 had lower scores of meaning and purpose in life than those who were 25 years and older. Yet, it was concluded that the meaning and purpose of life scores did not reveal a statistically significant difference. In the study conducted by Kaya et al. (2021) in the population between the ages of 18-65, a statistically significant difference was found between age and the total score of the MPLS scale. In the study, it was stated that the MLPS scale total score increased with increasing age. In the study of Ünlü et al. (2021) similar to our study, no statistically significant difference was found in terms of age, MLPS and its sub-dimensions.

In the study, it was concluded that married nurses find life more meaningful than single nurses. In hospitals, single nurses usually work at night shifts. The number of nurses working in the night shift is less than the number of nurses working in the day shift. This circumstance causes single nurses to wear in terms of physically and psychologically more. Besides, it is thought that emotional bonds and responsibilities towards spouses and children can make life more meaningful in married individuals. Contrary to this study, according to Soyulu (2016) study conducted with 127 female individuals between the ages of 40-65 who were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016, it was concluded that the marital status variable was not statistically different in the meaning and purpose of life. In the study conducted by Yılmaz (2018) with the people who will perform Umrah worship in 2018, it was concluded that the life meaning scores of married people were significantly higher than singles. In the study conducted by Kaya et al. (2021) the MLPS total score of the married group was found to be statistically significantly higher in married people (65.13 ± 9.78) than in singles.

In the study, it was discovered that nurses who worked

for more than four years had higher MPLS total scores, which was statistically significant. This can be explained by the fact that nurses promote to a managerial position as their experience increases. Also, some nurses do not have the chance to promote, and their burnout levels increase. Besides these, the cases witnessed throughout the study may have caused nurses to think more about the meaning and purpose of life.

In our study, no statistically significant difference was found between the change in the education level of nurses and their scale scores, but in the study of Kaya et al. (2021) there was a statistically significant difference between education levels. This difference may be due to the fact that some of the individuals in the group that Kaya et al. worked with had not completed their high school education.

The working conditions of the city hospital and the university hospital in the study differ from each other. It can be assumed that the number of staff of the city hospital being higher, their wage payments being better, and their working in a permanent position also affects the nurses' perspective on the meaning of life. A person may encounter many negative situations in his life, where he questions the meaning of life. The meaning people attribute to life can transform these negativities they live into power. Apart from stressful situations in their lives, nurses also witness incidents that patients and their relatives undergo. In the study, it is perceived that nurses' beliefs that suffering is transformative power are above the middle level. In a study conducted by Bolat et al. (2020) in a group that included healthcare professionals and different occupational groups, the total score of the transformative power of pain scale was found to be 3.98 ± 1.01 . In the study of Aksu et al. (2022) with nurses, it was found that the transformative power of pain scale did not have a statistically significant relationship with the variables of gender, marital status, education level and having children. These results are similar to the results obtained in this study.

In the research, one of the TPSS items, "If suffering is faced with patience and gratitude, it turns into happiness (4.95)" is the statement with the highest score (4.95). Similar to our study, in the study conducted by Uğurluoğlu et al. (2018) on individuals living in Isparta in 2018, it is observed that the highest score is from the same expression (4.41). In the study conducted by İzgüden and Erdem (2017), it is observed that the expressions of the transformative power of suffering are lower. Besides, a moderately positive significant relationship was found between the MPLS, the meaning of life sub-dimension, and the transformative power of suffering. Nurses who find life meaningful believe that suffering has more transformative power than nurses who think life is meaningless.

In the study, when the transformative power of suffering was examined in terms of the participants' demographic variables, there was no statistically significant difference. In the study conducted by İzgüden and Erdem (2017) on

hospital staff in 2017, no significant difference was found between demographic variables.

The meaning and purpose of life are one of the issues that have been discussed since human existence. This study attempted to reveal the relationship between suffering and transformative ways of expressing the meaning and purpose of life of nurses who face various patient groups and patient relatives. Considering whether there is a statistical difference between the demographic variables and the meaning and purpose of life and the transformative power of suffering, a statistical difference has been discovered between the institution variable and the meaning of life dimension. The marital status variable also differed statistically with the meaning of life dimension. Married nurses find life more meaningful than single nurses. It may be since marriage imposes different responsibilities and goals. Another reason may be that single nurses are assigned busier days, while the shift days are arranged. Working intensity can be effective in terms of the meaning single nurses attribute to life.

A statistically significant difference was seen in the working year variable in terms of the demographic variables of the meaning and purpose of life total scale scores. Nurses with a working year of four or more find life more meaningful than nurses with a working year of 1-3 years. The reason can be due to the cases witnessed throughout the study, causing nurses to think more about the meaning and purpose of life. In the correlation analysis conducted for the relationship between nurses' expressions of meaning and purpose of life with the transformative power of suffering, a weak positive relationship was observed between the transformative power of suffering and the meaning and purpose. While there is a weak relationship between the meaning and purpose of life dimension, one of the sub-dimensions of the scale, and the transformative power of suffering, there is a very weak negative relationship with the meaninglessness of life sub-dimension.

Author Contributions

R.Ç. (25%), D.Y.G. (25%), S.Ç (25%) and D.E. (25%) design of study. R.Ç. (25%), D.Y.G. (25%), S.Ç (25%) and D.E. (25%) data acquisition and analysis. R.Ç. (25%), D.Y.G. (25%), S.Ç (25%) and D.E. (25%) writing up. R.Ç. (25%), D.Y.G. (25%), S.Ç (25%) and D.E. (25%) submission and revision. All authors reviewed and approved final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Consideration

After the institutional permissions were obtained for the

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