





## The Meaning of Life During the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Mixed Method Research

### Covid-19 Pandemi Sürecinde Yaşamın Anlamı: Bir Karma Yöntem Araştırması

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this research is to examine the meaning of life in young adults, middle adults and advanced adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study group of the research consists of 620 adults, 403 female (65%) and 217 male (35%) residing in various provinces of Turkey. The age range of the participants ranged from 20 to 80 ( $\bar{x}=37.8$ ), with 383 (61.78%) in young adulthood (20-40 age), 134 (21.61%) in middle adulthood (41-65 age) and 103 (16.61%) in advanced adulthood (65+ age). Explanatory sequential design, one of the mixed methods, was used in the research. For the quantitative research, the "Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)" was applied to the participants. After the application, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 30 people selected by the maximum diversity sampling method. Quantitative data obtained within the scope of the research were analyzed by independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA); qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis. In the quantitative findings of the research, it is seen that the total meaning of life scores differ significantly in favor of female. The mean scores obtained from the scale differed significantly between advanced adults and young and middle adults; it was found that there was no significant difference between young adults and middle adults. Three different main themes obtained from the qualitative findings of the research were discussed in the context of three developmental periods: young adulthood, middle adulthood and advanced adulthood.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Meaning of life, Young adulthood, Middle adulthood, Advanced adulthood.

**Öz.** Bu araştırmanın amacı, COVID-19 pandemi sürecinde genç yetişkinlerde, orta yetişkinlerde ve ileri yetişkinlerde yaşamın anlamının incelenmesidir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu, Türkiye'nin çeşitli illerinde ikamet eden 403 kadın (%65) ve 217 erkek (%35) olmak üzere toplam 620 yetişkin oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcıların yaş aralığı 20 ile 80 arasında değişmekte olup ( $\bar{x}=37.8$ ), 383'ü (%61.78) genç yetişkinlik (20-40 yaş), 134'ü (%21.61) orta yetişkinlik (41-65 yaş) ve 103'ü (%16.61) ileri yetişkinlik (65+ yaş) dönemi içerisinde yer almaktadır. Araştırmada, karma yöntemlerden açıklayıcı sıralı desen kullanılmıştır. Nicel araştırma için katılımcılara "Yaşamın Anlamı Ölçeği (YAÖ)" uygulanmıştır. Uygulama sonrasında, nitel araştırma için maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilen toplam 30 kişiyle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında elde edilen nicel veriler bağımsız örneklemler t testi ve tek yönlü varyans analiziyle (ANOVA); nitel veriler ise içerik analiziyle çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma nicel bulgularında, yaşamın anlamı toplam puanlarının kadınların lehine anlamlı bir şekilde farklılaştığı görülmektedir. Ölçekten alınan puan ortalamalarının, ileri yetişkinler ile genç ve orta yetişkinler arasında anlamlı bir şekilde farklılaştığı; genç yetişkinler ile orta yetişkinler arasında ise anlamlı bir şekilde farklılaşmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmanın



nitel bulgularından elde edilen üç farklı ana tema, genç yetişkinlik, orta yetişkinlik ve ileri yetişkinlik olmak üzere üç gelişim dönemi bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** COVID-19, Yaşamın anlamı, Genç yetişkinlik, Orta yetişkinlik, İleri yetişkinlik.



## **Introduction**

With the COVID-19 virus gaining a global character, a "pandemic" was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020) and the first case in Turkey was encountered on March 10, 2020 (T.R. Ministry of Health, 2020). While it causes serious threats to the physical health of individuals, it also triggers the formation of many mental problems such as anxiety disorder, depression, panic disorder and mourning (Qiu et al., 2020). In addition, the inability to say goodbye, to perform religious and cultural rituals in the deaths that occur in this process causes the mourning process to be completed or postponed (Wallace, Wladkowski, Gibson, & White, 2020).

Along with the COVID-19 pandemic process, which has affected the whole world, some measures have been taken against the pandemic and certain restrictions have been brought in order to protect public health by the country administrations around the world. Social distancing and social isolation are at the forefront of these restrictions. Individuals over the age of 65, who are the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic process and included in the risky groups, and individuals under the age of 20 who affect the spread of the virus, are subject to social isolation restrictions. In this context, it is an important problem area that individuals over the age of 65, who live alone and are isolated, feel even more lonely because they cannot meet their socialization needs. However, the risks of exclusion from society, along with the increasing isolation from society, draws attention. Individuals with socially isolated parents and relatives, on the other hand, are uncertain about the care services provided to their isolated relatives. The measures taken for public health have also directly affected the country's economy and it has become very difficult to maintain commercial activities. With the stagnation of the service sector and the decrease in production, job losses and bankruptcies were experienced in certain sectors. Therefore, adult individuals who were terminated from their jobs had to face economic problems as well.

As the COVID-19 pandemic process can be seen; It has brought many changes in terms of individual, societal, social and economic aspects. Changing living conditions have played an active role in the differentiation of individuals' daily lives and gaining a new quality. The habits, values and lifestyles gained have reached a new dimension with the pandemic process. Efforts to shape and strengthen values, purposes, habits are expressed with the concept of the meaning of life (Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan, & Lorentz 2008). Individuals are in search of meaning throughout their lives and strongly tend to feel and believe that life is important, valuable and purposeful.

The meaning of life appears as a concept that takes place in human nature (Baumeister, 1991; Frankl, 1963), which is also frequently discussed in humanistic, existential and positive psychology. While emphasizing that life cannot have a meaning independent of the individual in existential psychology, attention is drawn to the fact that this meaning must be discovered by the individual himself. This discovery process is among the basic vital responsibilities of the individual. According to Frankl (2013), the meaning of life is the basic motivational power in the individual, the effort to find a meaning in life or the attempts to make his life meaningful. Individual; can discover the meaning of life by creating a work, interacting with a person, and developing an attitude against the inevitable experience of pain (Frankl, 1946; Frankl, 1984). Finding a meaning in life and having purposes that are tools to achieve this meaning are associated with well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It is emphasized that individuals' having positive purposes (Reker, Peacock & Wong, 1987) and orientations (Ryff & Singer, 1998) contributes to the sense of life and that purposes play a mediating role in the meaning of life (Ryff, 1989). The acceptance of life as a whole with all its positive and negative aspects has an effect that increases the individual's intrinsic motivation against the uncontrollable aspects of life and nourishes the meaning of life (Wong, 2015).



The absence of meaning in an individual's life is defined as "meaninglessness" (Frankl, 2013). Meaninglessness is expressed as individuals feeling aimless and unplanned (Harlow & Newcomb, 1990). This state of meaninglessness causes existential neurosis or existential emptiness, according to the existential approach (Yalom, 2018). Existential emptiness brings anxiety. May (1994) considers anxiety as "the courage to create" and states that anxiety plays an important role in the search for meaning (May, 1996). Awareness towards death leads individuals to make sense of life (May, 1997). It is stated that individuals who seek meaning are less satisfied with their lives (Steger, Frazier, Oishi & Kaler, 2006; Steger et al., 2008). Adler (2014), on the other hand, states that everyone has a purpose in life and this purpose takes an active role in making the individual's life meaningful.

The process of making sense of life, due to its abstract structure, refers to a life-long process that begins in adolescence. Individuals are in an effort to evaluate and make sense of their lives in order to understand the phenomena around them and shape their future during the pandemic process, as in their daily lives. Individuals in advanced adulthood due to social isolation; The individuals in the young and middle adulthood period were adversely affected by the pandemic process due to distance education, differentiation of business life and economic anxiety. These negative situations may result in increased anxiety levels of individuals (Pappas, Kiriaze, Giannakis & Falagas, 2009; Pappa, et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2020). In the studies in the literature on the subject, the meaning of life concept is mostly used as anxiety (Steger et al., 2006), depression (Mascaro & Rosen, 2005; Kleftras & Psarra, 2012), hope (Savi Çakar, Karataş & Tagay, 2016), religious belief (Steger & Frazier, 2005), life satisfaction (Steger & Kashdan, 2007; Steger, Oishi & Kesebir, 2011; Yıkılmaz & Demir Gdl, 2015), happiness (Zika & Chamberlain, 1988) and well-being (Ryff, 1989; Bonebright, Clay & Ankenmann, 2000; Emmons, 2005; Cotton-Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib & Finch, 2009; Sapmaz, Dođan, Sapmaz, Temizel & Tel, 2012; Şahin, Aydın, Sarı, Kaya & Pala, 2012) it is observed that the studies conducted on the concept of the meaning of life in Turkey are quite limited. The fact that studies conducted with different age groups (Pinquart, 2002; zmete, 2008; Yksel, 2012) are quite limited, it is important to consider the concept of the meaning of life in terms of different developmental periods. In this context, this study aims to examine the meaning of life in young adults, middle adults and advanced adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also aimed to determine whether the meaning of life differs according to some demographic variables (gender and developmental period). It is thought that the research findings will contribute to the relevant literature in terms of leading the studies to be carried out on the meaning of life and creating programs to increase the meaning of life. In addition, research findings; During the COVID-19 pandemic; It is hoped that it will contribute to the psycho-social support activities that can be provided for individuals, families and the society.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

Explanatory sequential design, one of the mixed methods in which qualitative and quantitative methods are used together, was used in the research. The use of quantitative and qualitative methods together in the study (Creswell, 2003), and the handling of approaches and concepts related to the quantitative and qualitative method together (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) are expressed as mixed method research. The exploratory sequential method involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data and then obtaining qualitative data.

### **Participants**



In the determination of the study group of the quantitative part of the research, the maximum variation sampling method, which is included in the purposeful sampling method, was used. The study group of the quantitative part of the research consists of 620 adults, 403 female (65%) and 217 male (35%) residing in various provinces of Turkey. Of the participants, 383 (61.7%) are in young adulthood, 134 (21.6%) in middle adulthood, and 103 (16.6%) in advanced adulthood. The ages of the participants vary between 20 and 80, with an average age of 37.8.

The study group of the qualitative part of the research consisted of a total of 30 people, ten from each developmental period, selected by the maximum diversity sampling method. 15 male (50%) and 15 female (50%) participants were included in the study group. There are 1 (3%) participants who were diagnosed with COVID only, 14 (47%) whose relatives were only diagnosed with COVID, 6 (20%) participants who and their relatives were diagnosed with COVID, and 9 (30%) participants who were never diagnosed with COVID.

## **Data Collection Tools**

### ***Personal Information Form***

It refers to the form created by the researcher, which aims to determine demographic variables such as gender and age.

### ***Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)***

It was developed by Steger et al. (2006) to determine the meaning that individuals find and seek in their lives. The scale is 7-point Likert type and consists of 10 items. The items of the scale were rated between 'definitely not true (1)' and 'definitely true (7)'. The scale has two sub-dimensions: existing meaning and trying to find meaning. "Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)" was adapted into Turkish by Demirdağ and Kalafat (2015). The adaptation study of the scale was carried out on 322 undergraduate students. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined as .81 for the existing meaning in life dimension and .85 for the search for meaning in life dimension. In the test-retest conducted, these values were determined as ,72 and ,76, respectively. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be .91 for the existing meaning in life dimension, .84 for the search for meaning in life dimension, and .74 for the total scale. The scale is a valid and reliable measurement tool for its use in Turkey.

### ***Semi-Structured Interview Form***

It was prepared to determine the views of young adults, middle adults and advanced adults about the meaning of life. The prepared interview questions were sent to 3 faculty members from the field of guidance and psychological counseling to get expert opinion for content validity. In line with the suggestions of the experts, the interview questions were finalized.

1. What are your thoughts on the meaning of your life? If you feel you have a sense of meaning in life, how did you arrive at that sense of meaning?
2. How has the meaning of your life changed during the COVID-19 pandemic? What are your feelings and thoughts about the meaning of your life during the pandemic process?
3. What are your purposes in life? How does having certain purposes in life affect your life?

## **Procedure**

The data of the research were collected between August and December of 2020. Data collection was carried out by the researchers via online platforms. The determination of the



participants was based on the principle of volunteering, and the necessary information was given to the participants for the purpose of the research. The applications took approximately 20 minutes.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data obtained within the scope of the research was evaluated in the SPSS 24.0 package program. Before the analysis of the data, the obtained data sets were examined in terms of normal distribution and extreme values, and their suitability for analysis was checked. Analysis of the quantitative data obtained within the scope of the research, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent samples t test; The analysis of qualitative data was analyzed by content analysis method.

### **Ethical Rules in Qualitative Research**

For the research, firstly the permission required by the Ministry of Health for the implementation of COVID-19 researches and then the permission of the University Ethics Committee were obtained. In this context, the necessary information was shared with the participants in the online environment and their voluntary participation in the research was ensured. One of the important ethical rules in qualitative research is to protect the identity information of the participants. For this purpose, "K" code was given to each of the participants from whom qualitative data were obtained.

### **Reliability and Validity of the Study**

Some necessary precautions were taken regarding the validity and reliability of the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews of the research. First of all, in the internal validity study, interview questions were created by scanning the relevant literature in the formation of interview questions (Venuleo, Marinaci, Gennaro & Palmieri, 2020). Applying for expert opinion regarding the prepared questions is also evaluated within the scope of another internal validity study. In line with expert opinions, the interview questions were finalized. However, another study conducted within the scope of internal validity is that the participants included in the research were selected from adults of different age groups and characteristics. Within the scope of the external validity study of the research; The data obtained from the interviews were described in detail and direct quotations were included. In addition, it has been observed that the results of the research are compatible with the theories and concepts in the related literature. The fact that three researchers carried out this study together is evaluated within the scope of the reliability of the research in collecting and analyzing the data.

## **Findings**

In this section, descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) results and content analysis findings are included.

### **Quantitative Findings**

The mean scores, standard deviations, ranges of scores and the minimum and maximum values that can be obtained from the scales are presented in Table 1.



Table 1.  
Descriptive statistics on scores from the scale and subscales

Variables						Skewness		Kurtosis	
	<i>n</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>sd</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>max</i>	Coefficient	<i>Se</i>	Coefficient	<i>Se</i>
Meaning of Life	620	44.68	10.13	14	70	-.087	.098	-.154	.196
Search for Meaning in Life	620	20.26	8.27	5	35	.032	.098	-.956	.196
Existing Meaning in Life	620	24.42	7.07	5	35	-.358	.098	-.745	.196

When Table 1 is examined, “Meaning in Life Questionnaire” ( $\bar{X}$  = 44.68, *Sd* = 10.13), “Subscale of Search for Meaning in Life” ( $\bar{X}$  = 20.26, *Sd* = 8.27), “Subscale of Existing Meaning in Life” ( $\bar{X}$  = 24.42, *Sd* = 7.07) mean scores and standard deviations are shown. The skewness coefficients of the scales are between -.358 and .032, and the kurtosis coefficients are between -.956 and -.154. According to Çokluk, Şekercioglu and Büyüköztürk (2012), the fact that the kurtosis and skewness coefficients are in the range of  $\pm 1$  indicates that the data show a normal distribution. When the coefficient values obtained are examined, it is seen that the existing data set meets the normal distribution assumption.

Independent samples t-test technique was used to determine whether the meaning of life and subscale scores of the participants showed a significant difference according to gender. The results from the independent samples t-test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.  
T-test results regarding the comparison of participants' meaning of life and subscale scores by gender

Variables	Gender	<i>n</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Meaning of Life	Male	217	42.33	10.36	-4.304	.000
	Female	403	45.95	9.78		
Search for Meaning in Life	Male	217	19.10	7.95	-2.574	.010
	Female	403	20.88	8.37		
Existing Meaning in Life	Male	217	23.23	7.01	-3.106	.002
	Female	403	25.06	7.02		

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the scores of the meaning of life and its subscales show a significant difference according to gender ( $t(618)$ meaning of life = -4.304,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $t(618)$ search for meaning in life = -2.574,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $t(618)$ existing meaning in life = -3.106,  $p < 0.05$ ). Female's scores on meaning of life ( $\bar{X}$  = 45.95, *Sd* = 9.78), search for meaning in life ( $\bar{X}$  = 20.88, *Sd* = 8.37) and existing meaning in life ( $\bar{X}$  = 25.06, *Sd* = 7.02); male's scores for meaning of life ( $\bar{X}$  = 42.33, *Sd* = 10.36), search for meaning in life ( $\bar{X}$  = 19.10, *Sd* = 7.95) and existing meaning in life ( $\bar{X}$  = 23.23, *Sd* = 7.01) were significantly higher.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique was used to determine whether the meaning of life and subscale scores of the participants showed a significant difference according to the developmental period. The mean and standard deviations of the meaning of life and subscale scores of the participants according to the developmental period are presented in Table 3.



Table 3.

Descriptive statistics on the analysis of participants' meaning of life and subscale scores by developmental period

Variables	Developmental Period	n	$\bar{x}$	Sd
Meaning of Life	Young Adult	383	46.7258	9.18
	Middle Adult	134	46.4104	8.61
	Advanced Adult	103	34.8544	9.65
Search for Meaning in Life	Young Adult	383	22.1305	8.28
	Middle Adult	134	18.8134	7.84
	Advanced Adult	103	15.1942	5.99
Existing Meaning in Life	Young Adult	383	24.5953	6.79
	Middle Adult	134	27.5970	6.40
	Advanced Adult	103	19.6602	6.38

The results obtained from the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) regarding the analysis of the meaning of life and subscale scores of the participants according to the developmental period are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

One-way analysis of variance (anova) results on the analysis of the meaning of life and its subscale scores by developmental period

Variables	Source	Sum of Squares	sd	Mean Squares	F	p	$n^2$
Meaning of Life	Between Groups	11948.214	2	5974.107	71.430	.000	.188
	Within Groups	51603.455	617	83.636			
	Total	63551.669	619				
Search for Meaning in Life	Between Groups	4263.746	2	2131.873	34.548	.000	.101
	Within Groups	38073.925	617	61.708			
	Total	42337.671	619				
Existing Meaning in Life	Between Groups	3697.820	2	1848.910	41.858	.000	.119
	Within Groups	27253.617	617	44.171			
	Total	30951.437	619				

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the scores of the meaning of life and its subscales show a significant difference according to the developmental period ( $F(2,617)_{\text{meaning of life}} = 71.430$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(2,617)_{\text{search for meaning in life}} = 34.548$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ;  $F(2,617)_{\text{existing meaning in life}} = 41.858$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Tukey HSD test, which is included in Post Hoc tests, was used to determine between which groups the differentiation status is. The results from the Tukey HSD test are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Tukey hsd test results regarding the analysis of meaning of life and subscale scores by developmental period

Variables	(I) Developmental Period	(J) Developmental Period	(I-J) Mean Difference	p
Meaning of Life	Young Adult	Middle Adult	.31540	.937
		Advanced Adult	11.87148*	.000
	Middle Adult	Young Adult	-.31540	.937
		Advanced Adult	11.55608*	.000
	Advanced Adult	Young Adult	-11.87148*	.000





Search for Meaning in Life	Young Adult	Middle Adult	-11.55608*	.000
		Middle Adult	3.31712*	.000
		Advanced Adult	6.93637*	.000
	Middle Adult	Young Adult	-3.31712*	.000
		Advanced Adult	3.61926*	.001
		Young Adult	-6.93637*	.000
Existing Meaning in Life	Young Adult	Middle Adult	-3.61926*	.001
		Middle Adult	-3.00171*	.000
		Advanced Adult	4.93511*	.000
	Middle Adult	Young Adult	3.00171*	.000
		Advanced Adult	7.93682*	.000
		Young Adult	-4.93511*	.000
		Middle Adult	-7.93682*	.000

\*p < .01

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that the sub-dimensions of the meaning of life differed significantly among all developmental period groups; the meaning of life score differed significantly between advanced adults and young and middle adults; It was found that there was no significant difference between young adults and middle adults.

### Qualitative Findings

In this section, data from young adults, middle adults, and advanced adults are presented, respectively, by developmental periods. During the collection of quantitative data, the participants included in the study were asked whether they were willing to participate in the semi-structured interview to be held with them later on. A total of 72 people (32 young adults, 25 middle adults, 15 advanced adults) reported that they were willing to be interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by randomly selecting 10 participants from each group in order to represent the young, middle and advanced adult groups equally among these volunteers.

### Theme 1: Sources of Meaning in Life

The first question of the research, "What are your thoughts on the meaning of your life? If you feel you have a sense of meaning in life, how did you arrive at that sense of meaning?" When the answers obtained from the participants were examined, it was determined that the first theme was "sources of meaning in life". The determined life sources of meaning theme and sub-themes are presented respectively according to their developmental periods.

### Sources of Meaning in Life in Young Adults

In the data obtained from young adults, the sub-themes collected in the theme of the sources of meaning of life; achieve career goals (f = 7), have character strengths (f = 7), close relationships (f = 6), spiritual values (f = 4), goal/purpose (f = 2), health (f = 2), living in the moment (f = 1), sports (f = 1), travel (f = 1), take time for yourself (f = 1), happiness (f = 1) and basic need satisfaction (f = 1). Participants who stated that there was no meaning in their life (f = 3) were also reached.

It has been observed that the most frequently mentioned sub-themes among young adults are career and character strengths/values sub-themes with the same frequency. In the character strengths sub-theme of the participants; It is seen that they draw attention to the concepts of altruism, desire to learn, gratitude, resilience, truth/honesty, being virtuous, and hope.

*"The lives of people with purposes also have meaning. In this direction, my purpose is to complete my education in the best way possible and to become a*



*psychologist who can benefit myself, my family and our society. Because I think seeing that you can help people makes you feel good, useful and competent.” (K1)*

*“The thing that gives meaning to my life in the current situation is my profession. I am able to provide the happiness that I can give to my environment about how life can be meaningful in my profession as much as possible. For this reason, I can only make my environment happy in my academic studies and profession, I solve the negative problems of people I have never met and make them happy, and I try to make myself and my environment happy with the income I earn. I can say that my profession is almost the last thing that gives meaning to my life.” (K4)*

*“I think I have a sense of meaning in life. I can say that I achieved this sense of meaning through my family, my education and my desire to learn. In addition, I can say that this pandemic process we are in allows me to discover new meanings of life.” (K7)*

### **Sources of Meaning in Life in Middle Adults**

In the data obtained from middle adults, the sub-themes collected in the theme of the sources of meaning of life; close relationships (f = 18), spiritual values (f = 7), have character strengths (f = 4), achieve career goals (f = 4), happiness (f = 4), health (f = 4), goal/purpose (f = 3) and money (f = 2). In addition, the participant (f = 1) who stated that there was no meaning in his life was also reached.

It is observed that the most frequently mentioned sub-theme among middle adults is close relationships. Close relationships of the participants are often; family, children, romantic partner, friends and pets.

*“My family gives the most meaning, their presence makes me so strong. My wife is my second family, my traveling companion, I feel like we exist for each other. The more I love and are loved, the more I feel alive, and I think that love means the greatest meaning in my life. I am happy when my big family and friends are with me, they are happy when I am with them. For this reason, being happy makes my life meaningful. Money to live on, health and a lot of peace are the other things that add meaning to my life. In the example of money, my needs are being met, which makes my life meaningful.” (K15)*

*“The purposes we intend to achieve with my wife, child and family. We are working harder to achieve these purposes. The plans we make to achieve the purposes we set make my life meaningful because I build our lives on them. The meaning of my life is to work selflessly to achieve my purposes. I feel productive as I work, it makes me happy and makes my life meaningful. How I reached it is related to education, my career, I discovered that I was happy as I produced, which motivated me more. They are what make my life worthwhile.” (K16)*

*“What makes life meaningful is my job, my health, and my dog. Changing an animal's life makes me very happy, I help it meet its needs. It also makes my life meaningful by accompanying my loneliness. My job allows me to help people be healthy. Helpfulness makes me happy. I feel my life is meaningful by being*



*appreciated by people. My health, on the other hand, makes my life meaningful because it allows me to lead a good life.” (K17)*

### **Sources of Meaning in Life in Advanced Adults**

In the data obtained from advanced adults, the sub-themes collected in the theme of the sources of meaning of life; close relationships (f = 26), spiritual values (f = 12), have character strengths (f = 9), health (f = 4), achieve career goals (f = 1), travel (f = 1), and happiness (f = 1) was determined.

It is observed that the most frequently mentioned sub-theme in advanced adults, as in middle adults, is close relationships. Close relationships of the participants are often; family, children, romantic partner, grandchildren and pets.

*“What makes my life meaningful; my wife, my kids and my job. My children have always come to good places, knowing that they are happy makes my life meaningful. My job makes sense because it enables me to make a living. My wife is my soul mate, because she is always behind me and because she is the mother of my children.” (K23)*

*“My faith, my wife, my children, my grandchildren. My faith makes me meaningful by filling me with peace. My wife is always supporting me. My children come to good places, by being a good son. My grandchildren allow me to experience the feeling of being a grandfather.” (K24)*

*“What makes my life meaningful; my wife and our pets, our cats. My wife always adds peace and meaning to my life as my supporter, confidant and life partner. Since our cats are not our children, they are our souls that we put in their place. The love of animals, the happiness that comes with their closeness to you is priceless.” (K30)*

### **Theme 2: The Meaning of Life in the Covid-19 Pandemic Process**

The COVID-19 pandemic process is considered as a process that creates radical changes in the lives of individuals. In this context, differentiation can be observed in the meanings of individuals' lives and their life purposes. The second question of the research, “How has the meaning of your life changed during the COVID-19 pandemic? What are your feelings and thoughts about the meaning of your life during the pandemic process?” When the answers obtained from the participants to the question were examined, it was determined that the second theme was "the meaning of life during the COVID-19 pandemic process". The meaning of life theme and sub-themes during the COVID-19 pandemic process are presented respectively according to their developmental periods.

#### **The Meaning of Life in Young Adults During the Covid-19 Pandemic Process**

In young adults, the meaning of life has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, mostly related to close relationships (f = 16), achieve career goals (f = 11), freedom (f = 4), living in the moment (f = 4), and altruism (f = 3) has been observed. Participants who stated that there is a differentiation in the meaning of life; it is seen that they draw attention to the concept of altruism, the importance of freedom, living in the moment and close relationships, being healthy and the anxiety process they experience.



*“First of all, I realized how valuable it is to be able to walk around without a mask. It was very valuable to be able to talk freely with whomever you wanted, whenever you wanted, and not to have to limit your life with certain rules. In short, it made me realize the value of a free life.” (K1)*

*“With the pandemic, I understood better that even the smallest thing in our daily life is precious to us and that we have a reason to be happy. I understood the importance of the moment. Even though there are plans, the moment we are in for the future should be the moment we spend without thinking about anything. We have to feel the moment, live it, and enjoy it.” (K3)*

*“Life has become more dull, helpless, unlivable. The pandemic process feels like a mousetrap. I feel like my life is out of my control. This causes me anxiety. While we live in a moment-oriented way in our normal lives, the concern for the future has become more prominent with the pandemic period. Work anxiety, health anxiety has come to surround us. My career life meaning has been negatively affected. In our daily life, we are now trying to live with the thought of how we can protect ourselves and our environment in an uneasy state. Therefore, the meaning of health was negatively affected. While many of the activities and events we do today seem ordinary to us, we have realized how important they are with the pandemic process. Distance has come between us and our loved ones. One feeling that this gave was the thought that one is actually alone. The meaning of life and the importance of my loved ones were positively affected. Therefore, my closeness to my family, which is the meaning of my life, increased even more. In this process, I realized how important our health is, as well as how much we can affect the health of the people around us as much as our own health, and how we can make altruism for both ourselves and the people around us. “Altruism” as a field of meaning in a new life has gained even more meaning.” (K7)*

### **The Meaning of Life in Middle Adults During the Covid-19 Pandemic Process**

In middle adults, the meaning of life during the COVID-19 pandemic is mostly related to close relationship (f = 18), health (f = 13), economy (f = 7), work (f = 6), freedom (f = 4) and living in the moment. It has been observed that the concepts of (f = 3) have changed. Participants who stated that there is a differentiation in the meaning of life; it is seen that they draw attention to the importance of freedom, living in the moment, close relationships and personal development, economic problems, changing work dynamics, being healthy and the anxiety process they experience.

*“After COVID-19, I realized how much I care about the moment we live in, all our plans are for the future, and we do not know what awaits us in the future and we cannot live in the present. The importance of the moment is the most precious thing that I have achieved in this period. The meaning of my life has decreased in terms of both work and social activities due to COVID. The clearest change in my emotional thinking was whether I would be unemployed. My concerns about the education of children have increased. I do not think that the distance education process is very beneficial. Since my children are the meaning of life, the meaning of my life was negatively affected as my worries increased.” (K13)*



*“I think that many things have changed in my life before and after the pandemic, apart from social and physical activities. For example, people tend to cook at home and engage in different family activities. The meaning of life began to take shape in this context. During this period, I tried to read more books. I focused on different foreign languages, tried to learn. However, it is a fact that human beings, who are social creatures, question many things within the framework of activities outside the home and work/work life that is getting harder. Therefore, as new meanings were added, some meanings were also lost.” (K14)*

*“The meaning of health has been quite negatively affected. I had covid, anxiety, stress problems. I mentioned my dog, there was no change in him. My job, on the other hand, became very stressful and negatively affected. Health, the meaning of my life, has become even more valuable. Without health, nothing happens.” (K17)*

### **The Meaning of Life in Advanced Adults During the Covid-19 Pandemic Process**

In advanced adults, it has been observed that the meaning of life has changed mostly in relation to the concepts of close relationships (f = 23), health (f = 20), and freedom (f = 6) during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is seen that the participants, who stated that there is a differentiation in the meaning of life, drew attention to the importance of freedom and close relationships, being healthy and the physiological and psychological problems they experienced.

*“I realized that life doesn't always go the way we want it to. There was a feeling of rebellion and acceptance. Wishes happened, I wish they didn't happen... We accepted because the whole world went through this process. There was fear, there were fears when I had difficulty breathing, will I leave my loved ones? Despite the house arrest, I tried to make use of the given time. I realized that life isn't always a milk port. It made me realize that life has its challenges too. We also understand that there are obstacles in our lives that we have to overcome. I wish it wasn't, but these are also a part of life... While we could at least take a few walks, we stayed away from these and similar activities, which made it very lonely. My thoughts on the meaning of life have been negatively affected by the pandemic. I could not travel, I could not meet with my social circle. It's so hard to feel alone. I felt like I was constantly dependent on someone.” (K22)*

*“I have lost a meaning in my life, my mother. My mother passed away from corona. This process has worn us out and it still does not end. It made me understand the value of my children, my job and my wife even more. They were the meaning of my life now, I can't bear to lose them when I lost my mother. Thank goodness they are the ones who tightly tied me to life. Without a family, one has no one.” (K23)*

*“Not being able to see my child and grandchild made me very sad and bored, but I still did not lose hope. I also thought of other people who were worse off than me. I once again realized how important nature, humanity and relationships are. I also realized that spirituality, love and relationships are more important than material things and they make my life meaningful.” (K26)*

### **Theme 3: Purposes in Life**



The third question of the research, "What are your purposes in life? How does having certain purposes in life affect your life?" When the answers obtained from the participants were examined, it was determined that the third theme was "purposes in life". Purpose in life theme and sub-themes are presented in order according to their developmental periods.

### **Life Purposes in Young Adults**

In the data obtained from young adults, sub-themes collected in the theme of purposes in life; achieve career goals (f = 6), have character strengths (f = 4), spiritual values (f = 4), being happy (f = 3), being healthy (f = 3), strong mental health (f = 2), purposes related to self-actualization (f = 2), close relationships (f = 2) and a quality life (f = 2) it was determined.

It is observed that the purpose of life with the highest frequency in young adults is career-related purposes. It is seen that the participants discussed their career-related purposes in the context of the social environment as well as the individual context.

*"I can say that my education and advancement in my career is my only purpose in my life right now. It is comforting to think that there will be a light in the end, even if I go through difficult stages and spiritual troubles to achieve this purpose. These purposes determine my path. It can be thought of as a compass. It makes it easy for me to plan and determine the steps I will take in my life." (K1)*

*"Currently, the purpose of my life is to fulfill my profession with the knowledge I have acquired, to be useful to my surroundings and to create beautiful and valuable moments for myself and my loved ones in this direction." (K3)*

*"Like every human being, I want to reach a good professional position, lead a comfortable life, and improve myself financially and morally. I can say that these wishes and purposes are a reason that makes me stronger in this process, prevents me from giving up and keeps me upright. I can say that it is a factor that can push me towards success so that I can be more determined and hardworking." (K7)*

### **Life Purposes in Middle Adults**

In the data obtained from middle adults, the sub-themes collected in the theme of purposes in life; close relationships (f = 10), achieve career goals (f = 4), have character strengths (f = 4), spiritual values (f = 2), having a home (f = 1), being happy (f = 1) and being healthy (f = 1) it was determined.

It is observed that the purpose in life with the highest frequency in middle adults is the purposes related to close relationships. Participants' purposes regarding close relationships; parenting, marriage, family, children and pets.

*"As I said, unfortunately, my only purpose in life right now is to see my family healthy; Sometimes when I think I've lost them, I think I have no purpose to live after that point. It makes me feel like there is only a limited amount of time in this life where I can be happy and the countdown has begun." (K12)*

*"To be healthy is to work, to provide a better future for my children, to be peaceful in my life. Always having a purpose makes life livable and gives me the opportunity to shape my life the way I want." (K13)*



*“I want a house to lay my head on and my house to be filled with peace and the sounds of children. I want to be a father again. My purposes in life are to provide them. When I have these purposes, I am more motivated. If I didn't have a purpose, I don't know how I would find my way. My purposes guide me.” (K16)*

### **Life Purposes in Advanced Adults**

In the data obtained from advanced adults, the sub-themes collected in the theme of purposes in life; close relationships (f = 8), being healthy (f = 9), being happy (f = 5), spiritual values (f = 4), have character strengths (f = 3), quality life (f = 1) and travel (f = 1) related purposes. In addition, the participant (f = 1) who stated that he had no purpose in life was also reached.

It is observed that the purpose of life with the highest frequency level in advanced adults is to be healthy. It can be said that the sub-theme of being healthy in the context of purpose in life comes to the fore more in advanced adults than in other developmental periods.

*“My purpose in life; to live a healthy life and make an effort. There is not much purpose left, we are at the end of the road (the participant was touched here, his eyes filled with tears) The aim is to see the happiness of my loved ones. If we were young, we would have purpose, but right now I am happy with the purposes of my loved ones.” (K21)*

*“Being healthy and not needing anyone. The well-being of my loved ones is my most important purpose.” (K28)*

*“To be able to continue my life in a healthy way. Purposes are a reason to wake up, start a new day. It makes me happy when I think of it.” (K29)*

## **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this research, the meaning of life in young adults, middle adults and advanced adults during the COVID-19 pandemic was examined. In addition, it is also discussed whether the meaning of life differs according to some demographic variables (gender and developmental period).

Within the scope of the quantitative dimension of the study, it was examined whether the meaning of life and subscale scores of the participants showed a significant difference according to gender. In this context, it has been determined that the meaning of life and subscale scores show a significant difference according to gender. Female's the meaning of life, the search for meaning in life and the existing meaning in life scores are significantly higher than male's the meaning of life, the search for meaning in life and the existing meaning in life scores. The findings of this study show parallelism with previous studies on the subject (Güven, 2015; Küçük, 2019). With this; there are also studies in the literature (Baş & Hamarta, 2015; Demirbaş, 2010; Demirci Seyrek & Ersanlı, 2017; Steger et al., 2006; Taşdibi Ünlü, 2019; Yüksel, 2012) stating that the meaning of life does not differ significantly according to gender. The inconsistency of the findings in the related literature may be due to the subjective nature of the concept of the meaning of life and the use of subjective criteria for meaning in judgments of life. However, when we look at the closure period of the COVID-19 epidemic in Turkey in terms of gender roles, female with traditional gender roles had the habit of living their daily lives at home before the epidemic, while males spent most of their time outside the



home/workplace before the epidemic. However, the fact that males spend most of their time at home after the closure (Kaya & Yaşar, 2021) and that they face economic difficulties in providing for the family as a result of this situation (Yaşar Dinçer & Yirmibeşoğlu, 2020) suggests that this may have an impact on the results obtained.

Within the scope of the quantitative dimension of the research, it was also examined whether the scores of the participants' meaning of life and subscales showed a significant difference according to the developmental period. In this context; meaning of life total score differed significantly between advanced adults and young and middle adults; It was found that there was no significant difference between young adults and middle adults. In addition, it was determined that the sub-dimensions of the meaning of life differed significantly among all developmental period groups. It has been observed that the meaning of life total scores of advanced adults are lower than that of young and middle adults. The group with the highest search for meaning in life score is young adults, and the lowest group is advanced adults; It is seen that the group with the highest existing meaning in life score is middle adults, and the group with the lowest is advanced adults. When the related literature is examined; studies abroad on the meaning of life are often carried out with advanced adults (Bahtiar, Sahar & Wiarsih, 2020; Girardi Paskulin & Molzahn, 2007; Levasseur, Tribble & Desrosiers, 2009); It is observed that the studies carried out in the country are mostly carried out with university students (Baş and Hamarta, 2015; Demirci Seyrek & Ersanlı, 2017; Taşdibi Ünlü, 2019) and young adults (Topuz, 2016; Yüksel, 2012). However, studies involving all three developmental periods (Orang, Hashemi Razini, Ramshini & Orang, 2018; Şahin, 2020) seem to be quite limited. In their study, Orang et al. (2018) found that the meaning of life differed significantly between three age groups (young adult, middle adult, and advanced adult). The research found that older adults reported higher levels of meaning in life. Similarly, Şahin (2020) found that middle adults and advanced adults have a high level of meaning in life, while emerging adults have a low level of meaning in life. Reker (2005), on the other hand, found that the meaning of life increases with age and that the level of meaning in life is highest in older adults in the study he conducted with participants in the young, middle and advanced adulthood periods. In case of inconsistency between the findings in the relevant literature and the current finding; It can be said that the differences in culture, quality of life and lifestyle of advanced adults are effective. However, it is thought that the fact that individuals over the age of 65 are more affected by the closure period of the COVID-19 epidemic and stay away from the most important elements that add meaning to their lives (family, friends, children, grandchildren) may have an impact on this result.

Within the scope of the qualitative dimension of the research, three main themes were determined after semi-structured interviews with the participants. The first theme identified was "sources of meaning in life". In the first question of the interview, the participants were asked about their thoughts on the meaning of their lives. When the answers given by the participants were examined, it was seen that the sources with the highest frequency that add meaning to the lives of young adults are career and character strengths/values. Participants often discussed careers with their thoughts about performing their profession competently and getting to the position they want in their careers. Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) draw attention to the fact that young adulthood includes the processes of making professional choices / determining career options, and they state that young adulthood is a very important process in explaining the career development of adults. Given the developmental tasks of young adulthood, careers are likely to add the most meaning to young adults' lives. In line with the current finding, Şahin (2020) found that career is among the elements that add meaning to the lives of young adults in his study. Super (1990); He states that searching for meaning in life and meaningful life are effective in discovering values in the career development process of individuals. Hill et al. (2013), on the other hand, determined in their study with psychology students that career and character strengths of altruism are among university





students' sources of meaning. Based on these findings, it can be said that the findings in the related literature support the current finding. When the answers given by the participants were examined, it was determined that the other sources that add meaning to the lives of young adults are close relationships, spiritual values, goal/purpose, health, living in the moment, sports, travel, take time for yourself, happiness and basic needs satisfaction. In his study, Erpay (2017) found that as the level of participants' preference to be alone increased, their level of meaning in their lives decreased. In this context, it can be said that individuals who do not prefer to be alone and establish close relationships have higher levels of meaning in life. Steger, Oishi and Kashdan (2008) determined that developing healthy relationships helps to increase the level of meaning in life. Hill et al. (2013), on the other hand, found that close relationships and the pursuit of happiness are among the sources of meaning for university students. Frankl (2013) draws attention to three elements in the discovery of the meaning of life: love, productivity and enduring pain. In this context, it is possible that love, one of the spiritual values, is included in the elements that add meaning to the lives of young adults. Bahadır (2011) states that all factors that affect the meaning of life gain value in line with a specific goal/purpose. In the study carried out with the psychological counselor candidates, Kaptan Çalışkan (2017) found that among the individual factors affecting the meaning in life; determined that the target is health and being an exemplary human being. He also states that individuals who meet their basic needs experience different initiatives that will make their lives meaningful. Considering the effect of meeting basic psychological needs on well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000), it is thought that meeting basic psychological needs will be effective in making life meaningful. In this context, it can be said that the present finding supports the findings in the related literature. The findings also reach young adults who state that there is no meaning in their lives. Considering the current developmental period, the existence of uncertainties in life is thought to be effective in perceiving life as meaningless.

When the answers given by the middle adults to the first question of the interview were examined, it was seen that the source of meaning of life with the highest frequency was close relationships. In the studies in the related literature, it is observed that close relationships come to the fore in the meaningful lives of middle adults (Fave, Brdar, Wissing & Vella-Brodrick, 2013; Reker & Guppy, 1988). Şahin (2020), on the other hand, in his study, stated that middle adults define family as a source of meaning in life; determined that they also emphasize children, spouses and siblings in this context. When the answers given by the participants were examined, it was determined that the other sources that add meaning to the life of middle adults are spiritual values, character strengths/values, career, happiness, health, goal/purpose and money, respectively. Dezutter et al. (2013) state that well-being is effective in making life meaningful. In this context, happiness, which is closely related to well-being, is an expected finding to be expressed among the sources of meaning in life. Considering that physical activity decreases in middle adulthood, it is possible that the health sub-theme is among the sources of meaning of life in middle adults. Similarly, in their meta-analysis study, Czekierda, Banik, Park and Luszczynska (2017) found a low-moderate significant relationship between physical health and the meaning of life. The fact that the health sub-theme has a higher frequency level in middle adults compared to young adults can be explained by the fact that health problems begin to be observed more frequently in middle adulthood. It is seen that the meaning sources of life of middle adults are quite similar to those of young adults, in addition to the money sub-theme, the frequency level of the career sub-theme is lower than that of young adults. The fact that individuals in middle adulthood have a clearer career structure compared to young adults may be a factor in explaining the decrease in career frequency. The addition of the money sub-theme can be explained by the higher responsibilities in middle adulthood compared to young adulthood.

When the answers given by the advanced adults to the first question of the interview were examined, it was seen that the source of meaning of life with the highest frequency was close



relationships. Krause (2007), in his study with individuals over the age of 65, determined that the meaning of life was highly correlated with the moral support from the family. Similarly, Şahin (2020) and Hupkens, Machielse and Goumans (2016) found that close relationships/human relations are among the sources of meaning in the life of advanced adults. Özmete (2008) found that advanced adults who have a romantic partner and receive social support from their children are happier and have higher levels of life satisfaction. Bahtiar et al. (2020) found that children and grandchildren add meaning to the lives of advanced adults. Considering that relationships are a source of meaning in every developmental period (Hill et al., 2013), it can be said that the current finding is in line with the findings in the relevant literature. When the answers given by the participants were examined, it was determined that the other sources that add meaning to the lives of advanced adults are spiritual values, character strengths/values, health, career, travel and happiness, respectively. Spiritual values such as religion (Yalom, 2018) and peace (Bar-Tur et al., 2001) are effective in making sense of the lives of advanced adults. In this context, it is an expected finding that spiritual values have a high frequency level in advanced adults. Kumar and Dixit (2017), on the other hand, state that altruism, which is among the character strengths, is associated with a meaningful life in advanced adulthood. Considering that the quality of health decreases over time, it can be said that health is a source of meaning in life. Park et al. (2007), in their study with individuals aged 65 and over, found that meaning in life is related to the quality of life associated with health. The fact that the frequency level of the career sub-theme, which is another source of meaning of life in advanced adults, is quite low compared to young and middle adults, can be explained by the decline in productivity in advanced adulthood. Travel is among the resources that add meaning to the lives of young adults and advanced adults; middle adults, on the other hand, are not among the sources that add meaning to life. The existence of an active work life and the high responsibilities in middle adulthood do not allow travel. In this case, it is likely that travel is not among the middle-adults' sources of meaning in life. It can be said that young adults have a life suitable for discovering new places and activities, while older adults make travel plans and visit their relatives after retirement are effective in expressing travel as a source of meaning in life. Happiness is another source that gives meaning to life in advanced adults. Similarly, Steger et al. (2009) determined in their study that the meaning of life in advanced adulthood is related to happiness. In this context, it can be said that the present finding is in line with the findings in the relevant literature.

The second theme determined within the scope of the qualitative dimension of the research was "the meaning of life during the COVID-19 pandemic process". In the second question of the interview, the participants were asked about their feelings and thoughts about the meaning of their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic process. Participants were asked to evaluate the meaning of life during the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of work life, social relations, health and other areas. When the answers given by the participants were examined, it was observed that the meaning of life of young adults, middle adults and advanced adults changed mostly in terms of altruism, freedom, close relationships, health, economy and living in the moment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sami, Toprak and Gökmen (2020) in the study they carried out to address the changes and transformations in the meaning of life in young people during the COVID-19 process; They found that 303 participants stated that there was a positive change, 41 a negative change, and 97 a neutral change. In the current study, young and middle adults who stated that their work life was positively affected during the pandemic process; states that the pandemic process allows them to improve themselves and draws attention to the efficiency of the home office working order and flexible working hours. It is observed that young and middle adults, who state that their work life is negatively affected, often draw attention to economic problems, decrease in job opportunities, increase in workload, and inefficiency of home office working order. It was observed that advanced adults often stated that there was no change in their work life. Considering the level of participation of advanced adults in business life, it can be said that the present finding constitutes an expected finding. Venuleo et al.



(2020) also stated in their study that they evaluated the meaning of life during the COVID-19 pandemic process, that business life was affected by the pandemic process. In the current study, it was seen that the pandemic process affected the social relations of young, middle and advanced adults both positively and negatively. In the context of restricting social relations, loneliness, lack of social support, unhappiness, decrease in social/cultural activities, restriction of travel and freedom; evaluated its positive impact on the context of an increase in online and family communication. In parallel with the current finding, Sami et al. (2020) found that social relations take place in the positive changes of young people towards the meaning of life in their study; In this context, they found that there was a significant increase in the importance given to family and social relations. A notable finding in older adults is the emphasis on loneliness. Along with social isolation, the social relationships of advanced adults that add meaning to their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic process have been adversely affected. Venuleo et al. (2020) stated that the pandemic process negatively affected social relations, individuals stopped visiting their social environment, and participation in social and cultural activities was interrupted. de Yong, Ziegler and Schippers (2020) draw attention to the difficulty of maintaining social connections during the pandemic process and state that social relations may be adversely affected. In the current research findings, changes in the field of "health" in young, middle and advanced adults, physical problems (difficulty in breathing, inactivity, weakness, joint problems, etc.), mental problems (anxiety, fear, paranoia, sadness, grieving process, eating disorders, sleep disorders, etc.) and increase in health awareness. Delaying check-ups is another issue that advanced adults draw attention to the change they experience in the field of health. Similarly, Sami et al. (2020) state that the anxiety and worry levels of young people increase during the pandemic process and this process can trigger physical problems. In the context of other fields; that young and middle adults often draw attention to the educational process; It was observed that they evaluated distance education and face-to-face education processes. In the related literature, studies on the meaning of life during the COVID-19 pandemic process are mostly aimed at a general evaluation (de Yong et al., 2020; Venuleo et al., 2020), or to address their relationship with different variables (Karataş and Tagay, 2021; Kul, Demir & Katmer, 2020; Trzebiński, Cabański & Czarnecka, 2020), studies in the context of developmental periods (Sami et al., 2020; von Humboldt et al., 2020) are observed to be quite limited.

The third theme determined within the scope of the qualitative dimension of the research was "purposes in life". In the third question of the interview, the participants were asked about their thoughts about their purpose in life. When the answers given by the participants are examined, it is seen that the sub-themes collected under the theme of purposes in life in the data obtained from young adults; It has been determined that there are purposes related to achieve career goals, have character strengths, spiritual values, being happy, being healthy, strong mental health, self-actualization, close relationships and a quality life. Considering the development task of young adulthood towards the career process, it is an expected finding that the career will come first. Another developmental task of young adulthood is establishing close relationships. Although young adults are expected to report life purpose related to romantic relationships, no participant reporting life purpose related to romantic relationships could be reached in the current findings. It is thought that this finding can be explained by the current operation in Turkey. Considering the unemployment and employment problem in Turkey in recent years (Yeşilyaprak, 2016), it is inevitable for young adults to develop career-related purposes rather than close relationships. Global changes in the 21st century can also pave the way for changes in career options (Yeşilyaprak, 2016). In this context, it is possible that the purposes in life will be shaped on career. In line with the current finding, Şahin (2020) also found that young adults report career-related life purposes more than romantic-related life purposes. Şahin, Zoraloğlu and Şahin Firat (2011) determined in their study that university students express career-related purposes such as using their special talents and tendencies and getting graduate education. İkiz, Asıcı, Kaya and Balkan (2018) found that university students



reported high scores on the "personal development" and "physical health" sub-dimensions of the "Life Purpose Scale" in their study with university students. In the research findings, it is seen that the sub-theme with the highest frequency after career-related purposes is character strengths/values and purposes related to spiritual values. Character strengths/values and moral values of the participants; It is observed that they deal with altruism, being virtuous, being a good person, loving, being loved and being peaceful. Similarly, Şahin (2020) found in his study that young adults report altruistic purposes. Due to the low emphasis on the sub-themes of being happy, being healthy, strong mental health, self-actualization, close relationships and a quality life, a detailed discussion was not included.

When the answers given by the middle adults to the third question of the interview were examined, it was seen that the purpose in life with the highest frequency was the purposes related to close relationships. Participants' purposes regarding close relationships; It has been observed that they deal with parenting, marriage, family, children and pets. Being a parent, getting married, seeing his family healthy, offering a good future to his children and living a happy life with pets are some of the life purposes stated by the participants. Considering that close relationships gain importance as developmental stages progress, a high frequency for purposes related to close relationships constitutes an expected finding. In the study conducted by Şahin (2020) and Ulusoy (2020), it was determined that middle-aged adults reported purposes for their children's futures and careers. In this context, it can be said that the present finding is in line with the findings in the related literature. In the data obtained from middle adults, the other sub-themes collected under the theme of purposes in life; It has been determined that there are purposes related to career, character strengths/values, spiritual values, being a home owner, being happy and being healthy. Due to the low emphasis on the relevant sub-themes, a detailed discussion was not included.

When the answers given by the advanced adults to the third question of the interview were examined, it was seen that the purpose in life with the highest frequency was to be healthy. It can be said that the sub-theme of being healthy in the context of purpose in life comes to the fore more in advanced adults compared to other developmental periods. Dixon (2007) stated that life purposes play an active role in the health of advanced adults. In their study, Kim, Kawachi, Chen and Kubzansky (2017) determined that a high level of purpose in life is associated with a series of positive health behaviors. In this context, it can be said that health and life purposes are in mutual interaction in advanced adulthood. In the data obtained from advanced adults, other sub-themes collected in the theme of life purposes; close relationships, being happy, spiritual values, character strengths/values, a regular life and purposes related to travel. Due to the low emphasis on these sub-themes, a detailed discussion was not included. There are also participants who stated that they have no purpose in life. Having problems in reaching self-integrity, which is a developmental task specific to advanced adulthood, may cause a hopeless perspective to be developed. However, it can be observed that in this period of loss in social roles (Feldman, 2012), it is not possible to develop a purpose for life. Similarly, Şahin (2020) also found that older adults report less purpose for life and the purposes are shaped in the context of being healthy.

In this study, which examines the meaning of life in young adults, middle adults and advanced adults during the COVID-19 pandemic process, it has been seen that the meaning of life and purposes in life in the COVID-19 pandemic process show both similarities and differences according to the developmental periods. It can be said that the findings of the present study are shaped by the reflections of the characteristics of the developmental periods on the meaning and purpose of life. Based on the emphasis that young adults place on career in the meaning of life and purposes in life; It is thought that career counseling practices to be carried out for career choices, career indecision and lifelong career process will contribute to a meaningful life. It has been



observed that the meaning of life and life purposes of middle adults are shaped more in the context of close relationships. In this context, the implementation of programs aiming to provide middle adults with the skills that are effective in the development of social relations is important in terms of improving the meaning of life. It has been observed that advanced adults deal with the meaning and purpose in life by drawing attention to close relationships and health. Practitioners working with advanced adults are recommended to re-evaluate life during the counseling process, to identify activities that will increase life satisfaction and the meaning of life, and to encourage clients' participation in these activities. It is also recommended to carry out preventive studies for physical health and psycho-educational studies aimed at raising awareness about health. Considering the difficult COVID-19 pandemic process; It is recommended to develop and implement mindfulness-based programs to increase the meaning of the lives of young adults, middle adults and advanced adults. Based on the research findings, during the COVID-19 pandemic process; It is thought that conducting psycho-social support activities for individuals, families and society will be beneficial in terms of reducing the negative effects of the pandemic process. In addition, it is considered important that social studies and psychological counseling services for individuals in advanced adulthood should be more widespread. Considering that the researches are often carried out to determine the sources of meaning of life, it is suggested that the sources of meaning of life and the factors that are effective in the formation of goals in life and the ways in which these resources and purposes affect life are recommended. In addition, it is thought that it is necessary for the relevant literature to deal with the relationships between the sub-dimensions of the meaning of life according to different developmental periods. The limitedness of the studies on the meaning of life and the purposes in life in Turkey necessitates the conduct of new studies on the subject.

One of the strengths of the study is that the study was designed according to the mixed method, which allows to evaluate the meaning and purpose of life in the context of both quantitative and qualitative findings during the COVID-19 pandemic process. In evaluating the research findings, the limitations of the research should be taken into consideration as well as the strengths of the research. Current research findings are limited to data obtained from individuals who voluntarily participated in the study. This situation does not allow the generalization of the research findings. In addition, in this study, the meaning of life during the COVID-19 pandemic was not discussed in terms of socio-economic and cultural level. Considering the social, economic and political effects of the COVID-19 pandemic process, it is very important to consider the meaning and purpose of life in the context of socio-economic and cultural level. Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic process may have long-term effects, it is recommended to carry out longitudinal studies that cover the COVID-19 pandemic process and its aftermath, addressing the meaning of life in the context of developmental periods.



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