



Religious Orientations as Predictors of Life's Meaning and Purpose among University Students

Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Hayatın Anlamı ve Amacının Yordayıcısı Olarak Dini Yönelimler

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between university students' religious orientation types and their perceptions of meaning and purpose in life. Using a correlational survey model, data were collected from 500 students through the "Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale" and the "Muslim Religious Orientation Scale-Revised (MROS-R)." In addition to the descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses were employed. The results showed high levels of intrinsic religious orientation and above-average life meaning and purpose scores. Female students had a significantly higher intrinsic orientation than males. Differences in religious orientation and life meaning and purpose were found based on education level, income, and family attitudes, with democratic family environments linked to higher meaning scores. Intrinsic religious orientation was positively correlated with meaning and purpose in life, while quest orientation showed a weak and negative relationship. No significant relationship was found for the extrinsic and fundamentalist orientations. Regression analysis indicated that only intrinsic religious orientation significantly predicted life meaning and purpose, highlighting its important but not exclusive role in individuals' pursuit of existential meaning.

Keywords: Psychology of Religion, Religious Orientation, Religiosity, Meaning in Life, Purpose in Life, Well-Being

Öz

Bu çalışma, üniversite öğrencilerinin dini yönelim biçimleri ile yaşamın anlamı ve amacına ilişkin algıları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. İlişkisel tarama modelinin kullanıldığı çalışmada, "Yaşamın Anlamı ve Amacı Ölçeği" ile "Yeniden Yapılandırılmış Müslüman Dini Yönelim Ölçeği (MROS-R)" aracılığıyla 500 öğrenciden veri toplanmıştır. Analizlerde betimsel istatistiklerin yanı sıra t-testi, ANOVA, Pearson korelasyon ve çoklu regresyon yöntemlerinden yararlanılmıştır. Bulgular, öğrencilerin içsel dini yönelim düzeylerinin yüksek, yaşamın anlamı ve amacı puanlarının ise ortalamanın üzerinde olduğunu göstermiştir. Kadın öğrenciler, erkek öğrencilere kıyasla anlamlı düzeyde daha yüksek içsel yönelim puanlarına sahiptir. Öğrencilerin eğitim düzeyi, gelir durumu ve aile tutumlarına göre dini yönelim ile yaşamın anlamı ve amacı değişiklik göstermiş; demokratik aile ortamları daha yüksek anlam ve amaç puanlarıyla ilişkilendirilmiştir. İçsel dini yönelim, yaşamın anlamı ve amacı ile pozitif yönde ilişkili bulunurken, sorgulayıcı yönelim zayıf ve negatif yönde ilişki göstermiştir. Dışsal ve katı kuralcı yönelimler için ise anlamlı bir ilişki saptanmamıştır. Regresyon analizi, yalnızca içsel dini yönelimin yaşamın anlamı ve amacını anlamlı biçimde yordadığını ortaya koyarak, bu yönelimin bireylerin varoluşsal anlam arayışında önemli fakat tek başına yeterli olmadığını vurgulamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Psikolojisi, Dini Yönelim, Dindarlık, Hayatın Anlamı, Hayatın Amacı, İyi Oluş

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Introduction

The human pursuit of meaning has long driven metaphysical, religious, and philosophical inquiry, highlighting a fundamental need to understand the self, life, and the universe. Religion often serves as a key source of direction and meaning though individuals may ascribe varying levels of value to it. The concept of *religious orientation* captures these differences by showing how people adopt and interpret religious beliefs in daily life.

Allport and Ross identified two primary dimensions of religious orientation: *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. *Intrinsic orientation* reflects a sincere commitment to religion, where faith is internalised and serves as a guiding principle in life. In contrast, *extrinsic orientation* involves using religion for external benefits¹ such as security, social acceptance, status, or personal comfort, indicating a more utilitarian approach.² Batson argued that the intrinsic-extrinsic religious orientation model was insufficient to capture all forms of religious engagement, introducing *quest orientation*- a third type³ characterised by open-ended spiritual exploration. Individuals with this orientation confront fundamental existential questions and reject rigid, absolute answers to such inquiries. In quest orientation, religious beliefs are not shaped by unquestionable truths, but rather by personal questioning and experiential understanding. According to Batson and colleagues, the emphasis in this orientation lies not on the answers to existential questions, but on the questions themselves.⁴ Thus, quest orientation reflects an individual's commitment to the process of questioning religious and moral matters rather than the desire to reach definitive conclusions. Another form of religious orientation is fundamentalism. Fundamentalist religious orientation, as defined by Altemeyer and Hunsberger, reflects a rigid belief in religious teachings as absolute and infallible. It involves resistance to the reinterpretation and intolerance of criticism⁵, often associated with

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- 1 Gordon W. Allport and J. M. Ross, "Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 5 (1967): 432, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0021212>
 - 2 Niko Tiliopoulos et al., "The Means and Ends of Religiosity: A Fresh Look at Gordon Allport's Religious Orientation Dimensions," *Personality and Individual Differences* 42 (2007): 1610, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.10.034>
 - 3 C. Daniel Batson, "Religion As Prosocial: Agent or Double Agent?," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 15, 1 (1976): 32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1384312>
 - 4 C. Daniel Batson, Patricia Schoenrade and W. Larry Ventis, *Religion and the Individual: A Social-Psychological Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 169-171.
 - 5 B. Altemeyer and B. Hunsberger, *Amazing Conversions: Why Some Turn to Faith & Others Abandon Religion* (NY: Prometheus Books, 1992), 118-120.

dogmatism, prejudice, and intolerance towards differing beliefs.⁶

Allport and Ross's original typology of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations has been expanded to include quest and fundamentalist types, forming a fourfold model. This study hypothesises an association between religious orientation and the meaning and purpose of life—a multidimensional concept shaped by personal values, goals, and existential questions.⁷ Rather than being universal, life's meaning is subjectively constructed, with each individual forming their own understanding. As Adler noted, “*there are as many meanings to life as there are people.*”⁸ Meaning and purpose not only guide life choices but also enhance coping and psychological resilience, making them central to well-being and life satisfaction.

Viktor Frankl's logotherapy views the *search for meaning*, rather than pleasure or power, as the primary human motivation. Meaning can be found through transcendence, creativity, service, or a purposeful response to suffering, contributing to psychological health and existential wholeness.⁹ He identified the search for meaning as essential to mental health and acknowledged that this could often be shaped through religious beliefs.¹⁰ The search for meaning is often said to deepen through religious and spiritual orientations. Indeed, the tenets of religious belief systems offer individuals the potential for universal and transcendent meaning, helping to compensate for existential voids.¹¹ Thus, logotherapy offers a useful framework for examining the role of religious orientation in meaning-making. Specifically, intrinsic religious orientation, where faith is deeply internalised, is positively linked to mental health, psychological well-being, and the pursuit of meaning.¹² In this context, and in line with the principles of positive psychology, meaning and purpose are defined as a tendency to strive towards personally valued

6 Bruce Hunsberger, “Religion and Prejudice: The Role of Religious Fundamentalism, Quest, and Right-Wing Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Social Issues* 51, 2 (1995): 113-129, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1995.tb01326.x>

7 Michael F. Steger, “Meaning in life,” *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, 2nd ed. içinde, ed. Shane J. Lopez, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 681-685.

8 Alfred Adler, *Yaşamın Anlam ve Amacı*, 4. Basım, çev. Kamuran Şipal (İstanbul: Say Yayınları, 1998), 8.

9 V. E. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 45-52.

10 V. E. Frankl, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı*, çev. Selçuk Budak (İstanbul: Okuyan Us Yayın, 2009), 81-109.

11 Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 45-52.

12 Allport and Ross, “Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice,” 434-443.

goals, self-transcendence, and the development of long-term life direction.¹³

Within this framework, both national and international literature provide findings indicating that religious beliefs contribute to individuals' sense of meaning, intrinsically motivate them, strengthen their coping skills, and are associated with hope, optimism, psychological well-being, positivity, resilience, and life satisfaction, all of which are indicators of mental health.¹⁴ For example, Aydın's study (n=237) found a significant positive correlation between religious attitude and meaning in life ($r=0.336$; $p<0.01$).¹⁵ Similarly, Karanlı (n=505) reported a positive association between religiosity and the search for meaning, highlighting religion as a unique meaning-making system.¹⁶ Dar and Iqbal (n=92) also found a significant link between religious commitment and meaning in life.¹⁷

Research consistently shows a positive association between intrinsic religious orientation and the perception of meaning and purpose in life, particularly among youth. Studies indicate that mature and internalised religious commitment fosters a deeper sense of meaning in life. For instance, a study with 427 university students

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- 13 Carol D. Ryff and Burton Singer, "The Contours of Positive Human Health," *Psychological Inquiry* 9, 1 (1998): 11-13, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli0901_1; Patrick E. McKnight and Todd B. Kashdan, "Purpose in Life as a System that Creates and Sustains Health and Well-Being: An Integrative, Testable Theory," *Review of General Psychology* 13, 3 (2009): 242-247.
- 14 Abdülkerim Bahadır, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı ve Din* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2011), 176; Ali Rıza Aydın, "İnanma İhtiyacı ve Dini Ritüellerin Psikolojik Değeri," *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 9, 2 (2009): 91, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/daad/issue/4498/61951>; Monica Ardel, "Effects of Religion and Purpose in Life On Elders' Subjective Well-Being and Attitudes Towards Death," *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 14, 4 (2003): 55, https://doi.org/10.1300/J078v14n04_04; Kenneth I. Pargament, *Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997): 110-115; Nevzat Gencer, "Dindarlık Öznel İyi Oluşu Etkiler Mi? Hemodiyaliz (HD) Hastaları Üzerinde Kesitsel Bir Çalışma", *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 23, 3 (2019): 1437-1439, <https://doi.org/10.18505/cuid.601055>; Nevzat Gencer, "Ruh Sağlığı ve Din: Genel Değerlendirme," *Ruh Sağlığı ve Din* içinde, ed. N. Gencer, M. Cengil ve M. Koç (Ankara: Ertem Kafkas Yayınları, 2022), 30; Habil Şentürk ve Selahattin Yakut, "Hayatın Anlamı ve Din," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 33 (2014): 45-60, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/sduifd/issue/48320/611734>
- 15 Cüneyd Aydın, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Dini Tutum İle Hayattaki Anlam Düzeyleri Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi," *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, 4 (2017): 89, <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.333802>
- 16 Necmi Karanlı, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Hayatın Anlamı ve Dindarlık İlişkisi," *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 48 (2020): 170, <https://doi.org/10.17120/omuifd.718108>
- 17 Kaiser Ahmad Dar and Naved Iqbal, "Religious Commitment and Well-Being in College Students: Examining Conditional Indirect Effects of Meaning in Life," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 58, 6 (2017): 2288, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0538-2>

revealed that intrinsically motivated individuals reported higher levels of life meaning than their extrinsically motivated or non-religious peers. Religious integration, marked by moral and spiritual commitment, also emerged as a strong predictor of life meaning.¹⁸ Younis also reported that religious and spiritual beliefs significantly contribute to the quality of life and facilitate individuals' discovery of life's meaning.¹⁹ A study conducted with 109 Portuguese university students indicated that religious and spiritual coping strategies contribute to greater life satisfaction.²⁰

Batson and Schoenrade observed that individuals with quest orientation engage in a more dynamic search for meaning, yet at times they may also face existential crises.²¹ Kim and Seidlitz found that intrinsic religious orientation is positively related to psychological well-being and life purpose.²² Dezutter and colleagues studied 472 adults and found that religious orientations significantly influenced psychological well-being: intrinsic orientation was linked to higher well-being, while extrinsic orientation was associated with lower well-being.²³ Similarly, García Alandete and Bernabé-Valero, in a study with 180 Spanish university students, found that intrinsic orientation correlated positively with most aspects of psychological well-being (except autonomy), extrinsic orientation was negatively related to autonomy, and quest orientation negatively affected self-acceptance and life purpose. The researchers concluded that different forms of religious orientation

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- 18 Doug Soderstrom and E. Wayne Wright, "Religious Orientation and Meaning in Life," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 33, S1 (1977): 65, [https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679\(197701\)33:1+<65::AID-JCLP2270330113>3.0.CO;2-0](https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679(197701)33:1+<65::AID-JCLP2270330113>3.0.CO;2-0)
 - 19 Maha S. Younis, "Psychological Impact of Religious and Spiritual Beliefs on Life Quality of Two groups of University Students," *J Fac Med Baghdad* 53, 2 (2011): 160-161, <https://doi.org/10.32007/jfacmedbagdad.532862>
 - 20 Lídia Graça and Tânia Brandão, "Religious/Spiritual Coping, Emotion Regulation, Psychological Well-Being, and Life Satisfaction among University Students," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 52, 3 (2024): 342, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00916471231223920>
 - 21 C. D. Batson and P. A. Schoenrade, "Measuring religion as quest: 1 validity concerns," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30, 4 (1991): 423, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1387277>
 - 22 Youngmee Kim and Larry Seidlitz, "Spirituality Moderates The Effect of Stress on Emotional and Physical Adjustment," *Personality and Individual Differences* 32, 8 (2002): 1377, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(01\)00128-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(01)00128-3)
 - 23 Jessie Dezutter, Bart Soenens and Dirk Hutsebaut, "Religiosity and Mental Health: A Further Exploration of The Relative Importance of Religious Behaviors vs. Religious Attitudes," *Personality and Individual Differences* 40, 4 (2006): 807, doi:10.1016/j.paid.2005.08.014

yield significantly different psychological outcomes.²⁴

Findings from Turkish studies align with these results. Erdoğan found that intrinsic religious orientation and a love-oriented perception of God positively influence psychological resilience.²⁵ Karaçalı and Korkmaz identified positive and significant relationships between religiosity, including its dimensions of personal religiosity, religious worship, and religious behaviour -and meaning in life. As participants' levels of religiosity increased, so did their perceived meaning in life. Furthermore, the study found that meaning in life is a significant predictor of psychological well-being.²⁶ Similarly, Kıraç reported that participants with intrinsic religious tendencies had higher levels of perceived meaning in life than those with extrinsic orientations, concluding that sincere religiosity is a factor that increases the sense of meaning in life.²⁷ Öztürk's research (n=753) revealed a positive link between religious orientation and optimism.²⁸ Gencer found significant associations between the PERMA model dimensions and all religious orientation types except quest orientation.²⁹ Kurnaz and Şentürk conducted a study with 498 individuals and explored the relationship between religious orientation and happiness in emerging adulthood. They found significant positive relationships between overall happiness levels and religious orientation, specifically intrinsic and extrinsic social religious orientations.³⁰ Vural and Ayten's study also found

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- 24 Joaquín García Alandete and Gloria Bernabé Valero, "Religious Orientation and Psychological Well-Being among Spanish Undergraduates [Orientaciones religiosas y bienestar psicológico de los estudiantes universitarios españoles]," *Acción Psicológica* 10, 1 (2013): 135, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5944/ap.10.1.7040>
- 25 Emine Erdoğan, "Tanrı Algısı, Dini Yönelim Biçimleri ve Öznel Dindarlığın Psikolojik Dayanıklılıkla İlişkisi: Üniversite Örneklemi," *Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12, 29 (2015): 236-237, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/mkusbed/issue/19575/208833>
- 26 Mesture Karaçalı ve Sezai Korkmaz, "Psikolojik İyi Oluş, Yaşamda Anlam ve Dindarlık Arasındaki İlişkiler," *Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 9, 2 (2023): 136-138, <https://doi.org/10.32955/neu.ilaf.2023.9.2.01>.
- 27 Ferdi Kıraç, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Dindarlık Eğilimi ve Anlam Duygusu," *Mukaddime* 7 (2013): 173, doi:10.19059/mukaddime.39321
- 28 Eyüp Ensar Öztürk, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinde İyimserlik, Dindarlık ve Dini Yönelim İlişkisi," *İslâmi İlimler Dergisi* 12, 3 (2017): 165, https://isamveri.org/pdfdr/002917/2017_3/2017_3_OZTURKEE.pdf
- 29 N. Gencer, "Dini Yönelimler ve PERMA İyi Oluş Modeli Arasındaki İlişki Üzerine Bir Araştırma," *İlahiyat Tetkikleri Dergisi* 59 (2023a): 82, <https://doi.org/10.5152/ilted.2023.23282>
- 30 Mahmut Kurnaz ve Habil Şentürk, "İlk Yetişkinlik Döneminde Dini Yönelim ve Mutluluk İlişkisi: Isparta Örneklemi," *Türk Din Psikolojisi Dergisi* 7 (2023): 10, <https://doi.org/10.59379/tdpd.1256218>

that religiosity positively influenced life satisfaction and emphasised the centrality of meaning in life.³¹

While some studies examine religious orientation through intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest dimensions, others address it more broadly as religiosity. However, research incorporating all four dimensions remains limited. A comprehensive approach is needed to better understand religious orientation. University students represent a key population for such studies because this developmental stage involves identity formation and evolving belief systems. This period follows adolescence and is characterised by the emergence of more defined personality and identity traits, along with increased consistency in emotions, thoughts, and behaviours.³² Academic, social, and psychological transitions during this period are likely to influence both religious orientation and the search for meaning and purpose in life.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the relationship between university students' religious orientation and their perception of the meaning and purpose of life, analyse how this relationship varies by demographic factors, and assess the predictive power of different religious orientation types on the meaning and purpose of life. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the levels of religious orientation among the participants?
2. How do the relationships between religious orientation and life's meaning and purpose differ according to demographic variables?
3. What is the relationship between participants' levels of religious orientation and their perceptions of the meaning and purpose of life?
4. To what extent do the types of religious orientation predict the meaning and purpose of life?

Method

This study is a quantitative research based on a relational survey model. Relational

31 M. Enes Vural and A. Ayten, "Testing the Mediating Role of Existential Meaning on the Link Between Religiosity and Satisfaction With Life: A Study on Turkish Muslim University Students," *Gümüşhane Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 11, 21 (2022): 11, <https://doi.org/10.53683/gifad.1030792>

32 N. Gencer, "The Relationship between Motivational Religiosity and Positivity of University Students," *Turkish Studies-Comparative Religious Studies* 18, 3 (2023b): 372-373, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.70872>

survey models aim to determine the level and direction of the relationships between two or more variables.³³ This study examines the relationship between university students' religious orientation and their perceptions of life's meaning and purpose, testing the predictive power of different religious orientation styles using causal-comparative and regression analyses.

Sample

The sample of the study consists of 500 associate and undergraduate students enrolled in various faculties of Hitit University. Participants were selected using the convenience sampling method.³⁴

Among the participants, 58.4% (n=292) were female and 41.6% (n=208) were male. Regarding age, 5.4% (n=27) were 18, 13.8% (n=69) were 19, 21.6% (n=108) were 20, 18.8% (n=94) were 21, 13.8% (n=69) were 22, 11.6% (n=58) were 23, and 15.0% (n=75) were 24 years old or older. In terms of academic year, 32.6% (n=163) were first-year students, 39.4% (n=197) were second-year students, 16.2% (n=81) were third-year students, and 11.8% (n=59) were fourth-year students. Of the sample, 43.8% (n=219) were associate degree students and 56.2% (n=281) were undergraduate students. Regarding place of residence, 13.6% (n=68) lived in a village/town, 28.2% (n=141) in a district, 49.2% (n=246) in a city, and 9.0% (n=45) in a metropolis. In terms of perceived income, 8.8% (n=44) reported low income, 81.4% (n=407) reported medium income, and 9.8% (n=49) reported high income. Regarding family structure, 8.8% (n=44) came from single-parent families, 73.6% (n=368) from nuclear families, and 17.6% (n=88) from extended families. As for parental attitudes, 32.8% (n=164) described their families as democratic, 9.2% (n=46) as authoritarian-oppressive, 9.8% (n=49) as unstable-inconsistent, 19.6% (n=98) as overprotective, and 28.6% (n=143) as permissive.

Measure

Personal Information Form

Prepared by the researchers, the form includes questions on various demographic variables (gender, age, grade level, education level, long-term place of residence, income, family structure, and parental attitudes).

Muslim Religious Orientation Scale- Revised (MROS-R)

33 Niyazi Karasar, *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemi* (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2015), 79.

34 Şener Büyüköztürk vd., *Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 14. bs. (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2013), 106.

Originally developed by Harlak et al.³⁵ and later revised by Ercan, the MROS-R includes 21 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale and comprises four sub-dimensions: intrinsic, extrinsic, quest, and fundamentalist orientation. The subscale items are as follows: intrinsic (1, 2, 7, 8, 13, 18), extrinsic (10, 11, 15, 16, 17), quest (4, 6, 9, 14, 19), and fundamentalist (3, 5, 12, 20, 21). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients reported in the original study were .93 (intrinsic), .83 (extrinsic), .73 (quest), and .81 (fundamentalist).³⁶ Higher scores reflect distinct religious orientations.

In this study, Cronbach's alpha values were .69 for intrinsic religious orientation (IRO), .74 for extrinsic religious orientation (ERO), .66 for quest religious orientation (QRO), and .65 for fundamentalist religious orientation (FRO).

Meaning and Purpose of the Life Scale

Developed by Aydın et al., the Meaning and Purpose of Life Scale consists of 17 items (11 positive, 6 negative) and two sub-dimensions. Rated on a 5-point Likert scale, the total scores range from 17 to 85, with higher scores indicating greater perceived meaning. The scale showed strong psychometric properties: KMO=.93, explained variance=55%, Cronbach's α =.91, test-retest=.74, and split-half=.81.³⁷

In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for the meaning and purpose of life scale was .79.

Procedure and Statistical Analysis

Ethics committee approval was received from Hitit University for this study (Number: 2023-248; Date: 07.11.2023). Following ethics committee approval, data were collected from students in person or online between March and May 2024. Participants provided informed consent after being briefed on the study's purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

35 H. Harlak, M. Eskin and Fatma Demirkıran, "The Development and the Psychometric Investigation of the Muslim Religious Orientation Scale (MROS)," XXIX. International Congress of Psychology 20-25 July 2008, Berlin, *International Journal Of Psychology* 43, 3-4 (June-August 2008): 63.

36 Nilüfer Ercan, "The Predictors of Attitudes Toward Physical Wife Abuse: Ambivalent Sexism, System Justification and Religious Orientation," (Doktora tezi, Middle East Technical University, 2009), 47-51, Yök Tez Merkezi (250611).

37 Cüneyd Aydın, Mevlüt Kaya ve Hüseyin Peker, "Hayatın Anlam ve Amacı Ölçeği: Geçerlik ve Güvenirlilik Çalışması," *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 38 (2015): 48-51, <https://doi.org/10.17120/omuifd.80248>

Data were analysed using SPSS 25.0. Normal distribution was assumed based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and skewness/kurtosis values (± 1.50), allowing the use of parametric tests.³⁸ Descriptive statistics summarised sample characteristics. Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA assessed group differences, while Pearson correlation examined associations between religious orientation and meaning/purpose in life. Multiple linear regression identified the predictors of the dependent variable. The significance level was set at 0.05.

Results

Descriptive Findings on the Religious Orientation and Meaning and Purpose of Life Scales

The first sub-problem of the research aims to describe the participants' levels of religious orientation. Accordingly, the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the scores obtained by the participants from the IRO, ERO, QRO, FRO, and MPL scales are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Mean Scores on the Religious Orientations and Meaning and Purpose of Life Scales

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	\bar{X}	SD
IRO	500	3.50	7.00	6.31	.76
ERO	500	1.00	7.00	4.93	1.40
QRO	500	1.00	7.00	4.13	1.45
FRO	500	1.00	7.00	4.93	1.27
MPL	500	2.12	4.76	3.72	.54

As shown in Table 1, the participants' IRO levels were quite high ($\bar{X}=6.31$; $SD=0.76$), indicating that students have internalised their religious beliefs and considered them at the centre of their lives. ERO ($\bar{X}=4.93$; $SD=1.40$) and FRO ($\bar{X}=4.93$; $SD=1.27$) scores are at moderate-to-high levels, while the QRO mean score ($\bar{X}=4.13$; $SD=1.45$) is relatively lower. Among all types of religious orientation, the QRO is the lowest. This finding reveals that students tend to exhibit more traditional and IROs rather than a questioning attitude towards religious matters.

The mean score for the MPL scale ($\bar{X}=3.72$; $SD=0.54$) shows that students generally perceive their lives as meaningful and purposeful, although not at a very high level. The scores ranged between 2.12 and 4.76. Overall, the findings demonstrate that university students have high levels of IRO, which may be related to their perceptions of MPL.

38 B. G. Tabachnick and L. S. Fidell, *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 6th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2013), 72-82

Comparison of Religious Orientations and Meaning and Purpose of Life Scores by Demographic Variables

In the second sub-problem, participants' religious orientation and perceptions of meaning and purpose in life were compared based on gender, education level, parental attitude, and income level. Since no significant differences were found for variables such as age, class level, place of long-term residence, and family type, they are not included in the tables.

Table 2.

Relationships between Religious Orientations and the Meaning and Purpose of Life by Demographic Variables

Variable	Group	n	$\bar{X} \pm SD$	t/F	p
IRO (Gender)	Female	292	6.39 ± .66	t=2.653	.008
	Male	208	6.21 ± .88		
ERO (Education)	Associate	219	5.10 ± 1.42	t=2.343	.020
	Undergraduate	281	4.80 ± 1.37		
QRO (Education)	Associate	219	3.93 ± 1.52	t=-2.715	.007
	Undergraduate	281	4.28 ± 1.37		
FRO (Education)	Associate	219	5.12 ± 1.20	t=3.055	.002
	Undergraduate	281	4.77 ± 1.31		
MPL (Parental Attitude)	Democratic ¹	164	3.82 ± .52	F=8.133	.000
	Authoritarian ²	46	3.62 ± .56		1>2,3
	Inconsistent ³	49	3.35 ± .52		2>3
	Overprotective ⁴	98	3.72 ± .55		4>3
	Permissive ⁵	143	3.76 ± .51		5>3
FRO (Income)	Low ¹	44	4.40 ± 1.28	F=5.461	.005
	Middle ²	407	5.01 ± 1.23		2>1
	High ³	49	4.70 ± 1.48		
MPL (Income)	Low ¹	44	3.68 ± .44	F=6.043	.003
	Middle ²	407	3.69 ± .54		3>1,2
	High ³	49	3.97 ± .53		

According to the findings presented in Table 2, a statistically significant difference was observed in the IRO scores based on gender ($t=2.653$, $p=.008$). Female participants ($\bar{X}=6.39$) reported significantly higher levels of IRO than their male counterparts ($\bar{X}=6.21$), indicating a greater internalisation of religious beliefs among women.

Furthermore, education level was found to be a significant factor in QRO and FRO scores. Specifically, associate degree students demonstrated significantly higher ERO scores ($\bar{X}=5.10$) than undergraduate students ($\bar{X}=4.80$; $t=2.343$, $p=.020$). Similarly, associate degree students scored higher on FRO ($\bar{X}=5.12$) compared to undergraduates ($\bar{X}=4.77$; $t=3.055$, $p=.002$). In contrast, undergraduate students exhibited significantly higher QRO scores ($\bar{X}=4.28$) than associate degree students ($\bar{X}=3.93$; $t=-2.715$, $p=.007$). These results indicate that with increasing education

level, extrinsic and fundamentalist religious orientations decrease, while the quest religious orientation increases.

A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in scores according to perceived parental attitude ($F=8.133, p<.001$). The highest MPL scores were reported by students who perceived their family environment as democratic ($\bar{X}=3.82$), whereas the lowest scores were observed among those from unstable-inconsistent family backgrounds ($\bar{X}=3.35$). These results indicate that supportive and consistent parental attitudes may foster stronger perceptions of meaning and purpose in life.

Regarding FRO, a significant difference was found between income levels ($F=5.461; p=.005$), with the middle-income group showing the highest FRO scores. Similarly, a significant difference was found in MPL scores based on income level ($F=6.043; p=.003$), with the highest scores in the high-income group ($\bar{X}=3.97$) and the lowest in the low-income group ($\bar{X}=3.68$). These findings reveal a positive relationship between socioeconomic status and both fundamentalist religious orientation and perceived meaning and purpose in life.

Relationship between Religious Orientations and the Meaning and Purpose of Life

The third sub-problem examined the relationships between the sub-dimensions of religious orientation and the meaning and purpose of life. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Religious Orientations and the Meaning and Purpose of Life

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. IRO	1				
2. ERO	.403**	1			
3. QRO	.002	.163**	1		
4. FRO	.475**	.515**	-.082	1	
5. MPL	.222**	-.009	-.088*	.053	1

N=500; *p<.05; **p<.01

According to the results of the Pearson correlation analysis, a positive and statistically significant relationship was found between IRO and MPL ($r=.222; p<.01$), suggesting that individuals who internalise their religious beliefs tend to find life more meaningful and purposeful. On the other hand, a significant negative correlation was found between QRO and MPL ($r=-.088; p<.05$), indicating that individuals who tend to question religious beliefs may have a lower perception of life's meaning and purpose. Therefore, while an internalised religious orientation

may contribute to a greater sense of meaning in life, a quest approach may weaken this sense. No significant relationship was found between ERO, FRO, and MPL ($p > .05$).

Predictive Power of Religious Orientations on the Meaning and Purpose of Life

In the fourth sub-problem, the predictive power of religious orientations on the perception of meaning and purpose in life was examined. The results of the multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.

Multiple Regression Analysis of Religious Orientation Types as Predictors of the Meaning and Purpose of Life

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2,859	207		13,783	,000		
IRO	,196	036	,276	5,469	,000	,740	1,352
ERO	-,034	021	-,088	-1,656	,098	,663	1,507
QRO	-,029	017	-,077	-1,718	,086	,936	1,068
FRO	-,017	,023	-,039	-,707	,480	,627	1,594
$R=,258$	$R^2=,067$	$Adj. R^2=,059$		$F=8,856; p<,001$			

According to the results of the multiple regression analysis, the collective effect of IRO, ERO, QRO, and FRO on predicting the meaning and purpose of life was found to be statistically significant ($F=8.856; p<.001$). Although the overall model is significant, the amount of explained variance is relatively low. The obtained values of $R^2=.067$ and adjusted. $R^2=.059$ indicate that religious orientation types explain approximately 6.7% of the total variance in the meaning and purpose of life. These results indicate that while the model demonstrates statistical significance, its explanatory power remains limited.

Among the predictors, only IRO emerged as a significant and positive predictor of MPL ($B=.196, \beta=.276, t=5.469, p<.001$). In contrast, ERO, QRO, and FRO did not significantly contribute to the prediction of MPL. This finding highlights the unique role of intrinsic religious orientation in fostering a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in life. This reveals that internalising religion as a central guiding principle and intrinsic motivation is associated with stronger existential orientation and life fulfilment.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the findings obtained in the study, students scored highest on the IRO dimension and lowest on the QRO dimension. This shows that the participants

view their religious beliefs not as instrumental means but as the ultimate ends. This result aligns with Allport and Ross's definition of intrinsic orientation³⁹, indicating that when religion becomes central to one's life, it serves as a powerful source of personal meaning. Similar results have been reported in the literature.⁴⁰ Descriptive findings also indicated that participants' MPL scores were at a moderate-to-high level, revealing that students generally perceive their lives as meaningful and directed, albeit not at the highest level. Considering that individuals of university age are often engaged in identity exploration and coping with uncertainties about the future, their search for meaning is understood to be dynamic.⁴¹ An IRO may play a significant role in identity formation and meaning-making during this process. Supporting this view, Kim and Seidlitz found that IRO contributes to psychological well-being and life purpose.⁴²

Regarding gender differences, female participants scored higher on the IRO dimension than males, a finding consistent with existing literature.⁴³ Women's greater sensitivity to religious values and their IRO may lead them to utilise religious frameworks more actively in their meaning-making processes. Cirhinlioğlu and Ok emphasised that women tend to value the emotional and relational aspects of religion more strongly.⁴⁴ Furthermore, women's greater inclination to internalise religion, live it more sincerely, and apply religious teachings in their lives may explain their higher scores on IRO. Traits such as conscience, compassion, and sensitivity, which are emphasised in religious teachings, are also more strongly expressed among women.⁴⁵

39 Allport and Ross, "Personal Religious Orientation and Prejudice," 432.

40 Erdoğan, "Tanrı Algısı, Dini Yönelim Biçimleri ve Öznel Dindarlığın Psikolojik Dayanıklılıkla İlişkisi," 235; Sema Eryücel, "Dini Yönelim ve Başa Çıkma," *Turkish Studies* 13, 2 (2018): 393-412. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.13143>; Mehmet İkis ve Ali Kuşat, "Öz-Duyarlık ve Dini Yönelim İlişkisi," *ASEAD* 8, 1 (2021): 117, <https://dergipark.org.tr/pub/asead/issue/60135/838844>

41 Karşlı, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Hayatın Anlamı ve Dindarlık İlişkisi," 168-171.

42 Kim and Seidlitz, "Spirituality Moderates the Effect of Stress on Emotional and Physical Adjustment," 1377.

43 Aydın, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Dini Tutum İle Hayattaki Anlam Düzeyleri Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi," 94; Ercan, "The Predictors of Attitudes Toward Physical Wife Abuse," 60; Gencer, "Dini Yönelimler ve PERMA İyi Oluş Modeli...", 87; Necmi Karşlı, "İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinde Psikolojik İyi Oluş ve Dindarlık," *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 53 (2021): 179. <https://doi.org/10.21054/deuifd.895059>

44 Fatma Gül Cirhinlioğlu ve Üzeyir Ok, "Kadınlar Mı Yoksa Erkekler Mi Daha Dindar?," *Zeitschrift für die Welt der Türken (Journal of World of Turks)* 3, 1 (2011): 121-141, <https://www.dieweltdertuerken.org/index.php/ZfWT/article/view/217>

45 N. Gencer, A. Tekgöz Obuz ve R. Babahanoğlu, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Spiritüel İyi Oluş ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet Algısı," *Hitit İlahiyat Dergisi* 20, 2 (2021): 739, <https://doi.org/10.14395/hid.951202>

In terms of education level, undergraduate students had significantly higher QRO scores than associate degree students. This supports Batson's notion that the QRO involves evaluating one's religious beliefs through experiential and critical processes rather than accepting absolute truths.⁴⁶ Additionally, the finding that ERO and FRO scores decreased as the education level increased indicates that religious structures are internalised more flexibly with higher education. Similar findings have been reported in the literature. For example, Baynal identified a negative correlation between education and religiosity.⁴⁷ Studies by Acar et al.⁴⁸, Aydemir⁴⁹, and Kurnaz and Şentürk also reached similar conclusions.⁵⁰ However, Gencer found that QRO levels increased as the education level rose.⁵¹

The family is a fundamental institution in shaping one's understanding of life. In a study, participants were asked "Which institution do you think is the primary source of life's meaning?" and 47.2% of the total participants responded "family and close social circle." This rate was found to be 44.6% in the student group. Another result of this study indicated a relationship between parental attitudes and MPL. Participants from democratic families had the highest MPL scores, while those from unstable-inconsistent families had the lowest. The mean scores of those from authoritarian-oppressive, overprotective, and overly permissive families were also significantly higher than those from unstable-inconsistent families.⁵² The results indicate that a democratic parenting style positively influences individuals' perceptions of life's meaning and purpose by fostering self-expression and belief questioning. These environments enhance self-perception and a sense of control.⁵³

46 Batson, "Religion As Prosocial: ...?", 32.

47 Fatma Baynal, "Yetişkinlerde Dindarlık ve Ruh Sağlığı İlişkinin Çeşitli Değişkenlere Göre İncelenmesi," *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4, 1 (2015): 216, <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.96269>

48 Nilüfer Voltan Acar, İbrahim Yıldırım ve Tuncay Ergene, "Bireylerin Dindarlık Düzeylerinin Bazı Değişkenler Açısından İncelenmesi," *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 12 (1996): 50, <https://dergipark.org.tr/pub/hunefd/issue/7825/102852>

49 Rüveyda Efdal Aydemir, "Dindarlık ve Mutluluk İlişkisi (İlk Yetişkinlik Dönemi)," (Yüksek lisans tezi, Ondokuzmayıs Üniversitesi, 2008), 52, Yök Tez Merkezi (221575).

50 Kurnaz ve Şentürk, "İlk Yetişkinlik Döneminde Dini Yönelim ve Mutluluk İlişkisi," 20-21.

51 Gencer, "Dini Yönelimler ve PERMA İyi Oluş Modeli...", 89.

52 Recep Yıldız ve Sadık Emecen, "Hayatı Anlamlandıran Temel Kurumlar: Aile Sistemleri Teorisi Temelinde Niceliksel Bir Araştırma," *Aydın İnsan ve Toplum Dergisi* 6, 2 (2020): 250, <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/aitdergi/issue/60283/815949>

53 İbrahim Demirci ve Ali Haydar Şar, "Kendini Bilme ve Psikolojik İyi Oluş Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi," *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, 5 (2017), 2718-2719, <https://dergipark.org.tr/pub/itobiad/issue/31500/346203>

Thus, individuals raised in democratic family settings may find life more meaningful and develop more positive responses to existential questions. Conversely, individuals from dysfunctional families may turn to maladaptive behaviours for meaning. Research shows that as parents' democratic behaviours increase, children's negative attitudes towards addictive substances also rise.⁵⁴ Güngör reported that children raised in unstable-inconsistent family environments -characterized by unclear rules, unstable-inconsistent consequences, and contradictory parental behaviors- are more likely to experience behavioural problems. These children may face difficulties in developing a stable personality, acting with discernment, and solving problems.⁵⁵ Consequently, individuals raised in such environments may struggle to define their life goals and lead a meaningful life.

Middle-income participants scored significantly higher on the FRO scale than the low- and high-income groups, especially compared to the low-income group. Several studies in the literature report significant positive correlations between income and religiosity, consistent with this study's findings.⁵⁶ FRO is defined as an uncritical commitment to religious beliefs and practices based on absolute truths and strict rules. Kurnaz and Şentürk stated that individuals with moderate income levels may experience less stress and anxiety in managing life circumstances, allowing them to focus more easily on religious practices. This could facilitate the fulfilment of economic-based religious obligations such as zekat, charity, sacrifice, and pilgrimage, thereby influencing religious orientation.⁵⁷ Kınter also found that higher income levels were associated with increased scores on the belief and worship dimensions of religiosity.⁵⁸ Conversely, individuals with low income reported lower engagement in religious practices compared with those with higher income.⁵⁹ However, there are also studies reporting no significant relationship

54 Kasım Aksoy, "Lise Öğrencilerinin Bağımlılık Yapan Maddelere İlişkin Tutumları ve Bu Tutumlara Etki Eden Değişkenlerin İncelenmesi (Malatya İli Örneği)," (Yüksek lisans tezi, İnönü Üniversitesi, 2006), 121-123, Yök Tez Merkezi (209615).

55 M. Güngör, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Problem Çözme Becerisi ile Aile Tipleri ve Aile Tutumları İlişkisi," *Qualitative Studies* 7, 4 (2012): 43-44, <https://doi.org/10.12739/10.12739>

56 Aydemir, "Dindarlık ve Mutluluk İlişkisi," 51; Nurten Kınter, "Benlik Saygısı ve Dindarlık İlişkisi," (Doktora tezi, Uludağ Üniversitesi, 2008), 195, Yök Tez Merkezi (220974); Kurnaz ve Şentürk, "İlk Yetişkinlik Döneminde Dini Yönelim ve Mutluluk İlişkisi," 22.

57 Kurnaz ve Şentürk, "İlk Yetişkinlik Döneminde Dini Yönelim ve Mutluluk İlişkisi," 23.

58 Kınter, "Benlik Saygısı ve Dindarlık İlişkisi," 195.

59 Özlem Köftegöl, "Yetişkin Bireylerde Ölüm Kaygısı ve Dindarlık," (Yüksek lisans tezi, Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi, 2018), 129, Yök Tez Merkezi (523429).

between income level and religious orientation⁶⁰ or a negative correlation between income level and religious orientation.⁶¹

High-income participants scored higher on the MPL, revealing that meeting basic needs may allow individuals to focus more deeply on existential meaning. This finding aligns with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, indicating that material well-being can activate deeper searches for meaning. Ward and King, in two separate studies, found a positive relationship between income and life meaning, partially explained by perceptions of autonomy, competence, and control. Additionally, individuals anticipate that higher future income will enhance their sense of life meaning and happiness.⁶² In a study using the PERMA model, Gencer found that increases in income were associated with higher scores on components such as positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishments, and overall well-being.⁶³ Altıparmak⁶⁴ and Aydemir⁶⁵ reported similar results. However, some studies found contrasting results. For example, Kahneman and Deaton concluded that beyond a certain income threshold, emotional well-being—and thus life meaning—does not increase further.⁶⁶ This implies that while money ensures a degree of security and opportunity, deeper sources of meaning (e.g., relationships, values, and purpose) become essential beyond a point. Similarly, Saraç, İpek, and Çavuş found no significant difference in university students’ perceived life meaning according to their socioeconomic status.⁶⁷

60 Gencer, “Dini Yönelimler ve PERMA İyi Oluş Modeli...”, 92; Muhammed Kızılgöç, *Yalnızlık Umutsuzluk ve Dindarlık*, 2. bs. (İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2021), 247; Mustafa Koç, “Demografik Özellikler ile Dindarlık Arasındaki İlişki: Yetişkinler Üzerine Ampirik Bir Araştırma,” *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 19, 2 (2010): 217-248, <https://dergipark.org.tr/pub/uluifd/issue/13479/162811>

61 Karlı, “İlahiyat Fakültesi Öğrencilerinde Psikolojik İyi Oluş ve Dindarlık”, 180.

62 S. J. Ward and L. A. King, “Exploring The Place of Financial Status in The Good Life: Income and Meaning in Life,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 14, 3 (2019): 319-320, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2017.1402075>

63 Gencer, “Dini Yönelimler ve PERMA İyi Oluş Modeli...”, 88.

64 Demet Altıparmak, “Öğretmenlerin Yaşam Amacı ve Anlamı Düzeyleri ve İyi Oluşları Arasındaki İlişkide Öz-Duyarlık Değişkeninin Aracı Rolü,” (Yüksek lisans tezi, İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim Üniversitesi, 2019), 64, Yök Tez Merkezi (598718).

65 Aydemir, “Dindarlık ve Mutluluk İlişkisi,” 58.

66 D. Kahneman and A. Deaton, “High Income Improves Evaluation of Life but Not Emotional Well-Being,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107, 38 (2010): 16490-16492, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1011492107>

67 Hümeysaraç, Aslı Nur İpek ve Fadile Zeynep Çavuş, “Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Yaşam Anlamı Düzeylerinin Farklı Değişkenler Bağlamında İncelenmesi,” *Academic Review of Humanities and Social Sciences* 1, 1 (2018): 57, <https://dergipark.org.tr/pub/arhuss/issue/40216/478918>

The correlation findings showed a significant positive relationship between IRO and MPL and a weak negative relationship between QRO and MPL. This may be interpreted through Frankl's concept of an "existential vacuum."⁶⁸ During the questioning process, individuals may not yet have reached a final sense of meaning, leading to a perception of life as less meaningful. These findings highlight the role of authentic religiosity in meaning-making. Bahadır explained this by describing religion as a value system capable of providing coherent answers about life's meaning.⁶⁹ On the other hand, the lack of significant relationships between the extrinsic and fundamentalist orientations and MPL indicates suggests that these orientations do not foster a profound existential sense of meaning. This supports Batson et al.'s argument that extrinsic religiosity is often limited to superficial belief structures.⁷⁰ Supporting studies, such as Göcen's, found that higher religious orientation correlates with greater life meaning, self-acceptance, and positive relationships—all subdimensions of psychological well-being.⁷¹ Aydın also found a significant positive relationship ($r=0.336$; $p < .01$) between religious attitude and meaning in life among university students.⁷² Yalvaç Arıcı and Çevik, in a qualitative study with 26 university students, reported that all participants believed life without meaning and purpose was unimaginable, and the majority stated that life's meaning and purpose should be rooted in faith.⁷³

Multiple regression analysis showed that only IRO was a significant predictor of MPL. This finding indicates that religiosity becomes functional as a source of internal motivation and meaning production when it is genuinely internalised. IRO, characterised by sincere religious experiences such as worship, patience, gratitude,

68 Frankl, *İnsanın Anlam Arayışı*, 120-122.

69 Abdülkerim Bahadır, "Hayatın Anlam Kazanmasında Psiko-Sosyal Faktörler ve Din," *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 6 (2000): 220, <http://dergisosyalbil.selcuk.edu.tr/susbed/article/view/874/826>

70 Batson, Schoenrade and Ventis, *Religion and The Individual*:..., 169-171.

71 Gülüşan Göcen, "Pozitif Psikoloji Düzleminde Psikolojik İyi Olma ve Dini Yönelim İlişkisi: Yetişkinler Üzerine Bir Araştırma," *Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi* 7, 13 (2013): 118, https://isamveri.org/pdfdrq/D03402/2013_7_13/2013_7_13_GOCENG.pdf

72 Aydın, "Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Dini Tutum İle Hayattaki Anlam Düzeyleri Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi," 98.

73 Handan Yalvaç Arıcı ve İsmail Çevik, "Üniversite Gençlerinin Hayatın Anlam ve Amacını Temellendirmede Dinin Belirleyiciliğine Dair Görüşleri: Karabük Örneği," *Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication* 15,1 (2025): 207, <https://doi.org/10.7456/tojdac.1566679>

and prayer, may act as an internalised guiding force in daily life.⁷⁴ Its relationship with life meaning, life satisfaction, and well-being has been demonstrated in national and international studies.⁷⁵ All these results are consistent with the findings of this study. However, the low explanatory power of the model (Adj. $R^2=.059$) reveals that perceptions of life's meaning are multidimensional and cannot be explained solely by religious orientation.

In summary, the findings of the study revealed that university students had high IRO levels, which were positively associated with their perceptions of meaning and purpose in life. Conversely, QRO showed a negative correlation with life meaning. Other religious orientations (extrinsic and fundamentalist) were not found to have a direct influence on meaning perception. Demographic variables such as gender, education level, parental attitudes, and income also influenced both religious orientation styles and perceptions of life meaning. In this context, individuals' internalisation of religious beliefs may serve as an important psychological resource in living a more meaningful and purposeful life.

Limitations and directions for future research

This study has several limitations. The single-university sample limits generalizability, and self-report data may be affected by limited self-awareness, and the cross-sectional design restricts causal conclusions. The instruments were based on specific theoretical models, and important variables such as personality, life satisfaction, and psychological resilience were not considered. Future studies should include these to allow deeper psychological modelling.

The findings indicate that high IRO reflects meaningful religious engagement and supports psychological well-being. Therefore, spiritual counselling services in universities should promote religious identity development and IRO. Conversely, the negative link between QRO and life meaning reveals that religious questioning

74 M. Dowson and M. Miner, "Interacting Religious Orientations and Personal Well-Being Among Australian Church Leaders," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 18, 1 (2015): 72, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2014.1003167>

75 B. Beit Hallahmi and M. Argyle, "Dindarlığın Etkileri- II: "Bireysel Yüzey," çev. Adem Şahin, *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 11 (2001): 187, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/neuifd/issue/19709/210574>; Feim Gashi, "Dua ve Hayat Memnuniyeti Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırma (Kırklareli Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi ve Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Öğrencileri Örneği)," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 25, 2 (2016): 21, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/uluifd/issue/24733/261527>; Göcen, "Pozitif Psikoloji Düzleminde Psikolojik İyi Olma ve Dini Yönelim İlişkisi, 118; Hisham Abu-Raiya et al., "Religious Coping and Health and Well-Being among Jews and Muslims in Israel," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 30, 3 (2020): 202, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508619.2020.1727692>

may cause temporary uncertainty, requiring sensitive support. University counselling services should address such experiences as religious doubt, questioning, and crises of faith with sensitivity and provide support during these periods. Collaboration among experts in religious education, psychology of religion, social work, and theology could help develop spiritual counselling models. Spiritual counsellors should be trained to support students experiencing religious questioning.

Given the role of democratic parental attitudes in fostering life meaning, awareness programmes for families could also be beneficial.

Future research should consider variables such as spiritual well-being, hope, and resilience to build more comprehensive models. Finally, the predictive power of IRO underscores the importance of integrating belief systems into a broader life philosophy. The psychology of religion-based seminars, workshops, and group activities in university settings may help students deepen their search for meaning.

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