

Meaning of Life, Academic Motivation, and Academic Achievement among BS Students: A Correlational Study

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the relationship between meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement among undergraduate students enrolled in BS programs. It was hypothesized that meaning of life would positively influence academic motivation and academic achievement, and that academic motivation would serve as a mediator between meaning of life and academic achievement. A sample of 250 BS students (aged 18–25 years) was selected through purposive convenient sampling from various universities in Karachi. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006), Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; Vallerand et al., 1992), and self-reported GPA were employed to measure the key variables. Data were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation, linear regression, and mediation analysis.

Preliminary findings revealed that students with a higher sense of life meaning demonstrated stronger academic motivation and better academic achievement. Moreover, academic motivation significantly mediated the relationship between meaning of life and academic achievement, suggesting that purposeful living enhances students' intrinsic motivation, which in turn promotes academic success. Gender-based analysis indicated minor differences, with female students reporting slightly higher academic motivation. These findings highlight the importance of existential purpose in fostering motivation and performance, offering implications for educational counseling and student well-being initiatives in higher education settings.

Keywords: *Meaning of life, academic motivation, academic achievement, BS students, mediation, higher education.*

Introduction

The pursuit of academic success among university students is influenced by a range of psychological, motivational, and existential factors. Beyond intellectual ability, an individual's perception of meaning and purpose in life plays a crucial role in shaping their motivation, perseverance, and overall academic performance. Within the higher education context, particularly among BS students, the transition into adulthood is marked by increased responsibility, self-direction, and the search for personal identity and life goals. Understanding

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how meaning of life relates to academic motivation and academic achievement provides valuable insight into the psychological determinants of student success and well-being.

The concept of meaning of life refers to an individual's understanding of life's purpose, coherence, and significance (Steger et al., 2006). Viktor Frankl (1963), through his existential theory, proposed that the search for meaning is a fundamental human drive. Individuals who possess a strong sense of purpose are more likely to display resilience, goal-directed behavior, and psychological stability. In the academic domain, meaning in life may act as an intrinsic motivator, guiding students toward achievement and persistence in the face of challenges (Steger, 2012).

Academic motivation represents the internal and external factors that initiate, sustain, and direct students' engagement in learning activities (Vallerand et al., 1992). It is often categorized into intrinsic motivation—engaging in learning for personal satisfaction and growth—and extrinsic motivation, which involves striving for external rewards such as grades or recognition. Research has demonstrated that intrinsic motivation, which is closely linked with personal meaning and fulfillment, is positively associated with academic achievement and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kusurkar et al., 2012). Conversely, lack of motivation or reliance solely on extrinsic rewards often leads to academic disengagement and lower achievement (Diseth, 2011).

Academic achievement—commonly measured by grade point average (GPA)—is a widely accepted indicator of academic performance and success. While cognitive ability contributes to achievement, recent studies have highlighted the importance of psychological constructs such as meaning, purpose, and motivation in predicting academic outcomes (Ahmad & Jalil, 2019). Students who perceive their education as aligned with a broader sense of life purpose tend to exhibit stronger academic engagement, better coping strategies, and higher academic performance (Duffy & Dik, 2013). This suggests that the integration of existential meaning into academic pursuits can enhance both motivation and achievement.

In Pakistan's educational context, university students often face academic stress, career uncertainty, and socio-economic pressures that challenge their sense of direction and motivation. The presence of a clear meaning in life can serve as a protective factor, promoting persistence and optimism despite academic and personal challenges (Naseer & Saeed, 2020). However, limited empirical work has explored the intersection between existential meaning and academic functioning among BS students in Pakistan. Examining this relationship may offer new insights for counselors, educators, and policymakers seeking to enhance student motivation and well-being in higher education institutions.

Thus, the present study aims to investigate the interrelationship among meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement in BS students. It further explores whether academic motivation mediates the relationship between meaning of life and academic performance. Understanding these associations will not only contribute to academic psychology literature but also provide practical implications for designing motivation-based counseling and academic support programs that foster purposeful engagement and success among university students.

Furthermore, the construct of meaning in life has been associated with a range of positive psychological outcomes, including emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and academic resilience. Students who possess a clear sense of purpose are better equipped to manage academic stress, maintain goal-directed behavior, and recover from setbacks (Bronk et al., 2009). Conversely, lack of meaning or existential confusion can lead to disengagement, procrastination, and a sense of hopelessness, which negatively affects academic performance (Steger, 2012). The presence of meaning provides a cognitive framework through which individuals interpret challenges as meaningful and surmountable, thereby reinforcing intrinsic motivation and long-term persistence. This perspective aligns with Frankl's (1963) notion that

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when individuals perceive purpose in their suffering or effort, they are more likely to find satisfaction and success in their pursuits.

In the Pakistani educational and cultural context, understanding the role of meaning and motivation is particularly relevant. University students often navigate multiple pressures, including familial expectations, competitive academic standards, and socioeconomic limitations (Iqbal & Aftab, 2018). Within collectivist societies, meaning is often derived not only from individual aspirations but also from fulfilling familial and societal roles (Riaz & Saleem, 2019). Therefore, students who internalize their educational goals as a means of contributing to family honor and social progress may experience a deepened sense of purpose that strengthens their motivation and achievement. Integrating this culturally sensitive understanding of meaning with academic motivation may therefore provide a more holistic explanation of student engagement and success within the local context.

Literature Review

The literature on meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement underscores the interconnectedness of existential and motivational factors in predicting students' academic success. Scholars have increasingly emphasized that learning is not merely a cognitive process but also a deeply psychological and purposive activity. The presence of meaning and purpose acts as a catalyst for motivation, engagement, and persistence among university students (Frankl, 1963; Steger et al., 2006).

Meaning of Life and Academic Motivation

The construct of meaning in life has its roots in Viktor Frankl's (1963) existential theory, which posits that humans are inherently driven by the desire to find purpose and coherence in life. This existential meaning contributes to psychological stability, resilience, and motivation. Steger et al. (2006) conceptualized meaning in life as having two components: presence of meaning (the degree to which individuals perceive their lives as meaningful) and search for meaning (the extent to which they strive to find meaning). Empirical studies have demonstrated that students with a strong sense of meaning tend to exhibit higher intrinsic motivation and greater engagement in learning (Dik et al., 2015). Meaning in life provides a motivational framework by linking personal goals to a broader sense of purpose. According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), intrinsic motivation arises when individuals perceive their actions as autonomous, competent, and connected to their values. Thus, the presence of meaning reinforces intrinsic academic motivation, leading to greater satisfaction and persistence. Research by Steger (2012) and Duffy and Dik (2013) found that meaning-oriented students display deeper learning strategies, sustained effort, and enhanced self-efficacy, which contribute to improved academic outcomes.

Academic Motivation and Academic Achievement

Motivation is widely recognized as a core determinant of academic success. The Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) developed by Vallerand et al. (1992) categorizes motivation into intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation dimensions. Intrinsically motivated students engage in learning for personal fulfillment, curiosity, and growth, whereas extrinsically motivated students are driven by external rewards or avoidance of failure. Numerous studies have shown that intrinsic motivation is more strongly associated with academic achievement, creativity, and persistence (Diseth, 2011; Kusurkar et al., 2012). Empirical evidence indicates that motivation mediates the relationship between psychological well-being and academic performance. Pintrich and De Groot (1990) found that motivated students display superior self-regulated learning behaviors, such as goal setting, effort management, and metacognitive

monitoring. In a Pakistani study, Ahmad and Jalil (2019) reported that university students with higher intrinsic motivation achieved better grades and reported greater life satisfaction. Conversely, a lack of motivation or over-reliance on extrinsic rewards often leads to academic disengagement and burnout (Reeve, 2012). Therefore, understanding how meaning of life influences motivation provides valuable insight into mechanisms that enhance achievement.

Meaning of Life, Motivation, and Academic Achievement: A Mediational Perspective

Recent research suggests that the relationship between meaning of life and academic achievement may be mediated by academic motivation. Meaning provides students with internalized goals and a sense of direction, which in turn enhances motivation to achieve academically (Hodge et al., 2018). In a longitudinal study, Park et al. (2019) found that students who reported higher life meaning demonstrated stronger academic motivation, which predicted higher GPA scores over time. This mediation effect highlights the importance of purpose-driven learning, where students perceive education not merely as a requirement but as a meaningful pursuit linked to their personal and societal goals. Moreover, meaning-centered education frameworks emphasize that when students connect their studies to broader existential values—such as contribution, personal growth, or fulfillment—they show improved academic outcomes (Martela & Steger, 2016). Such students tend to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than threats to self-worth. This positive orientation enhances both perseverance and academic resilience, reinforcing the notion that meaning serves as a psychological anchor for sustained motivation and performance.

Cultural Context and Student Experience in Pakistan

Within the Pakistani context, where education is often intertwined with familial expectations and societal advancement, the role of meaning and motivation gains particular importance. Students in collectivist cultures may derive meaning not only from personal aspirations but also from fulfilling family responsibilities and contributing to community welfare (Riaz & Saleem, 2019). A study by Naseer and Saeed (2020) revealed that Pakistani university students who perceived their academic journey as meaningful reported higher motivation and lower academic stress. However, the pressure to meet social and familial expectations can sometimes shift students toward extrinsic motivation, emphasizing achievement for recognition rather than personal growth (Iqbal & Aftab, 2018). This dynamic highlights the need to cultivate intrinsic motivation through meaning-oriented counseling and mentoring interventions in higher education. Enhancing students' awareness of personal purpose and aligning academic goals with individual values can foster authentic motivation and sustainable achievement in university settings.

In addition to motivation, the psychological mechanisms linking meaning of life to academic performance involve enhanced self-regulation, resilience, and goal orientation. Students with a well-defined sense of purpose are more likely to set long-term goals, regulate their emotions, and sustain effort over time (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Meaningful engagement enables learners to perceive academic challenges as opportunities for personal growth rather than as threats to self-worth. Research by Henderson and Knight (2012) demonstrated that individuals with higher life meaning exhibit greater psychological resilience and adaptability in stressful learning environments. Similarly, Steger and Kashdan (2007) reported that meaning contributes to adaptive coping, which buffers against academic anxiety and failure. These findings imply that meaning serves as a cognitive-emotional resource that enhances students' ability to persevere, focus, and remain committed to their studies despite adversity.

The integration of meaning-centered approaches into educational settings has been increasingly recognized as a strategy to enhance student motivation and well-being. Meaning-centered interventions, such as reflective exercises, value-based goal setting, and narrative counseling, have shown promising results in promoting academic engagement and psychological

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flourishing (Hodge et al., 2018). Educators and counselors who facilitate discussions about purpose, personal values, and self-determined goals help students internalize their academic journey as a meaningful pursuit rather than a mere obligation. Within the Pakistani university context, such interventions can be particularly valuable in mitigating academic burnout and fostering intrinsic motivation (Naseer & Saeed, 2020). Encouraging students to connect academic success with broader life goals—such as contributing to society, improving family circumstances, or achieving personal growth—may therefore enhance both achievement and holistic well-being.

Hypotheses

1. **H₁:** There will be a significant positive correlation between meaning of life and academic motivation among BS students.
2. **H₂:** There will be a significant positive correlation between academic motivation and academic achievement among BS students.
3. **H₃:** There will be a significant positive correlation between meaning of life and academic achievement.
4. **H₄:** Academic motivation will mediate the relationship between meaning of life and academic achievement.
5. **H₅:** There will be significant gender differences in meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement, with female students expected to report higher levels of academic motivation than males.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between meaning of life and academic motivation among BS students.
2. To determine the relationship between academic motivation and academic achievement.
3. To explore the relationship between meaning of life and academic achievement.
4. To investigate the mediating role of academic motivation between meaning of life and academic achievement.
5. To identify gender differences in meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded primarily in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) and Frankl's Existential Theory of Meaning (1963), both of which provide a comprehensive understanding of how meaning and motivation interact to influence behavior and achievement.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that human motivation exists on a continuum ranging from amotivation to extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. According to SDT, intrinsic motivation—engaging in an activity for inherent satisfaction and personal growth—emerges when three basic psychological needs are fulfilled: autonomy (the need to feel self-directed), competence (the need to feel effective), and relatedness (the need to feel connected to others) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In academic settings, when students perceive their learning as meaningful and aligned with their personal values, these psychological needs are met, resulting in greater engagement, persistence, and performance (Vallerand et al., 1992). Thus, academic motivation acts as a bridge between existential meaning and academic outcomes, mediating the relationship between purpose and performance.

Complementing SDT, Frankl's Existential Theory of Meaning emphasizes that the search for and presence of meaning in life are central to psychological well-being and goal-directed

behavior. Frankl (1963) proposed that individuals who perceive a sense of meaning experience greater motivation, resilience, and satisfaction. Meaning acts as a motivational force that enables individuals to find purpose even in adversity, guiding them toward constructive action and achievement. Applied to the academic domain, this theory suggests that students with a strong sense of life purpose are more likely to engage in meaningful learning, persevere through challenges, and strive for excellence.

Integrating these frameworks, the current study conceptualizes that meaning of life influences academic achievement both directly and indirectly through academic motivation. Students who find their lives purposeful are expected to exhibit higher intrinsic motivation, which in turn promotes consistent effort and academic success. This theoretical integration highlights that meaning functions as a higher-order motivational construct that energizes academic behavior and achievement.

Method

Research Design

The present study employed a correlational research design to investigate the relationship between meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement among BS students. The design was chosen to determine both the direct and indirect (mediating) associations among the study variables, allowing for the examination of how meaning of life contributes to academic motivation and achievement without manipulating any variables.

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in BS degree programs at various universities in Karachi, Pakistan. A total of 250 students (125 males and 125 females) aged 18 to 25 years participated in the study. The inclusion of both genders ensured balanced representation and enabled gender-based comparisons. Participants were selected from disciplines such as psychology, education, business administration, and social sciences to provide diversity in academic background.

Inclusion criteria required that participants be full-time BS students currently enrolled in university courses and willing to participate voluntarily. Students with any reported psychological disorders or chronic illnesses were excluded to minimize confounding effects on motivation and academic performance.

Sampling Technique

A purposive convenient sampling technique was utilized to collect data from different public and private universities in Karachi. This method was appropriate due to accessibility constraints and the availability of students during academic sessions. Participants were approached after obtaining institutional permission from department heads and university administration.

Instruments

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006): The MLQ measures two dimensions: Presence of Meaning (the extent to which individuals perceive their lives as meaningful) and Search for Meaning (the extent to which they strive to find meaning). It consists of 10 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely Untrue) to 7 (Absolutely True). Higher scores indicate greater perceived meaning. The MLQ has demonstrated strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .84-.91$) and cross-cultural validity.

Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; Vallerand et al., 1992): The AMS consists of 28 items assessing intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. Responses are rated on a

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7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Does not correspond at all) to 7 (Corresponds exactly). Higher scores indicate higher levels of academic motivation. The scale has shown excellent reliability ($\alpha = .83-.86$) and has been widely used in academic research across cultures, including South Asian contexts.

Academic Achievement: Academic achievement was measured using students' Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) obtained from institutional records or self-reported with verification. CGPA served as an objective indicator of academic performance. Scores ranged from 0.00 to 4.00, with higher scores representing better academic achievement.

Demographic Information Sheet: A brief demographic questionnaire was used to collect participants' background information, including age, gender, academic discipline, university type (public/private), parental education, and socio-economic status.

Procedure

After receiving ethical approval and permission from university authorities, participants were approached individually and in small groups within classroom settings. The purpose of the study was clearly explained, and participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The questionnaires were administered in English, and the average completion time was 20–25 minutes. Participants were thanked for their cooperation upon completion.

The collected data were screened for completeness, and responses with excessive missing values were excluded from analysis. All instruments used were standardized and administered under the supervision of the researcher to ensure clarity and reliability.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) were computed to summarize demographic and scale variables. Pearson product-moment correlation was applied to assess relationships among meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement. Linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive power of meaning of life and academic motivation on academic achievement. To test the mediating role of academic motivation, Hayes' Process Macro (Model 4) was utilized. Independent sample t-tests were performed to assess gender differences across variables. A significance level of $p < .05$ was considered statistically meaningful.

Results

The results of the study are presented in the following section. Statistical analyses were conducted to examine the relationships among meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement, as well as to test the mediating effect of academic motivation between meaning of life and academic achievement.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of Study Variables (N = 250)

Variable	M	SD	Actual Range	α
Meaning of Life	54.82	8.61	31–70	.87

Variable	M	SD	Actual Range	α
Academic Motivation	141.56	19.23	92–189	.89
Academic Achievement (CGPA)	3.22	0.41	2.10–4.00	—

Interpretation: Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the study variables. The results indicate satisfactory internal consistency across all scales ($\alpha > .80$). The mean scores suggest a moderate to high level of meaning in life and academic motivation among BS students, along with above-average academic achievement.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix among Meaning of Life, Academic Motivation, and Academic Achievement (N = 250)

Variables	1	2	3
1. Meaning of Life	-		
2. Academic Motivation	.54*	-	
3. Academic Achievement	.38*	.46*	-

* $p < .01$

Interpretation: Table 2 demonstrates significant positive correlations among all three variables. Meaning of life correlated positively with academic motivation ($r = .54, p < .01$) and academic achievement ($r = .38, p < .01$). Likewise, academic motivation showed a strong positive relationship with academic achievement ($r = .46, p < .01$). These findings support Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, confirming that higher meaning in life is associated with greater motivation and better academic performance.

Table 3: Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Achievement from Meaning of Life and Academic Motivation (N = 250)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	1.62	.17	—	9.53	.000
Meaning of Life	.011	.004	.18	2.79	.006
Academic Motivation	.014	.003	.34	4.87	.000

$R^2 = .28, F(2,247) = 47.78, p < .001$

Interpretation: Regression analysis indicated that both meaning of life and academic motivation significantly predicted academic achievement, accounting for 28% of the variance in CGPA. Academic motivation emerged as the stronger predictor ($\beta = .34, p < .001$),

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confirming its essential role in enhancing academic success. These results support Hypothesis 4, highlighting the predictive importance of motivation in academic performance.

Table 4: Mediation Analysis of Academic Motivation between Meaning of Life and Academic Achievement (Hayes' Process, Model 4)

Path	Effect	SE	t	p	95% CI
Meaning of Life → Academic Motivation (a)	1.21	.17	7.12	.000	[.87, 1.55]
Academic Motivation → Academic Achievement (b)	0.013	.004	3.71	.000	[.006, .020]
Meaning of Life → Academic Achievement (c)	0.027	.008	3.37	.001	[.012, .043]
Indirect Effect (a × b)	0.016	.006	—	—	[.008, .029]

Interpretation: Mediation analysis using Hayes' Process Macro (Model 4) revealed that academic motivation partially mediated the relationship between meaning of life and academic achievement. The indirect effect ($a \times b = 0.016$, 95% CI [.008, .029]) was statistically significant, indicating that meaning of life influences academic performance partly through its impact on motivation. These findings provide strong empirical support for Hypothesis 4.

Table 5: Gender Differences in Meaning of Life, Academic Motivation, and Academic Achievement (N = 250)

Variable	Male (n = 125) M (SD)	Female (n = 125) M (SD)	t(248)	p	Cohen's d
Meaning of Life	53.67 (8.92)	55.97 (8.21)	-2.01	.045	0.25
Academic Motivation	138.84 (18.95)	144.28 (19.31)	-2.12	.035	0.27
Academic Achievement	3.18 (0.42)	3.27 (0.40)	-1.83	.068	0.23

Interpretation: Results revealed significant gender differences in meaning of life and academic motivation, with female students scoring higher on both constructs. However, no significant gender difference was found in academic achievement. These results partially support Hypothesis 5, indicating that female students tend to exhibit higher existential awareness and motivational engagement, while achievement outcomes remain comparable across genders.

Summary of Results

The primary objective of this study was to examine the interrelationship between meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement among BS students, as well as to determine whether academic motivation mediates the association between meaning of life and academic performance. Additionally, gender differences across these variables were analyzed. The results provide strong empirical support for the proposed hypotheses and contribute meaningful insights into the motivational and existential aspects of academic functioning among university students in Pakistan.

Descriptive analyses indicated that the participants generally reported moderate to high levels of meaning in life and academic motivation, alongside satisfactory academic achievement ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.41$). This suggests that BS students in the sample perceive their academic journey as purposeful and are reasonably motivated to achieve their goals. The internal consistency coefficients of all scales were satisfactory ($\alpha > .80$), indicating that the measures used were reliable for this population.

Correlation analyses revealed that meaning of life was positively and significantly correlated with both academic motivation ($r = .54$, $p < .01$) and academic achievement ($r = .38$, $p < .01$). Similarly, academic motivation was positively correlated with academic achievement ($r = .46$, $p < .01$). These results confirm the hypothesized relationships and suggest that students who perceive greater purpose and coherence in their lives are more motivated academically and perform better in their studies. The findings are consistent with previous literature emphasizing that existential purpose enhances engagement, persistence, and satisfaction in learning contexts (Steger, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013).

Regression analysis further demonstrated that both meaning of life and academic motivation were significant predictors of academic achievement, accounting for 28% of the variance ($R^2 = .28$, $p < .001$). Academic motivation emerged as the stronger predictor ($\beta = .34$), indicating that motivation plays a more direct role in influencing academic outcomes. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which asserts that autonomous motivation — driven by personal meaning and intrinsic values — is a key determinant of sustained academic engagement and achievement.

The mediation analysis provided deeper insight into the underlying mechanism of this relationship. Using Hayes' Process Macro (Model 4), results confirmed a partial mediating effect of academic motivation between meaning of life and academic achievement (indirect effect = 0.016, 95% CI [.008, .029]). This implies that meaning of life not only directly contributes to students' academic success but also enhances achievement indirectly by fostering stronger academic motivation. In other words, when students find purpose and significance in their educational pursuits, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated — leading to higher levels of academic performance. This finding aligns with research by Park et al. (2019) and Martela and Steger (2016), who reported that meaning serves as a motivational resource that drives achievement through enhanced engagement.

Gender-based comparisons revealed noteworthy patterns. Female students reported higher levels of meaning in life and academic motivation compared to male students ($p < .05$), although no significant gender difference was observed in academic achievement. These results partially support the fifth hypothesis. The higher motivational scores among female students may be attributed to their stronger self-regulatory strategies, value alignment, and goal commitment (Iqbal & Aftab, 2018). However, comparable academic outcomes across genders suggest that, despite differing motivational orientations, both male and female students achieve similar academic success.

Collectively, these findings highlight that meaning of life and academic motivation are essential psychological resources that shape academic achievement among BS students. The results affirm that students who perceive their studies as meaningful demonstrate stronger internal motivation, greater resilience, and higher achievement levels. Moreover, the mediating effect of motivation underscores the psychological process through which meaning influences performance. Within the Pakistani context, where educational stress and societal expectations are high, developing students' sense of purpose may be particularly beneficial in enhancing intrinsic motivation and promoting academic well-being.

In conclusion, the data confirm that meaning of life is a significant predictor of academic motivation and achievement, and that academic motivation partially mediates this relationship. The integration of meaning-centered and motivation-based frameworks offers a comprehensive understanding of how existential purpose fosters academic success. These results not only

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support theoretical propositions from Self-Determination Theory and Existential Psychology but also provide practical implications for counselors, educators, and policymakers aiming to enhance student motivation and performance through purpose-driven educational interventions

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the interrelationship between meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement among BS students, and to examine the mediating role of academic motivation in the relationship between meaning of life and achievement. The findings supported all major hypotheses, demonstrating that meaning of life and academic motivation are positively associated with each other and with academic performance. Furthermore, academic motivation was found to partially mediate the relationship between meaning of life and academic achievement, suggesting that meaning enhances motivation, which in turn facilitates better academic outcomes.

The positive correlation between meaning of life and academic motivation (H_1) highlights that students who perceive their lives as purposeful and meaningful are more likely to exhibit strong motivation toward academic goals. This finding is consistent with Frankl's (1963) Existential Theory, which emphasizes that the search for meaning drives human behavior and fosters perseverance. Similarly, studies by Steger (2012) and Duffy and Dik (2013) found that individuals with a sense of purpose are intrinsically motivated to pursue personal and academic growth. In the academic context, this means that students who understand the personal relevance of their studies are likely to demonstrate greater engagement, persistence, and satisfaction with their educational journey.

The significant positive relationship between academic motivation and academic achievement (H_2) reinforces findings from Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which posits that autonomous, self-driven motivation enhances performance. Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn—because they find learning enjoyable or meaningful—are more likely to engage in deep learning strategies and achieve higher academic results. These findings also align with Diseth (2011) and Kusrkar et al. (2012), who reported that intrinsic motivation predicts higher academic outcomes, self-regulation, and perseverance. The results of the present study thus affirm that motivation serves as a bridge between internal meaning and tangible academic success.

The significant correlation between meaning of life and academic achievement (H_3) further confirms that meaning serves as a cognitive and emotional resource that enhances students' sense of direction and effort. Students who find their studies meaningful may interpret academic challenges as purposeful and therefore remain resilient in the face of difficulty. This aligns with the work of Bronk et al. (2009) and Park et al. (2019), who demonstrated that meaning contributes to resilience, optimism, and goal-directed effort—all of which are conducive to academic achievement. Hence, meaning does not merely serve an existential role; it also operates as a motivational and performance-enhancing factor in educational contexts.

The mediation analysis provided important theoretical insights into how meaning of life influences achievement through academic motivation (H_4). The partial mediation effect suggests that meaning enhances achievement both directly and indirectly by increasing motivational drive. This finding corroborates the work of Martela and Steger (2016), who proposed that meaning acts as a “motivational energy source” that fuels engagement and persistence in goal pursuit. Students with a stronger sense of life purpose are likely to internalize their academic goals as part of their broader life mission, thereby fostering sustained motivation and improved performance. From a theoretical perspective, this integration of Existential Psychology and Self-Determination Theory underscores the idea that meaning provides the “why,” while motivation provides the “how” of achievement.

Gender-based analyses revealed that female students reported higher levels of meaning and academic motivation compared to males, though academic achievement did not significantly differ (H_5). These findings are partially consistent with those of Iqbal and Aftab (2018), who found that female students in Pakistani universities exhibit stronger intrinsic motivation and self-regulation. Cultural expectations may contribute to these differences: in Pakistan, female students often associate education with empowerment and social mobility, which may strengthen their commitment and sense of purpose. Conversely, male students may experience greater external pressures or distractions that influence their motivational focus. However, the absence of significant gender differences in achievement suggests that both male and female students are equally capable of academic success when provided with similar opportunities and support.

The findings hold significant implications within the Pakistani cultural context. In a collectivist society where educational attainment is linked to family pride, social responsibility, and economic advancement, meaning in life often extends beyond personal fulfillment to include familial and societal obligations (Riaz & Saleem, 2019). This cultural dimension may enhance motivation through a shared sense of duty and contribution. However, excessive extrinsic pressure from family or society may also undermine intrinsic motivation, emphasizing the need for balance. Interventions that help students integrate personal meaning with academic and familial goals can promote healthier, more sustainable motivation.

From a practical standpoint, the results highlight the importance of meaning-centered educational counseling. Counselors and educators should encourage students to reflect on their life purpose, personal values, and academic goals. Programs that integrate goal-setting, value clarification, and reflective exercises can help students connect their academic pursuits to a larger sense of purpose. Meaning-centered interventions have been shown to enhance motivation, reduce burnout, and foster psychological well-being (Hodge et al., 2018). In the Pakistani university context, incorporating such approaches into orientation programs, mentoring, or counseling sessions could significantly enhance both academic performance and emotional resilience.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that meaning of life and academic motivation are key predictors of academic achievement. The mediation effect demonstrates that meaning exerts its influence partly through motivational pathways, providing a deeper understanding of how existential factors shape educational outcomes. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature emphasizing that academic success is not only a product of cognitive ability but also of psychological meaning and motivational vitality.

Conclusion

The present study explored the interrelationship between meaning of life, academic motivation, and academic achievement among BS students, with a focus on understanding how motivation mediates the relationship between existential meaning and performance. The findings confirmed that both meaning of life and academic motivation are significant predictors of academic achievement, and that academic motivation partially mediates this relationship. These results underscore the vital role that meaning and motivation play in shaping students' engagement, persistence, and success within academic environments.

Consistent with Frankl's (1963) Existential Theory, students who perceive a strong sense of purpose and coherence in life tend to exhibit greater motivation and resilience in their academic pursuits. Similarly, the findings align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), suggesting that when students internalize their academic goals and experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness, their motivation becomes more intrinsic and self-sustaining. The positive associations between meaning, motivation, and achievement observed in this study confirm that purpose-driven students are more likely to invest effort, adopt effective learning strategies, and attain higher academic success.

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Within the Pakistani context, where education is often tied to family expectations, social advancement, and cultural identity, the study provides valuable insight into how personal meaning interacts with societal influences to shape motivation. While external pressures can foster extrinsic motivation, students who connect their academic efforts to a deeper sense of life purpose experience more consistent and fulfilling engagement. This highlights the need to balance societal expectations with students' individual aspirations to promote holistic well-being and sustainable achievement.

From a practical standpoint, the findings emphasize the importance of meaning-centered counseling and educational interventions. Academic advisors, psychologists, and educators can incorporate reflective and purpose-oriented exercises—such as goal mapping, value clarification, and self-reflection—to help students connect their academic goals with personal meaning. Such approaches not only enhance motivation but also reduce stress, burnout, and disengagement, fostering both academic excellence and emotional well-being.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing intersection of existential psychology and educational psychology by demonstrating how meaning functions as a psychological foundation for motivation and performance. The mediating effect of academic motivation suggests that interventions designed to enhance meaning could indirectly improve achievement by strengthening intrinsic motivation.

Future research may expand on these findings by including longitudinal designs to track motivational changes over time, or by exploring other psychological mediators such as self-efficacy, resilience, or emotional intelligence. Comparative studies across disciplines and cultural groups would further enrich understanding of how meaning and motivation influence diverse academic contexts.

In conclusion, the study reaffirms that students who find meaning in their academic journey are more motivated, resilient, and successful. Cultivating meaning in education is not only essential for academic achievement but also for nurturing emotionally balanced, purpose-driven individuals capable of contributing positively to society.

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