

Discussion on the improvement of the sense of meaning of life among Chinese elderly under the background of active aging

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Abstract: This year's report of China's 20th National Congress puts forward the implementation of the "National Strategy for Actively Responding to Population Aging", in which the sense of meaning of life is an important influence factor in evaluating active aging, so paying attention to the sense of meaning of life of the elderly is not only a necessity of the times, but also of great significance in the reality of elderly people's lives. In this study, a questionnaire on the sense of meaning of life of the elderly was used to survey 114 elderly people, and the results of the study showed that the main factors such as marriage, health status, economic status, social participation, social support and other factors have a significant impact on the sense of meaning of life of the elderly. Meanwhile, based on the background of active aging, this study proposes corresponding enhancement strategies, such as maintaining physical health, encouraging healthy marital relationships among the elderly, establishing good social support, and increasing social participation.

1. Introduction

The report of China's Twentieth National Congress points out that it is necessary to implement the strategy of actively coping with population ageing and to take a path of coping with population ageing with Chinese characteristics. According to current research, sense of meaning of life is an important influencing factor in evaluating positive aging. Therefore, this study investigates the current situation and influencing factors of older people's sense of meaning of life and proposes corresponding enhancement countermeasures, with a view to enriching the study of older people's sense of meaning of life at the doctrinal level and providing insights into the improvement of older people's quality of life in the context of positive aging.

2. Definition of relevant concepts

2.1 Active ageing

Active aging refers to the fact that older people, including those who have been laid off and retired, sick, or disabled, still have the potential, opportunity, and power to participate in economic, political,

and spiritual and cultural activities, and contribute to society to the best of their ability, as well as receive social security when they need help, and to form a virtuous circle through such proactive attitudes and approaches as a way of improving the quality of life of older people and meeting the challenges of aging^[1].

2.2 Sense of the meaning of life

In the field of psychology, the connotation of meaning in life was first proposed by Frankl, who believed that meaning in life refers to people's awareness and pursuit of purpose and goals in their own lives^[2].

As for the definition of older people's sense of meaning in life, Jeong-jong believes that older people's sense of meaning in life refers to the extent to which they perceive the mission, purpose, and existential value of their lives, which is a high-level spiritual need. Liu Fang locates older people's sense of meaning in life as understanding the meaning of the social behaviors they produce and understanding what life really means, and people's interpretation of their life experiences is the source of meaning in life^[2].

3. Survey on the current situation of the sense of meaning of life among the elderly

3.1 Research Objects and Tools

In this study, 114 valid questionnaire points were recovered, including 36 men and 78 women. The Sense of Meaning in Life Questionnaire for the Elderly was used, which consists of 15 items and consists of three dimensions: suffering cognition, active pursuit, and passive acceptance, and was scored using a Likert 5-point scale. The questionnaire has good reliability and validity, with a consistency reliability coefficient of 0.889 and a split-half reliability of 0.871, and the results of the factor analysis explaining 61.954% of the total variance, which shows that it is applicable to the older age groups^[3].

3.2 Research methodology

3.2.1 Methods of investigation

Before the survey, the survey respondents will be informed of the purpose and significance of the survey, after obtaining the permission of the survey respondents, the relevant questionnaires will be issued to them, and after the completion of the questionnaires, they will be verified and data entry will be completed.

3.2.2 Statistical methods

Applying SPSS20.0 software, the data were entered and statistically analyzed, using mean \pm standard deviation for the description of the measurement data, and independent samples t-test, one-way ANOVA and other methods for the sense of meaning of life to analyze the difference as statistically significant at $P < 0.05$.

3.3 Findings

3.3.1 General characteristics of older people's sense of meaning in life

It was found that the sense of meaning of life scores of the elderly were in the middle to upper

score band, indicating that the meaning of life performance of the elderly was at the middle to upper level, and that the cognitive dimension of suffering of the sense of meaning of life of the elderly had the highest scores, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Total Score and Dimensions of Sense of Meaning of Life in Older Adults

	totals	misery perception	pursue vigorously	passive acceptance
M	3.95	4.19	4.05	3.53
SD	0.44	0.52	0.54	0.50

3.3.2 Analysis of differences in older adults' sense of meaning in life on demographic variables

The results showed that region, age, marital status, health status, and economic status were the influencing factors on the sense of meaning in life of the elderly, and the difference was statistically significant ($P < 0.05$), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of a univariate analysis of general information and factors influencing sense of meaning of life in older adults

	sports event	overall average score	t/F	P
genders	Male (N=36)	3.86±0.46	1.59	0.12
	Female (N=78)	4.0±0.43		
area	Rural (N=22)	3.65±0.47	3.80	0.00
	Urban (N=92)	4.03±0.41		
age	55-59 years (N=33)	3.77±0.41	2.46	0.049
	60-64 years (N=22)	3.97±0.46		
	65-69 years (N=38)	4.08±0.35		
	70-74 years (N=16)	4.01±0.39		
	75+ (N=5)	4.0±1.0		
marital status	Spouse alive (N=97)	4.30±0.44	3.66	0.00
	No spouse (N=17)	3.89±0.44		
religious belief	No religion (N=99)	3.96±0.45	0.36	0.68
	Religious (N=15)	3.92±0.43		
health status	Very good (N=40)	4.09±0.45	2.70	0.049
	Good (N=50)	3.92±0.43		
	General (N=18)	3.88±0.44		
	Not so good (N=6)	3.62±0.29		
economic situation	Fairly generous (N=12)	4.16±0.58	8.59	0.00
	Roughly adequate (N=95)	3.98±0.38		
	Slightly difficult (N=5)	3.34±0.53		
	Quite difficult (N=2)	3.0±0.0		

3.4 Discussion and Analysis

3.4.1 Discussion on the overall status of older people's sense of meaning in life

The sense of meaning in life of the elderly subjects is at a moderately high level. The economic status of the elderly subjects in this study is generally sufficient for most of them, their physical condition is also good, and their marital status is mainly that their spouses are alive, which, coupled with the continuous development of Chinese society in the context of active aging, and the concern of the government and social groups for the elderly, which enables them to have a sense of security and a sense of belonging in their old age, puts the sense of meaning of life of the elderly at a moderately high level.

3.4.2 Discussion on factors influencing older people's sense of meaning in life

The results of this study show that there is no significant difference in the total score of sense of meaning of life and its factor scores of elderly people across gender and religion, while there are significant differences in region, age, marital status, health status, and economic status.

Regionally, for older people living in the city, there is greater access to health care, transportation, and leisure and recreational activities, and their sense of meaning in life is higher than that of older people living in rural areas. In terms of age, the sense of meaning in life changes as older people age, which is consistent with the findings of Halford et al^[4]. On the marital status sub-subject, marriage is one of the important parts of social support, and older adults with spouses who are able to receive emotional and life support from each other can increase older adults' existential feelings go and sense of worth. Older people without spouses are more likely to feel lonely and empty in their lives. In terms of health status, the most direct problem faced by the elderly in the old age stage is the change of health status, the change of health status will affect the attitude of the elderly towards death, and some studies have shown that the attitude of the elderly towards death has a direct relationship with the sense of meaning of life^[5]. In terms of economic status, older people with better economic conditions tend to have a higher social status, more social resources to utilize, and a higher satisfaction with life, and therefore have a higher sense of meaning in life. And according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, it is difficult for individuals to pursue the realization of higher-level needs, such as self-actualization, when their lower-level needs are not realized.

Furthermore, in addition to demographic factors such as region, age, and marital status, which were explored in this study, it has now been shown that social support and social participation are also important influences on older adults' sense of meaning in life.

In terms of social support, according to positive psychology, when an individual has access to effective support, his or her physical and mental health will perform well. In a study by Xie Yuntian et al. it was shown that the stronger the perception of a sense of meaning in life is, the better the individual's mental health is^[6]. In which policy support, family support and community support all play an important role. For the elderly, the socioeconomic status will deteriorate compared to the pre-retirement period, but policy support can play a compensatory role. Chinese older people have a relatively strong family concept, and some studies have shown that care from the family and the achievements of children and grandchildren are important sources of older people's sense of meaning in life^[7]. Community support can complement and fulfill the life services and emotional needs of older adults.

In the research on social participation, it has been shown that in the process of living and serving others in the workplace, older people can feel their own contribution to society or the country, feel that "old age is useful", and can get more creative sense of value and meaning^[7]. In a study of 219 Korean retirees, Kim et al. showed that regular participation in social welfare activities can promote the experience and pursuit of meaning in life, and thus a sense of meaning in life^[8]

4. Countermeasures to enhance the sense of meaning in the lives of older persons

Based on the above findings and the context of active aging, we can improve older people's sense of meaning in life in the following ways:

4.1 Maintenance of physical health

For the elderly, the emergence of illnesses brings great distress, and the problems of medical expenses and access to medical care, as well as psychological anxiety and fear of death, affect the elderly's sense of meaning in life; therefore, providing the elderly with general knowledge and skills

in medical care, and encouraging them to participate in regular exercise to enhance their ability to cope with physical aging, is conducive to enhancing the elderly's sense of meaning in life.

4.2 Encouraging healthy marital relationships among older persons

In old age, older persons with spouses can receive emotional and life support from each other, which can enhance their sense of existence and value. At the governmental level, legislation can be strengthened to guarantee the freedom of marriage for older persons, and legal literacy can be enhanced to ensure the implementation of the policy. At the social level, the media should guide the change of concepts to realize the de-labeling of remarriage for the elderly, and enterprises can also pay attention to the market of senior marriage. At the individual level, older people should emancipate their minds and be brave enough to pursue love, and their children should care for their parents and provide support.

4.3 Building good social support

The positive aging perspective emphasizes that society should provide appropriate assistance to the needs of the elderly, and that social support is the moral and material support that an individual receives from his or her rightful social relationships^[9]. It is one of the factors influencing the mental health and sense of meaning in life of the elderly, and the establishment of a good social support system is an effective measure for the enhancement of the sense of meaning in life.

4.3.1 Policy support

The Government can give full play to its strengths and formulate appropriate policies to provide support and assistance to the elderly at the macro level. In terms of medical policies, more drug allowances should be provided to the elderly to alleviate the burden of medical expenses on the elderly and their families, and the relevant policies could be tilted in favor of the poor elderly group. In terms of social policies, policies on preferential treatment for the elderly can be implemented, such as the free application of preferential treatment cards for the elderly and the fulfillment of the desire of the elderly to continue their education. In terms of specific policies for the elderly, the Government's guiding role can be strengthened by defining a mechanism for evaluating services for the elderly, using the dynamic evaluation of the physical and income status of the elderly as the basis for implementing various subsidies, and setting nationally standardized criteria for financial subsidies for the elderly and the disabled who are in financial difficulty. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the publicity of these policies and improve the way they are publicized in accordance with the characteristics of older persons, so that more older persons will understand the State's policy support for them and enhance their sense of the meaning of life.

4.3.2 Family support

Family support plays an important role in the support network for the elderly. In society, the moral construction of the family should be strengthened to stimulate people's deep-seated feelings of "home", and the relevant departments should give commendations to the typical filial piety of children to the elderly, and crack down on the failure to support parents and the abuse of the elderly, so as to make old age care and love for the elderly a social trend. For children who live apart from the elderly, they can be guided to learn how to communicate with their children through online video chatting to realize the comfort of the spirit. You can also support your parents financially and spiritually to participate in social activities, such as joining senior citizen universities, community activities for the elderly, etc. The elderly often share a common language and more interpersonal support is conducive

to the enhancement of the sense of meaning of life among the elderly.

4.3.3 Community support

Outside the family, the community has become the most important activity place for the elderly, and the community also has naturally abundant resources, on the one hand, it can provide life care for the elderly in the community, for the empty-nested elderly, or for those who have children who work during the day and have no one to take care of them, the community can provide them with door-to-door accompanying services, such as reading and chatting with them, on the other hand, it can organize the establishment of an activity center for the elderly. On the other hand, they can organize the establishment of activity centers for the elderly, and encourage the elderly to participate in various activities together, such as community group tours for the elderly and joint participation in sports activities. At the same time, it is also necessary to strengthen the training of community staff, so that they can better understand the physiological and psychological characteristics of the elderly, so as to better improve services for the elderly.

4.4 Increased social participation

The potential, opportunity and power of older persons to participate in economic, political, spiritual and cultural activities are also emphasized in the perspective of active ageing. Older people's social participation is a mode of behavior to realize their own value in the process of social interaction, through the form of social labor and social activities^[10], which can be mainly participated in the following ways:

4.4.1 Socio-economic activities

At the governmental level, enterprises and social organizations can be guided to pay more attention to and support the social and economic activities of the elderly, and policies can be made to improve the labour protection mechanism for the re-employment of retired persons, so as to change the imperfect status quo of the re-employment of retired persons beyond the legal limit, who are not protected by labour laws. At the community level, the ability and quality of the elderly group to adapt to the Internet era can be improved by organizing training and other means. At the same time, we need to emphasize that participation in socio-economic activities is an active choice for some older persons, not an absolute obligation or responsibility.

4.4.2 Socio-cultural activities

In order to encourage the elderly to participate in social and cultural activities, it is possible to start from both the hardware facilities and the soft environment. On the one hand, it is possible to promote the barrier-free construction of community environments and public facilities, to reduce the barriers to the activities and travel of the elderly, and to coordinate resources from all sides to provide venues for activities, so as to provide the elderly with opportunities to participate in social and cultural activities; on the other hand, it is possible to issue timely information about venues around the community and social activities. On the other hand, we can release timely information about places and social activities around the community and encourage the elderly to set up interest groups or organizations and actively participate in relevant social and cultural activities in the form of groups. At the same time, the elderly in China show a strong "government dependence" on social and cultural activities, and large-scale, high-level activities are more likely to attract the participation of the elderly, so the government can carry out corresponding social and cultural activities according to these characteristics of the elderly.

4.4.3 Social welfare activities

At present, China's volunteer activities for the elderly have not yet formed a generalized activity for senior citizens, and their main body composition is still at the level of the "elderly elite". Therefore, it is possible to form an operational model of community volunteerism for the elderly in which the government takes the lead and advocates, the community coordinates according to its own resources, and the social work organization cooperates. At the same time, volunteer activities can be designed according to the psychological characteristics and interests of the elderly, and a good community service platform can be established for the participation of the elderly in volunteer services.

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