

The Impact of Meaning-of-Life Orientations on Parenting Practices: A Psychosocial Perspective

Nilufar Abdussattor qizi Kodirova,

*Master's Degree Student of Psychological and Pedagogical Education, Faculty of Psychology,
Belgorod State National Research University*

Abstract

The article presents research findings on the influence of meaning-of-life orientations on parenting practices. It explores the theoretical and empirical dimensions of meaning-of-life orientations and their psychosocial impact on parental attitudes. Data analysis highlights correlations between parents' meaning-of-life orientations and their approaches to child-rearing. The study provides practical recommendations for fostering positive parenting environments.

Key words: meaning-of-life orientations, parenting practices, psychosocial influences, parental attitudes.

Introduction: The importance of meaning-of-life orientations has gained significant attention in psychology, as these orientations fundamentally shape individuals' perspectives and actions in various life domains. Rooted in a person's values, goals, and sense of purpose, meaning-of-life orientations act as a guiding framework influencing emotional stability, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships. One particularly impactful area is their role in shaping social behaviors, including parenting practices. Parenting, recognized as a core social institution, serves as the foundation for nurturing the emotional, social, and cognitive development of children. It is through parenting that children acquire essential skills, values, and the capacity to navigate societal complexities effectively. Understanding how meaning-of-life orientations intersect with parenting is critical, as it highlights the psychological and emotional processes underlying parental attitudes and actions. Parents with clear life purposes and value systems are more likely to engage in practices that foster a positive home environment. This alignment not only enhances their capacity to provide emotional support but also contributes to creating a stable atmosphere that encourages the child's growth and adaptability.

Investigating these connections offers valuable insights into how parents' internal frameworks influence their external parenting styles. Such an exploration enables a deeper understanding of how meaning-of-life orientations can be harnessed to promote supportive and nurturing environments for child development. This article delves into these dynamics by combining theoretical perspectives and empirical research to uncover the intricate relationship between a parent's sense of purpose and their approach to raising children. Through this examination, it aims to provide practical recommendations for enhancing parenting practices, ultimately contributing to the well-being of families and the broader society.

Theoretical Foundations

Meaning-of-Life Orientations. Meaning-of-life orientations refer to an individual's deeply rooted framework for interpreting life's purpose, values, and overarching goals. These orientations are not only philosophical but also practical, as they shape how individuals perceive their existence, make decisions, and interact with the world around them. As a critical component of psychological well-being, meaning-of-life orientations influence both personal and social behaviors, including one of the most impactful roles an individual can undertake: parenting.

Scholars such as Leontiev and Frankl have emphasized that life's purpose serves as a driving force behind resilience, motivation, and overall mental health. A strong sense of purpose provides individuals with a compass that guides their actions, enabling them to navigate challenges with clarity and determination. For parents, this orientation becomes particularly vital, as it directly impacts their approach to raising children and fostering their development.

Several key aspects illustrate the multifaceted nature of meaning-of-life orientations:

- **Ontological Dimension.** This dimension underscores the connection between personal goals and broader societal values. Parents who perceive their role within the larger social framework are more likely to instill a sense of responsibility, community, and ethical behavior in their children.
- **Phenomenological Perspective.** Meaning-of-life orientations involve subjective interpretations of life experiences, allowing individuals to derive personal significance from their actions and relationships. For parents, this perspective helps in understanding and empathizing with their children's unique experiences, promoting a more compassionate and supportive parenting style.
- **Activity-Based Dimension.** The practical application of life values in daily roles is a cornerstone of meaning-of-life orientations. Parents with a strong sense of purpose are more likely to translate their values into actionable behaviors, such as teaching, nurturing, and modeling positive interactions for their children.

Expanding on these dimensions highlights how meaning-of-life orientations serve as a foundational structure that not only defines personal identity but also shapes relational dynamics. In the context of parenting, these orientations influence the creation of nurturing environments that support children's emotional and psychological growth. By integrating life's purpose into their parenting practices, individuals can provide stability, inspire resilience, and foster a deep sense of belonging within their families.

Parenting Practices. Parenting practices encompass the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral strategies used by parents to guide their children. Styles range from authoritarian to authoritative and permissive. Studies show that parents with strong meaning-of-life orientations are more likely to adopt nurturing and supportive parenting methods.

Methods and Data Collection

The research was conducted with 100 participants (50 couples) aged 25–45. The following tools were used to collect data:

1. **Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI)**. Developed by E. Schaefer and R. Bell and adapted by T. V. Neshcheret and T. V. Arkhireeva, this method evaluates various aspects of parental attitudes, particularly focusing on mothers, in family life and child-rearing. The PARI questionnaire contains 115 statements about family life and child-rearing practices. The instrument is categorized into 23 scales, which measure different aspects of parental attitudes and family life:
 - **Attitudes toward Family Roles (8 scales)**. This includes dependency on family (limiting the mother's role to homemaker), parental "sacrifice," marital conflicts, parental over-authority (encouraging child dependency), dissatisfaction with the role of homemaker ("parental martyrdom"), inattentiveness of the husband, maternal dominance, and the mother's need for external assistance in child-rearing.
 - **Optimal Emotional Contact (4 scales)**. Verbalization (allowing the child to express themselves), partnership (equality between parents and child), encouragement of child activity, and friendly relationships between parents and children.
 - **Excessive Emotional Distance from the Child (3 scales)**. Parental strictness, irritability, and avoidance of conflict (avoiding communication with the child).
 - **Over-Concentration on the Child (8 scales)**. Over-care (shielding the child from difficulties), suppression of the child's will, fear of hurting the child, exclusion of external influences (child's dependency on the mother), suppression of aggression, suppression of sexuality, intrusive parental behavior, and an excessive focus on accelerating the child's development.
2. **Meaning-of-Life Orientations Test by D.A. Leontiev (SJO Methodology)**. This diagnostic tool measures an individual's sense of life across three temporal dimensions: future (goals), present (process), and past (results). The test evaluates the source and structure of an individual's life purpose. Scoring involves summing the numerical values across 20 scales and converting the total score into standard percentages. Participants' responses on a symmetrical 3210123 scale are recalibrated using an ascending or descending asymmetrical scale.

Results and Discussion

Stage 1: Diagnostic Assessment. During the initial stage, diagnostic methods were applied within participant groups to identify characteristics of parental attitudes and the current state of life orientations.

Stage 2: Data Analysis. Results from the diagnostic assessments were processed and analyzed using mathematical statistics. This stage focused on studying the relationship between parental attitudes and the participants' meaning-of-life orientations.

Stage 3: Intervention Program Development. Based on the findings, a program was designed to harmonize the interaction between participants' meaning-of-life orientations and their parental attitudes.

This structured approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between life orientations and parenting practices, facilitating the development of practical recommendations for enhancing family interactions.

Statistical Findings

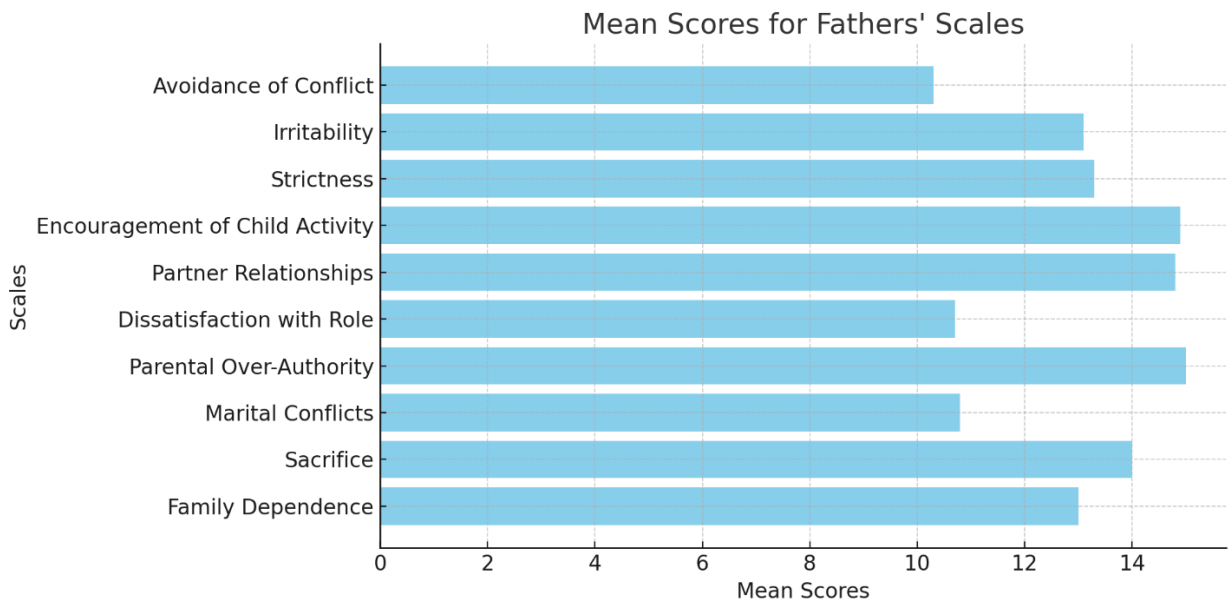
The study aimed to explore the influence of meaning-of-life orientations on parenting practices among fathers and mothers, focusing on correlations between parental attitudes and the scales of meaning-of-life orientations. Utilizing the “Parental Attitude Research Instrument” (PARI) and the “Meaning-of-Life Orientations Test” (developed by D.A. Leontiev), the research revealed significant patterns in how these orientations shape family dynamics and child-rearing practices.

1. Results from Fathers. The findings indicate that fathers exhibit a moderate level of awareness and responsibility toward family roles. On the scale of “Family Dependence,” fathers scored an average of $M_x=13$, reflecting a balanced approach to maintaining family responsibility without overburdening themselves. Additionally, the scale of “Sacrifice,” with $M_x=14$, highlights a moderate effort to protect their family from external challenges.

Key indicators such as “Marital Conflicts” ($M_x=10.8$), “Parental Over-Authority” ($M_x=15$), and “Dissatisfaction with the Role of Host” ($M_x=10.7$) show middle-range values, suggesting that while fathers are actively engaged, they face occasional struggles in managing family responsibilities. Furthermore, scales such as “Partner Relationships” ($M_x=14.8$) and “Encouragement of Child Activity” ($M_x=14.9$) underscore their readiness to foster open communication and promote children’s autonomy.

Table 1. Father's Scale Results

Scales	Mean Scores (Fathers)
Partner Relationships	14.8
Encouragement of Child Activity	14.9
Strictness	13.3
Irritability	13.1
Avoidance of Conflict	10.3



Picture 2. Mean Scores for Fathers' Scales

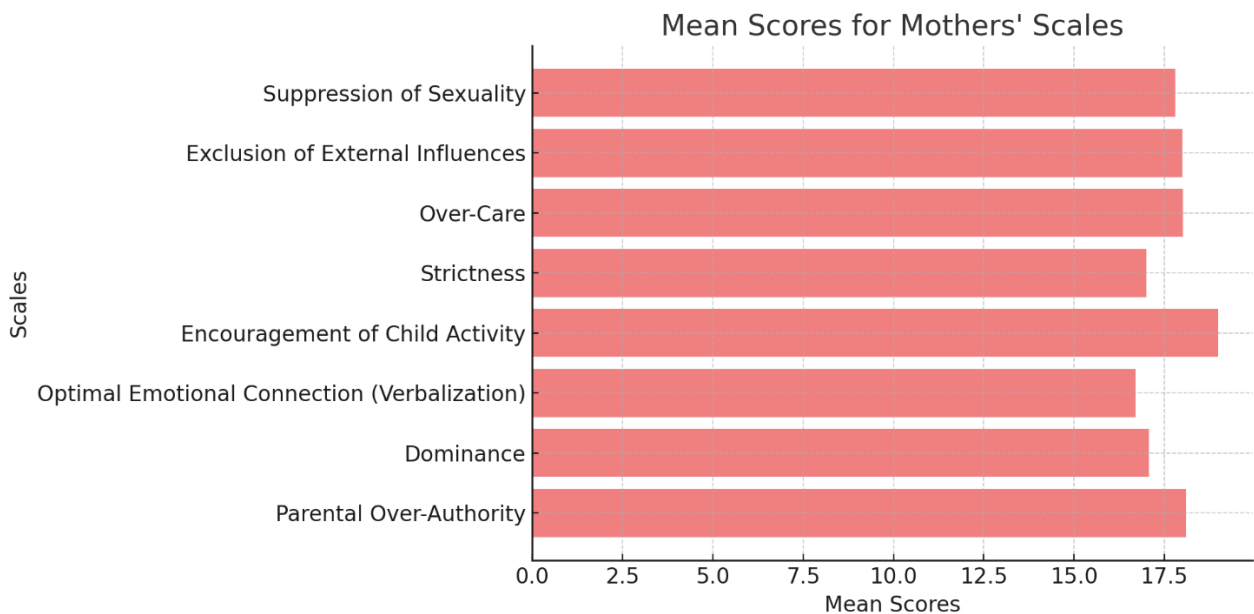
The “Optimal Emotional Connection” scale provided deeper insights into the emotional involvement of fathers. Indicators such as verbalization (Mx=14.7Mx = 14.7Mx=14.7), partnership (Mx=14.8Mx = 14.8Mx=14.8), and encouragement of activity (Mx=14.9Mx = 14.9Mx=14.9) signify an active engagement in child development. Fathers who scored higher on these scales demonstrated positive parenting behaviors, including a willingness to answer questions, collaborate with their children, and actively participate in their development.

2. Emotional Distance and Over-Concentration. Despite the positive trends, some fathers displayed challenges in managing emotional distance. Indicators such as “Parental Strictness” (Mx=13.3Mx = 13.3Mx=13.3), “Irritability” (Mx=13.1Mx = 13.1Mx=13.1), and “Avoidance of Conflict” (Mx=10.3Mx = 10.3Mx=10.3) suggest moderate levels of emotional distance, which can impact the parent-child relationship. Over-concentration scales revealed an average tendency toward excessive focus on the child, such as “Over-Care” (Mx=11.4Mx = 11.4Mx=11.4), “Suppression of Child’s Will” (Mx=11.9Mx = 11.9Mx=11.9), and “Fear of Hurting the Child” (Mx=13.2Mx = 13.2Mx=13.2). These behaviors can hinder a child’s independence and social adaptability, emphasizing the need for balanced parenting strategies.

3. Results from Mothers. In contrast, mothers showed higher scores across several scales, reflecting a more dominant role in family dynamics and parenting practices. For instance, on the scale of “Parental Over-Authority,” mothers scored Mx=18.1Mx = 18.1Mx=18.1, significantly higher than fathers, indicating a stronger influence on children’s dependence. Similarly, the scale of “Dominance” (Mx=17.08Mx = 17.08Mx=17.08) highlights the leadership role mothers often assume in both household management and child-rearing.

Table 2. Mother's Scale Results

Scales	Mean Scores (Mothers)
Parental Over-Authority	18.1
Dominance	17.08
Optimal Emotional Connection (Verbalization)	16.7
Encouragement of Child Activity	19.0
Strictness	17.0



Picture 2. Mean Scores for Mothers' Scales

Mothers also exhibited higher levels of “Optimal Emotional Connection” with their children. Indicators such as verbalization ($Mx=16.7Mx = 16.7Mx=16.7$), partnership ($Mx=16.3Mx = 16.3Mx=16.3$), and encouragement of activity ($Mx=19Mx = 19Mx=19$) show an active approach to fostering independence, mutual respect, and open communication. These behaviors positively influence children’s socialization and ability to express themselves.

4. Emotional Distance and Challenges. Mothers, like fathers, encountered issues with emotional distance. Scales such as “Parental Strictness” ($Mx=17Mx = 17Mx=17$) and “Irritability” ($Mx=14Mx = 14Mx=14$) indicate moderate levels of strictness, potentially resulting from the pressures of balancing multiple roles. High scores on the “Over-Care” scale ($Mx=18.02Mx = 18.02Mx=18.02$) and “Exclusion of External Influences” ($Mx=18Mx = 18Mx=18$) reflect protective tendencies, which, while rooted in genuine concern, may limit children’s exposure to broader social environments.

Additionally, the “Suppression of Sexuality” scale ($Mx=17.8Mx = 17.8Mx=17.8$) reflects cultural influences on parenting. Societal norms often discourage open discussions on topics related to sexuality, which can lead to gaps in children’s understanding of their own development.

5. Correlations Between Meaning-of-Life Orientations and Parenting Practices. The study revealed significant correlations between meaning-of-life orientations and parenting practices. Fathers’ scores on the “Goals in Life” scale ($Mx=34.9Mx = 34.9Mx=34.9$) were positively associated with partnership and peer-like relationships with their children. Conversely, lower scores on “Effectiveness of Life” ($Mx=24.4Mx = 24.4Mx=24.4$) were linked to stricter parenting styles and lower emotional involvement.

For mothers, high scores on “Goals in Life” ($Mx=36.8Mx = 36.8Mx=36.8$) were correlated with encouragement of child activity ($r=0.340*r = 0.340*r=0.340*$) and restriction of external influences ($r=0.410*r = 0.410*r=0.410*$). These findings emphasize the importance of a clear life purpose in shaping positive parenting behaviors.

6. Gender Differences and Cultural Context

The study highlights distinct gender differences in parenting practices, shaped by cultural expectations and societal norms. Fathers demonstrated greater involvement in fostering independence, while mothers played a more central role in managing daily family life and emotional connections. These roles, reflective of Uzbek family dynamics, underscore the influence of cultural values on parenting approaches.

Practical Implications

The findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing parenting practices should consider the parents’ meaning-of-life orientations. Programs focusing on helping parents clarify their life goals and values could improve their emotional engagement and reduce tendencies toward over-concentration or emotional distance. Additionally, counseling services can address cultural barriers, such as the stigma around discussing sexuality, to foster open communication within families.

Conclusion

This study underscores the significant impact of meaning-of-life orientations on parenting practices. Both fathers and mothers exhibit unique strengths and challenges shaped by their life orientations and cultural context. By fostering awareness of these dynamics, parents can create more supportive and balanced environments for their children’s development. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts and strategies for integrating cultural nuances into parenting support programs. And the relevance of this study lies in addressing the significant psychological and social implications of

meaning-of-life orientations for parenting. These orientations serve as a foundation for developing supportive parental attitudes that foster children's emotional and cognitive growth. The practical significance of the findings is evident in their potential application in various family and social settings. The results can be utilized to design group and individual programs for parents, enabling them to align their life goals with positive parenting practices. Furthermore, these insights can support educators and family therapists in promoting holistic child development and healthy familial relationships.

Meaning-of-life orientations play a critical role in shaping parenting practices. By understanding and fostering these orientations, parents can create supportive and nurturing environments that promote children's holistic development. Further research should explore longitudinal impacts and cross-cultural variations in these dynamics.

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