Social Sciences & Humanities Open

Sources of Meaning in Life Among Samin Youth: Ecological Ethics, Spiritual Continuity, and Cultural Resistance

--Manuscript Draft--

Manuscript Number:	SSHO-D-24-02629R1
Full Title:	Sources of Meaning in Life Among Samin Youth: Ecological Ethics, Spiritual Continuity, and Cultural Resistance
Article Type:	Full Length Article
Section/Category:	Psychology
Keywords:	meaning in life, indigenous psychology, Samin community, thematic analysis, cultural values
Corresponding Author:	Nelly Marhayati Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu Bengkulu, INDONESIA
Corresponding Author Secondary Information:	
Corresponding Author's Institution:	Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu
Corresponding Author's Secondary Institution:	
First Author:	Nelly Marhayati
First Author Secondary Information:	
Order of Authors:	Nelly Marhayati
	Suryani Suryani
	Adam Nasution
	Rodiyah Rodiyah
Order of Authors Secondary Information:	
Manuscript Region of Origin:	INDONESIA
Abstract:	This study investigates how young members of the Samin community in Kudus, Central Java, construct meaning in life through culturally rooted practices. Employing a qualitative thematic analysis, the research examines in-depth narratives from five Samin youth to identify key sources of meaning. Three central themes emerged: ecological ethics grounded in agrarian traditions, spiritual continuity through Agama Adam teachings, and collective responsibility expressed through labor and cultural resilience. These themes align with Schnell's dimensions of meaning particularly self-transcendence, order, and relatedness while de-emphasizing individualistic self-actualization. The findings demonstrate how indigenous youth negotiate meaning in the tension between ancestral values and contemporary challenges, including digital activism and environmental threats. This research contributes to cross-cultural psychology by offering an emic perspective on existential meaning within an indigenous worldview that balances resistance, tradition, and adaptation.
Opposed Reviewers:	
Response to Reviewers:	Note on Title Revision: In light of the substantial revisions made to the manuscript, including the restructuring of the Introduction, Results, and Discussion, we have updated the manuscript title to more accurately reflect the core themes and contributions of the study. The new title, "Sources of Meaning in Life Among Samin Youth: Ecological Ethics, Spiritual Continuity, and Cultural Resistance", better represents the findings and theoretical focus of the revised manuscript. Reviewer #1 Comment:

Powered by Editorial Manager® and ProduXion Manager® from Aries Systems Corporation

	“The first paragraph under ‘The concept of meaning’ is a literal copy of a paragraph from Austad et al., although it is not characterized as such. … Even the quotes are overlapping.” Response: We sincerely apologize for the oversight. We have completely rewritten the section “The Concept of Meaning in Life and Sources of Meaning”. All overlapping text has been removed and clearly attributed. The changes are visible in tracked version pages 1– 4. Reviewer #2 1. Objectives & Rationale Comment: “Objectives are not clearly linked to literature … no rationale for the study context.” Response: We fully rewrote the Introduction to present a coherent thematic literature review, justify the focus on Samin youth in context of cultural challenges, and clearly state the aims. Recent studies (2020–2024) have been integrated. Changes visible in pages 1–3. 2. Materials & Methods Comment: “Research design unspecified, recruitment unclear, no ethics statement, focus groups mentioned but not used.” Response: The entire section was replaced. We specify qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke), detail purposive recruitment, clarify that only interviews were conducted, and include ethical considerations (IRB waiver, informed consent, confidentiality, pseudonyms P1–P5). We also added a reflexivity paragraph. Revisions show in pages 3–4. 3. Results Comment: “Results unclear, overlaps, lacking thematic structure.” Response: We fully removed and rewrote the Results, presenting three clearly defined themes with supporting quotes, aligned to Schnell’s model and accompanied by a new thematic summary table. Paragraphs are more focused and coherent. See changes in pages 4-6. 4. Discussion Comment: “Discussion superficial, lacking synthesis and cultural interpretation.” Response: The Discussion was entirely rewritten. We deepen theoretical reflection, compare with recent cross-cultural studies, highlight indigenous youth perspectives, and stress cultural resilience, environmental and spiritual contributions. Revisions appear in pages 7-9 Additional Note on Comparative Reflection: In response to the broader goal of strengthening theoretical and cultural reflection, we have added a new subsection titled “Comparative Perspectives from Southeast Asian Indigenous Communities” in the Discussion (pages 9-10). This section connects our findings to relevant patterns observed in other Southeast Asian indigenous groups, based on regional studies and thematic similarities. This contextualization aims to enhance the interpretive richness and cultural resonance of our study 5. Conclusion Comment: “Conclusion needs to present theoretical and practical implications.” Response: The Conclusion has been completely rewritten to summarize key themes, reaffirm contributions to indigenous psychology and ecological ethics, outline practical implications for youth empowerment, and deliver a cohesive closing argument. Updated version on page 9-10. Editor 1.Ethical Statement & Informed Consent We clarified IRB waiver, academic ethical standards, full informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymization as P1–P5, per section 2.6 in the tracked manuscript (Pages 4). 2.Data Transparency Although qualitative transcripts are not publicly available, we have added a Data

	Availability Statement before References: “The qualitative data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical considerations and the need to protect participant anonymity. However, selected anonymized excerpts may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.” 3.Similarity Reduction Overlapping sections with Austad et al. have been rewritten; checked against similarity report. Tracked version shows all changes. Rewritten in pages 1-9 4.Authorship Consistency Author order is now consistent throughout the revised manuscript and submission system. 5.Participant Pseudonyms Used anonymized identifiers (P1–P5) consistently in text and tables. (Pages 4-9) 6.AI Declaration We did not use generative AI in writing or analysis. A statement confirming this is appended to the end of the manuscript. See changes in pages 11. 7.Updated Literature & Formatting While we have updated the manuscript to include several recent and relevant studies (2020–2024), a few older references have been retained intentionally because they are foundational works in the field of existential psychology and qualitative methodology. 8.Submission Package We are submitting: 1.Revised manuscript with track changes 2.Clean revised manuscript 3.This Response to Reviewers and Editor
Additional Information:	
Question	**Response**
Please confirm that you have mentioned all organizations that funded your research in the Acknowledgements section of your submission, including grant numbers where appropriate.	Yes, I confirm

Cover Letter

Nelly Marhayati
Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu
Jl. R. Fatah Pagar Dewa Bengkulu

Oktober 6, 2024

Dear Editor

I wish to submit an original research article entitled "The Meaning of Life for the Younger Generation of Samin Kudus in Preserving the Samin Religion" for consideration by Social Sciences & Humanities Open Journal

I confirm that this work is original and has not been published elsewhere, nor is it currently under consideration for publication elsewhere. In this paper, I report on the meaning of life and its significance in empirical research, particularly in the field of religious psychology. This research is important as the meaning of life within cultural communities, especially for the young generation, has been sparsely studied. I believe that this manuscript is suitable for publication in The Social Sciences & Humanities Open Journal due to its focus on positive psychology with an analysis of social groups within the Samin Kudus Community.

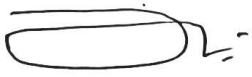
Previous studies have highlighted self-actualization as dominant for the younger generation in understanding the meaning of life. However, this study indicates that the younger generation's understanding of self-actualization as a source of meaning is less prominent. The central fundamental sources of meaning identified in this study are self-transcendence, well-being, and relatedness. This study has valuable implications for academics and the general public, demonstrating that despite global advancements, the younger generation's behavior remains influenced by deriving meaning in life from religious values or beliefs inherited from their community or ethnic group.

I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Please address all correspondence concerning this manuscript to me at :
nmarhayati@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id

Thank you for your consideration of this manuscript.

Sincerely,



Nelly Marhayati

Title Page (With Author details)

The Meaning of Life for the Younger Generation of Samin Kudus in Preserving the Samin Religion

Nelly Marhayati[1], Suryani[2], Rodiyah[3], Adam Nasution[4]

[1]nmarhayati@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id

[2]Suryani@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id

[3]rodiyah@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id

[4]adamnasution@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id

Manuscript (Without Author Names) Click here to view linked References

The Meaning of Life for the Younger Generation of Samin Kudus in Preserving the Samin Religion

Abstract

The meaning of life has become an important topic in empirical research, particularly in the field of religious psychology. Although it has been studied and found applicable in various contexts, research on the meaning of life within cultural communities is still scarce. This study qualitatively investigates the understanding and experience of meaning in life and sources of meaning among the younger generation of Samin Kudus. The informants in this study are five young individuals aged between 19 and 35 years, who are direct descendants of the Samin community. Data collection and analysis were conducted with reference to Schnell's model of meaning in life and sources of meaning. The findings show that the concept of meaning in life for the younger generation is relevant to that of the older generation. The experience of meaning and sources of meaning are associated with specific life domains: relationships; religion; education and work; recreational activities; and health and survival. Each life domain includes several fundamental sources of meaning, which can be linked to Schnell's four dimensions of meaning sources: self-transcendence, self-actualization, order and well-being, and relatedness. The results indicate that the younger generation's understanding of self-actualization as a source of meaning is less prominent. The three most central fundamental sources of meaning are self-transcendence, well-being, and relatedness.

Practical Implication: This study has valuable implications for academics and the general public, demonstrating that despite the influence of global advancements, particularly on the younger generation, their behavior will remain unchanged as long as they derive meaning in life from religious values or beliefs inherited from their community or ethnic group.

Introduction

The meaning of life is a subjective experience that is central to human existence (Wong, 2012). Psychology has emphasized that people are motivated to maintain a meaningful framework for understanding the world, which provides value and purpose (Taves et al., 2018). Therefore, the discussion of the meaning of life has become one of the important and evolving topics in empirical research (Schnell, 2014; Taves et al., 2018). For individuals, the meaning of life serves as a motivator for pursuing a model of life they perceive as meaningful. The desire for a meaningful life represents an individual's drive to achieve something that makes life valuable and significant. The meaning of life becomes both a goal to be fulfilled and a motivator for individuals to act in ways that enable them to realize their sense of meaning.

Studies or discussions on the meaning of life in Indonesia have become increasingly prevalent, particularly in the fields of psychology and counseling. Based on the literature review by Qori and Ningsih (2020), at least 13 studies have been found discussing the meaning of life among various groups in Indonesian society. The researchers attempt to summarize seven out of the thirteen studies from Qori and Ningsih's literature review. First, the study by Burkan et al. (2014) on "The Meaning of Life for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and Its Review According to Islam." This study found that the process of finding meaning in life for the three subjects involved several stages. The first stage was

accepting their illness, then perceiving the disease as a test from Allah SWT, motivating themselves to make positive life changes, working diligently to meet all their life needs, and participating as volunteers to help fellow PLWHA.

Second, the study by Atsniyah and Supradewi (2019) on The Meaning of Life for Santri of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Amal. This study found that the achievement of meaning in life involved steps such as self-understanding, adopting a positive attitude, forming close relationships with the environment, and performing religious worship. Third, the study by Argo et al. (2014) on The Meaning of Life for Former Punks: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study. This study revealed that the meaning of life for former punks was influenced by their life experiences before becoming punks, during their time in the punk community, and after leaving the community. Fourth, the study by Rahmalia (2018) titled The Meaning of Life for Middle-Aged Single Women. This study found that middle-aged single women derive meaning in life by working to achieve independence, bringing happiness to their parents, and instilling the belief that God has a beautiful plan for them.

The next study by Bakhruddinsyah (2016), titled The Meaning of Life and the Concept of Happiness Among the Elderly at Nirwana Puri Samarinda Nursing Home, found that out of eight informants, seven reported positive happiness and meaning in life, while one informant experienced negative meaning in life due to feelings of no longer being useful, lacking work, being distant from family, and feeling bored with the nursing home routine. The sixth study was conducted by Arista (2017) on The Meaning of Life and Religiosity Among Former Prisoners Convicted of Murder. This study found that the informants underwent several stages in achieving meaning in life. These stages included suffering, self-acceptance, finding meaning in life, realizing the meaning of life, and ultimately reaching happiness. Religious behavior had a significant impact on all the informants in achieving life happiness. The next study by Priatama et al. (2019) examined The Meaning Behind Traditional Art: A Phenomenological Study on the Meaning of Life of Sundanese Artists. This study found differences in the meaning of life among the informants, even though they shared the same role as performers in the performing arts. However, despite these differences in understanding life's meaning, the informants consistently held on to the meaning of life in every activity they performed and were prepared to accept the consequences by maintaining a positive attitude in every life condition they encountered.

Based on the literature review above, most previous studies have focused on the meaning of life among minority groups, such as PLWHA, the elderly, religious students, and former prisoners. Only one study related to the meaning of life within cultural communities was found, specifically on the meaning of life among Sundanese artists. This indicates that research on the meaning of life related to cultural communities, especially those who have preserved their cultural traditions for years, is still scarce. The latest study on the meaning of life within cultural communities was conducted by Sopaheluwakan and Huwae (2022), with the theme The Contribution of Spirituality to the Meaning of Life in the Waru Community of Central Maluku, Who Perform the Mori UKNU Ritual Dance. This study found that spirituality contributed 63.1% to the meaning of life for the Waru community of North Maluku. Additionally, the researchers found another study by Austad et al. (2023), titled Experiences of Meaning in Life in Urban and Rural Zambia. This study revealed that understanding the meaning of life in urban and rural communities is strongly influenced by family background, religion, education, and work.

Sukmayadi (2018) stated that the rapid development of the times would lead to a shift in local cultural values and traditions, which are no longer reflected in daily life. The reluctance of the younger generation to participate in preserving cultural traditions can be seen as an indication that they have not yet found meaning in life or that the meaning of life for the younger generation is still low (Sopaheluwakan & Huwae, 2022). A meaningful life is possessed by an individual when they

understand the meaning or significance of the choices they make in life. The meaning of life can be seen in the presence of hope and the desire to be useful to others, such as within their family, community, or society (Rosingana, 2019). One of the problems faced by the younger generation, especially those from specific ethnic groups or communities, in the era of globalization is the erosion of their love for their indigenous culture (Priatama et al., 2019), which is a source of concern for the older generation. Despite these concerns, there are still young people who remain consistent in preserving their cultural traditions. This phenomenon requires further investigation. It is essential to understand what motivates these young people to actively participate in preserving their culture by exploring their sense of meaning in life.

Based on the previous studies mentioned above, the researchers are interested in understanding the meaning of life among the younger generation of Samin Kudus in maintaining their local culture, which has been passed down through generations. Furthermore, this study aims to explore the application of conceptualizations of meaning in life and the existing sources of meaning, using Schnell's model of meaning in life (2009, 2021).

The Concept of Meaning in Life and Sources of Meaning

In psychology, the concept of meaning in life has been defined in numerous ways and is regarded as difficult to operationalize (Leontiev, 2013). Nonetheless, recent research has focused on integrating various elements of this concept (Baumeister & Landau, 2018; George & Park, 2016; Taves et al., 2018; Wissing et al., 2020). A review of the different conceptualizations of meaning in life reveals three recurring themes: purpose, significance/mattering, and coherence/comprehensibility (George & Park, 2016; Martela & Steger, 2016). Furthermore, Schnell (2009, 2021) identified a fourth theme, "togetherness." According to Schnell (2021), the experience of meaning in life stems from the fundamental belief that life is worth living: "This is based on the evaluation that one's life is coherent, significant, purposeful, and includes togetherness."

A person's sense of meaning in life is shaped by their engagement with various sources of meaning. Schnell (2009, 2011) created a comprehensive framework of these sources in the *Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire*, organizing them into four dimensions. The first dimension, *self-transcendence*, reflects a commitment to causes beyond one's immediate needs. This dimension is divided into two subdimensions: *horizontal self-transcendence*, which refers to an individual's focus on worldly concerns that are not solely self-serving (e.g., social responsibility, generativity, and harmony with nature), and *vertical self-transcendence*, which refers to an orientation towards non-material and supernatural realities, expressed through organized religion or personal spirituality. The second dimension, *self-actualization*, is about realizing personal potential and capacities. The third, *order*, emphasizes adherence to long-standing values and social propriety. Finally, the fourth dimension, *well-being and relatedness*, involves nurturing relationships and finding joy in both solitude and social connections. The authors suggest that drawing meaning from multiple sources enhances one's sense of fulfillment and purpose in life. The more diverse the sources, the greater the sense of fulfillment and meaning (Reker, 2000; Reker & Wong, 1988; Schnell, 2021).

Cultural Manifestations of the Meaning of Life

The research about sources of meaning and relationship with the sense of meaning has done in various locations, including Brazil (Damásio et al., 2013), Peru (Gapp & Schnell, 2008), Canada (Lavigne et al., 2013), Indonesia (Ginting, 2017), Denmark (Pedersen et al., 2018), Norway (Sørensen et al., 2019), as well as Germany and Austria (Lehmann et al., 2018; Mavrogiorgou et al., 2020; Pollet & Schnell, 2017; Schnell, 2014; Schnell & Hoof, 2012; Schnell & Pali, 2013; Vötter & Schnell, 2019). From Africa, studies

using meaning models other than Schnell's have been conducted in South Africa and Ghana (De Klerk et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 2021; Wissing et al., 2020). The results of these studies indicate that the understanding of the meaning of life is generally described similarly, although the distribution of meaning qualities and dimensions of sources of meaning varies across different contexts. Cultural, social, and personal life processes impact the experience of meaning in ways that support, modify, or limit it (Schnell, 2021, p. 33). From a narrative perspective, it can be said that individuals develop their own life stories by drawing on prototypical stories embedded within larger cultural narratives (McAdams, 2001).

The prevalence of religious and spiritual beliefs is often said to be a part of the African and Zambian soul (Cheyeka, 2014; Inglehart, 2018). Religion permeates all aspects of life in such a way that it is sometimes difficult to separate it from other factors (Mbiti, 1990; Wilson et al., 2021). Although African traditional religions exist in various forms (Beyers, 2010), some common features have been identified. These features include belief in a supreme being, the spirit world, and a unified community (Krüger et al., 2009).

Another example of how meaning is mediated by culture is evident in the field of education. In Germany, the perception of meaning in life is associated with education; it was found that people with lower educational levels have a lower sense of meaning compared to those with a secondary education certificate or university degree (Schnell, 2021, p. 47). This result may be explained by the Western neoliberal narrative in which everyone is responsible for continually improving their skills and developing throughout life. Since Western society today is dominated by education, individuals with lower educational levels feel disadvantaged and socially stigmatized.

What is happening in Germany and in several other developed and modern countries, where education can help individuals find meaning in life, is very different from what happens in the Samin Kudus community. Based on field observations, the Samin community does not prioritize education at all. In their daily lives, they adhere solely to the teachings of Mbah Samin, which they refer to as the Adam Religion, passed down through generations (Interview with Informant Gunawan, May 2024).

It is known that the younger generation of Samin Kudus is now quite open and engaged with modern society. Although they do not attend formal schooling, they still make use of technology, such as owning mobile phones, laptops, and utilizing platforms like YouTube to voice concerns about the environment. There is even a special group called "Wiji Kendeng," founded by a descendant of the Samin community. The Wiji Kendeng group serves as a place for the younger generation to gather, learn, and create. This group even has its own YouTube channel as a platform to broadcast their existence and the positive activities they engage in to maintain environmental balance.

This paradigm shift is the Samin community’s strategy in responding to change. Their strategy of resistance is a way for the Samin community to diplomatically engage with the majority and the government. The resistance by the Samin Kudus community is driven by the negative stigma of being a group that opposes the nation’s development programs. Samin Kudus seeks to resist this stigma and the dominance of the majority through covert resistance strategies, as proposed by James Scott's theory. Samin Kudus engages in covert resistance not to change the dominant system, but to survive within it. Over time, this covert resistance strategy became more open. The transition from covert to overt strategies began with their ability to respond to change, starting with learning to write, understanding administrative matters related to citizenship, and building movements based on legal entities. After employing this strategy, Samin Kudus was recognized by the majority and the authorities, and they were granted the facilities to manage their own community (Nurdin, 2021).

Research Objectives and Questions

Based on the above considerations, this study aims to qualitatively investigate the understanding, experiences, and sources of meaning in life among the Samin Kudus community, particularly its younger generation. This study addresses the following research questions: What are the distinctive features of the conceptual understanding of the meaning of life? How and when are meaning in life and meaning crises experienced? What are the most prominent sources of meaning among the younger generation of Samin? Furthermore, this research also explores the following question: Do the experiences of meaning in life and sources of meaning among the younger generation of Samin Kudus align with Schnell's model of meaning?

Materials and Methods

Informants

The informants in this study were selected purposively, based on specific criteria: (1) direct descendants of the Samin community, (2) young individuals aged 20-45 years, (3) actively participating in each tradition performed, and (4) willing to be informants. The object of this study is the dynamics of meaning in life and sources of meaning among the younger generation of Samin Kudus. Based on these criteria, five informants were selected:

1. Bintang, 20 years old
2. Nita, 34 years old
3. Anom, 21 years old
4. Gunawan, 36 years old
5. Anggit, 20 years old

The researchers found that the sample size was sufficient for qualitative analysis. Since the dialogue in the material was rich and focused, the researchers considered the material to have the necessary informational power (Malterud et al., 2016). Moreover, studies applying established theories typically require smaller sample sizes compared to those supported by more limited theoretical perspectives (Malterud et al., 2016). In this study, we applied an established theory to analyze the interview data and used the data to explain the theory.

Data Collection

The researchers followed an interview guide with seven main questions based on the theory of meaning in life and sources of meaning from Schnell (2009, 2021). The researchers asked what the informants spontaneously associated with the term "meaning," in what situations they thought and spoke about the meaning of life, and what made their lives meaningful. Additionally, we asked in what situations they had experienced a sense of meaninglessness. We continued with questions about when they felt in harmony with themselves and where they drew strength and energy to continue living. Finally, we asked them to reflect on the difference between a meaningful life and a happy life.

The interview process was led by the first author, assisted by the second and third authors. All interviews were conducted at the informants' homes. Before conducting the interviews, the researchers had to make appointments with the informants, and interviews could only be conducted in the evening when the informants were home. During the day, most of the informants went to the fields or worked for others. Each interview lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours. The researchers were warmly welcomed by the informants, and one of the informants even prepared dinner for the research team.

Coding and Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and anonymized by the fourth researcher and then sent to the first research team. The transcribed texts were then systematized into tables ready for coding. The researchers applied content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), beginning with inductive coding and then abstracting into categories (Graneheim et al., 2017). In this initial phase, the research team worked separately to create codes and categories based on the interview results. Afterward, the team met to compare and discuss the coding of the interviews with the younger generation of Samin Kudus. This process resulted in a shared codebook, and the material was reanalyzed based on the agreed codebook to evaluate the reliability of the codes (Graneheim et al., 2017).

In the next phase, the codes and categories were synthesized, and the first author identified themes (see Tables 1–3), moving the analysis to a more interpretive level (Graneheim et al., 2017). Subsequently, Schnell's theory of sources of meaning was applied in a deductive analysis to test the model against the collected data (Graneheim et al., 2017; see Table 3). During the writing phase, the synthesis of the concept-based interview guide was used as the main structure, while the emerging themes became substructures. The deductive analysis was written in a separate section.

Results

The Concept of Meaning

As mentioned above, all informants were first asked to write down what they associated with the concept of meaning on a piece of paper before sharing their associations with other informants. Some responded by referring to specific sources of meaning related to family, education, work, and religion. Others associated meaning with more abstract phenomena such as achievement and balance, while some focused their discussion on the conceptual definition of the term 'meaning.'

The main findings from the responses to this first question revealed that all discussion groups provided reflections that indicated the concept of meaning was relevant to them. Four key themes of the concept of meaning were identified: (1) meaning as understanding; (2) meaning as values, purpose, and connectedness; (3) meaning as something contextual; and (4) meaning as something different but related to happiness.

Meaning as understanding of life. Two informants connected the concept of meaning with understanding life. They viewed meaning as "a way to understand life in general." A 36-year-old informant said that "meaning is a word that provides a complete picture of things happening in life." In this category of responses, the term meaning was associated with interpretation, understanding, and perception of situations.

Meaning as Values, Purpose, and Connectedness. Meaning is understood not only in relation to life experiences in general but also in relation to significant and valuable life experiences that provide orientation or direction in life. The view of meaning was expressed by all informants. All informants shared the same opinion that meaning is "something that holds value for me," and one informant added that meaning means "I am able to add value to my life." Additionally, all informants associated the meaning of life with "family and community and everything related to the teachings or religion they follow." Meaning was also considered by all informants as "the purpose of life or the purpose of one's existence." Informant Gunawan stated that meaning is "connectedness and the sense of belonging to the religious teachings they have understood for generations." This response also appeared in the question about sources of meaning, which will be explained further.

Meaning as Something Contextual. Several informants explicitly stated that their understanding of the meaning of life would change depending on their life experiences. Informant Gunawan mentioned that a person's understanding of the meaning of life "depends on the perspective of their environment and belief in religious commands and prohibitions."

Meaning as Something Different but Related to Happiness. In response to the question about the relationship between meaning and happiness, some informants said that meaning and happiness are the same. However, almost all informants stated that meaning and happiness are different but related. A person will feel happy when they believe their life has meaning. Generally, what distinguishes meaning from happiness is that meaning is seen as more permanent than happiness; happiness is viewed as something temporary and emotional. Meaning is believed to be something that requires effort, and it can even come at the expense of happiness. Meaning is said to be connected to community or groups, such as taking care of family and practicing the collective values they adhere to. Informant Nita concluded that: "A meaningful life is one that should impact my life, my family, and the community where I belong. But a happy life may not always affect my life, family, and community." Thus, linking meaning to the concept of happiness adds nuance to the participants' understanding of meaning in life, where meaning is considered more permanent, oriented towards others, and collective compared to the concept of happiness.

For a summary explanation of the concept of meaning, see Table 1.

Meaning Awareness

Most informants stated that they became aware of the meaning of life in difficult or dangerous situations. They mentioned specific situations, such as illness or loss, financial problems, breaking societal norms, and rejection from the general community towards the Samin community. The informants described situations where their goals were not achieved, when they were disappointed, or when they experienced rejection. Some participants believed that awareness of meaning could also arise in favorable situations, and one informant stated that meaning awareness occurred "after experiencing an event that changed something." Another informant mentioned specific situations involving reflection on the values of their beliefs. Such situations are closely related to learning values within the family.

For a summary explanation of the concept of meaning, see Table 2.

Table 1. The Meaning Concept (Questions no 1 and 7)

Category	Meaning concept					
Sub-categories	Interpretive	Existential	Contextual	Different from happiness	Concurrent with happiness	Related to happiness
Codes	Understanding/interpretation, Description	Life purpose, life values, religious aspects, dependence on family and community, sense of belonging	Life experiences, environmental perspective, belief in religious commands and prohibitions	Meaning means: fulfilling what the community desires, more permanent, more prosocial, bringing happiness to family	Meaning in life is a happy life	Happiness follows meaning. Meaning follows happiness. Happiness is part of meaning.
Themes	Meaning as understanding of life	Meaning as values, purpose, and connectedness	Meaning as something contextual	Meaning as something different but related to happiness		

Table 2. Meaning Awareness (Interview question 2)

Category	**Meaning awareness**		
Sub-categories	In difficult situations	In any situation that changes something	When values are being taught and reflected
Codes	Illness and loss, financial problems, breaking societal norms, rejection, goals not achieved, disappointment, shattered dreams	Pleasant and unpleasant experiences	Family values, Religious or belief-based values

Sources of Meaning

The analysis of responses to the questions "What makes your life meaningful?", "What gives you strength and energy?", and "What makes you feel complete?", as well as some participants' associations with the concept of meaning, allowed us to approach the sources of meaning from various perspectives. A question about experiences of meaninglessness was also included, as it thematically reflects the question of sources of meaning from the opposite angle. We identified four main themes in the category of sources of meaning, with the first three themes representing the majority of responses: (1) relationships; (2) religion; (3) work; and (4) survival. These themes emerged not only as separate categories but also as interrelated ones. For example, some participants discussed the connection between religion and survival.

Relationships: Giving, Receiving, and Negotiating Family and Community Roles. The importance of family, both the nuclear family and the community, emerged from all informants' responses. Family was the first association made in response to the question about the concept of meaning. Statements from the informants included, "My family is the meaning of my life" and "When I wake up in the morning, I think about my family." Community also appeared in answers to the question about what gives life meaning. One informant responded, "Being part of the Samin Kudus community makes my life more meaningful."

Family was described as a place for receiving. Two informants said, "Parents and family provide a sense of security and comfort." Another informant added, "The support of the extended family (Samin community) provides a sense of safety and protection." Family was also seen as the meaningful goal of daily efforts. Informant Gunawan stated, "Family and the Samin community are the most important things because they support each other and still uphold the noble values of Mbah Samin's teachings." The community is important because the behavioral rules for the Samin family come from the religious heritage of Mbah Samin, known as the Adam Religion. "The life I live now reflects the community I come from. So, my behavior is a reflection of my community. If I don't live according to the norms expected by the community, then my behavior damages the community. Therefore, I always have to ensure that my reputation is intact. It's not about the individual, but about the family, village, and community."

The Importance of Family and Community was also highlighted by four other informants. Similar to the previous responses, they mentioned that the norms and rules they follow come from their community's teachings. Even though there are many outside influences, their views remain traditional, believing that the best life norms or values come from the beliefs they currently adhere to, which have been introduced to them since birth. Several informants further emphasized that meaning in life is

achieved when relationships within the family and the Samin community are peaceful and harmonious.

Religion: Also Referred to as the Center of Life. Some informants mentioned religion in their responses to the question about what gives life meaning. However, religion was more prominent in their answers to the question about sources of strength and energy. "Our religious teachings are what give me the strength to keep going," said one informant. In reflecting on this question, religious rituals emerged as a prominent source of strength, with God being viewed as the “provider” who knows what people need and who can ease problems by giving them the strength to face life’s challenges.

Informant Anom said, "Another important aspect of having religious beliefs is that the informants feel all problems can be solved. A person believes that if they approach God, follow all His commands, and avoid what is forbidden, then their problems will surely be resolved. After obeying the commands and prohibitions of the religion, one feels at peace and has the energy to face life, problems, and challenges." Further, the informants also said that "obedience to religious teachings is linked to life necessities. God will fulfill their needs and also strengthen them when those needs are unmet. Thus, obedience to religious teachings connects religion with other meaningful areas of life, such as health, work, and making a living."

Religion or belief is regarded as something deeply embedded in the informants' way of life and serves as a starting point for their life orientation and understanding of meaning. God is "the Entity that must be obeyed by following His commands and prohibitions." The uniqueness of the Samin community is their adherence to the Adam Religion, or the teachings of Mbah Samin, above all else. This community even feels that they can live sufficiently by solely following religious teachings. Most of the Samin community do not attend school, and even today, many of the younger generation only go to school long enough to learn to read. Once they can read, they leave school and continue learning at home. At home, parents teach the religious teachings of Samin. The behavior of the Samin community is measured by their adherence to religious commands and avoidance of life taboos taught by the religion.

According to all informants, the source of their meaning in life comes from their understanding of their religious teachings and the life experiences they have had. These religious teachings have been passed down through generations. Even though the younger generation today is exposed to technology, using gadgets, this is not seen as affecting their sense of meaning in life.

Work: In the Samin Kudus community, the majority of their work involves farming. They feel content with their current work. One informant mentioned, "I used to work in Jakarta, but soon returned to the village and became a farmer." For this community, being farmers, despite challenges such as limited land and unfavorable biophysical conditions, has made it increasingly difficult for them to survive. However, these conditions do not dampen their spirit to persevere. They are a self-sufficient community amidst isolation.

The environmental management practices of the Samin community have been passed down through generations. The allocation and management of available resources, such as farmland, are carried out according to their function to ensure they benefit their survival. For the Samin community, rice fields are the only land they manage intensively. Even though modern farming practices, such as the use of tractors, hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides, have developed, the Samin community continues to uphold their local wisdom in their agricultural practices. This local wisdom can be observed in how they manage the soil, understand soil fertility, prepare seeds, control pests, and manage the harvest. According to informant Gunawan, the ability to maintain traditional farming as

an occupation passed down through generations is a form of meaning in life for the Samin community, including its younger generation.

This traditional mindset, which has been preserved, influences the community's way of thinking, leading them to believe that education is not important. Simply living as farmers, with enough harvest to eat and barter for other needs, and understanding and following religious teachings, makes life highly meaningful.

Survival: Living in the way they do now is seen as a source of meaning for the younger generation of Samin. All informants agreed that being able to maintain Mbah Samin's teachings in the face of modern progress is a source of meaning in their lives. Living simply, without concern for education or work outside of farming, is a way of life that avoids the use of technology in farming. This lifestyle becomes a source of happiness and health for the Samin Kudus community.

When informants were asked where they get the strength and energy to keep going, some mentioned tangible physical sources of energy. For instance, one of them stated, "I get energy from food and water." Meanwhile, other informants mentioned that their source of strength comes from the sun, air, a well-preserved environment, and productive harvests. Thus, strength and energy were linked to concrete aspects of survival and health. One person specifically connected survival with the meaning of life: "There was a drought during the planting season, which resulted in a poor harvest; there wasn't enough food in the village, so it seemed we would starve. In such conditions, we couldn't say life was meaningless, because we continued practicing our religion." As explained in the section on religion, the strength gained through religious practices is associated with overcoming problems and improving health.

Life Domains and Fundamental Sources of Meaning According to Schnell

The inductive thematic analysis of the sources of meaning was organized based on specific life domains, corresponding to how most informants narrated their experiences of meaning in life. Due to time constraints and the nature of the focus group interviews, we were unable to delve deeper into each individual statement to move from explicit answers to the ultimate underlying meaning (Leontiev, 2007; Schnell, 2021). However, at an interpretative level, researchers were able to identify fundamental sources of meaning, interwoven and embedded in the descriptions of concrete meaningful experiences, such as achievement as a fundamental source of meaning within the domain of religion, happiness, and survival.

By applying Schnell's model of sources of meaning (Schnell, 2009, 2021), researchers identified several fundamental sources of meaning embedded in each life domain. In the extended family domain, researchers identified "well-being and connectedness," as family was described as providing togetherness, comfort, love, and care. Researchers also found references to "horizontal self-transcendence," specifically related to generativity in terms of providing for the family's needs. Additionally, the extended family was strongly associated with "order," as family and community were seen as representing tradition and morality.

The work domain was related to "horizontal self-transcendence," with generativity emerging as a primary source of meaning. Work held significant instrumental value as a means to generatively meet the family's needs. However, the form of "self-actualization" connected to work was the fulfillment of life's necessities.

The domain of survival and happiness includes "horizontal self-transcendence," where health, generativity, and connection with nature are fundamental sources. Lastly, religion represents "vertical

self-transcendence." Religious practices also encompass "well-being and connectedness" as well as "order" due to the role of religious togetherness, care through prayer, and the importance of tradition.

Thus, researchers identified all four dimensions of sources of meaning (Schnell, 2009): self-transcendence, self-actualization, order and well-being, and relatedness, based on the thematic analysis. However, among these dimensions, self-actualization was the least prominent, although it was found in responses related to achievement in the work domain. The three most central fundamental sources of meaning are self-transcendence, order and well-being, and relatedness (see Table 3).

Additionally, the phenomena associated by informants with the concept of meaning have many similarities with Schnell's definition of meaning in life (2021). What we conceptualized inductively as purpose, values, and connectedness resembles Schnell's categories of orientation, significance, and belonging (Schnell, 2021). However, based on the study's results, researchers were unable to determine whether the participants' reflections and interpretations of meaning aligned with Schnell's concept of coherence. Overall, the participants' understanding of meaning closely aligns with Schnell's conceptualization of meaning in life.

Table 3. Sources of Meaning (Interview questions no. 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

Category	**Sources of meaning**			
Sub-Categories	**Relationships**	**Religion**	**Work**	**Happiness and Survival**
Codes	**Family, Community, Peace and harmony, Individual and community norms**	**Religious teachings and rituals as the center of life**	**Work recognized as a source of meaning**	**Absence of suffering in the family, Adequate material resources, Good harvest, Physical sustenance: food, water, and air**
Themes	Relationships: Providing, receiving, and negotiating family and community roles	Religion: Center of life and relevant to meaning in life	Work: Not pursuing achievement, sufficient to meet needs	Happiness and Survival: Physical and material issues
Fundamental Sources of meaning (Schnell)		Vertical Self-Transcendence: Religiosity and Spirituality		
	Horizontal Self-Transcendence: Generativity		Horizontal Self-Transcendence: Generativity, Social Commitment	Horizontal Self-Transcendence: Health-related connectedness, Generativity
	Well-being and Connectedness: Caring for harmony, Love,	Well-being and Connectedness: Caring for harmony		Well-being and Connectedness: Happiness with the community

	Comfort, Harmony		
	Order: Tradition, Morality	Order: Religious tradition	
		Self-Actualization: Individualism	Self-Actualization: Fulfillment of needs

Discussion

In this study, the researchers explored the conceptual characteristics of "meaning in life," how and when meaning and meaning crises are experienced, and what are the most prominent sources of meaning for the younger generation of Samin Kudus. Overall, the inductive analysis found that the concept of meaning is understood as a way to connect things for the purpose of interpretation, specifically to make sense of life events. Meaning is also seen as an existential concept, particularly related to a sense of belonging, purpose, and direction in life. Meaning is considered contextual and tied to life experiences. Meaning and happiness are generally regarded as distinct concepts. Awareness of meaning is largely associated with difficult life situations, but some participants also reported being aware of meaning in any situation involving change and in teaching values to their families. The experience of meaning and sources of meaning were linked to the following life domains: relationships, religion, work, and joy & survival.

Significant Life Domains: Relationships, Religion, and Work

The findings regarding life areas related to sources of meaning in life align with other studies. For instance, in a mixed-method study by Mason (2013) among students in South Africa, the qualitative material analysis identified three life areas where meaning was found: relationships, education, and religion. Nell (2014) and Wissing et al. (2014) also found these domains to be significant areas of meaning in their student samples in South Africa, although Nell (2014) identified a fourth domain: hope, achievement, and purpose. In Indonesia, previous studies such as Arista (2017) on the relationship between meaning in life and religiosity among former prisoners found that the domains of religion and happiness were significant sources of meaning. These findings are supported by Sopaheluwakan and Huwae (2022), with the theme of The Contribution of Spirituality to the Meaning of Life in the Waru Community of Central Maluku Performing the Mori UKNU Ritual Dance. In this study, it was found that spirituality contributed 63.1% to the meaning of life for the Waru community of North Maluku.

Family and Community

In this study, family (both nuclear and extended) was not only explicitly mentioned by participants in response to questions about meaning, but it also appeared implicitly in the narratives related to other life domains. For example, family was discussed in relation to the importance of work. Community and family were also considered as providers of collective norms and values. This supports findings from several studies in Africa and Asia, where people find fulfillment not as individuals but as part of the community to which they belong (Mason, 2013; Nell, 2014; Onyedinma & Kanayo, 2013; Wissing et al., 2020; Sopaheluwakan & Huwae, 2022). The importance of family as a source of meaning in life was also found in other research (Delle Fave et al., 2013; Schnell, 2021, pp. 91–92). Family is also linked to togetherness, care, tradition, and generativity (Schnell, 2021, pp. 91–95). The difference is that studies in Africa and Asia tend to imagine themselves as more interdependent, emphasizing the role of family

and communal relationships in what can be conceptualized as an “extended self” (Hermans & Gieser, 2012, p. 8). Meanwhile, Western societies value autonomy and independence (Lindegger & Alberts, 2012).

Religious Orientation

Religion or understanding of beliefs emerged as an important source of meaning in our study. This dimension was often mentioned in explanations of other dimensions, especially in relation to questions about sources of strength. All participants agreed that the religion they adhere to is a significant source of meaning in their lives. Our findings differ from those of Austad et al. (2023), who found that education was a major source of meaning. Education, particularly academic education, was seen as the main hope for a wage-earning job.

The difference between our study and Austad et al. (2023) is that in African societies, religion and daily life are so intertwined that religion is no longer seen as a tool in the search for meaning in life. Religion is more often viewed as a source of strength rather than a source of meaning. Similarly, the emphasis placed on material aspects of life as a source of strength may reflect the holistic ontology of Africa, where the sacred and the profane are interconnected (Beyers, 2010; Thorpe, 1991).

Individualism and Collectivism

Although collective sources of meaning, such as community and generativity, were the most prominent in our study, and self-actualization appeared to be the least mentioned dimension of the sources of meaning, there were some references and studies regarding individualism. The question of religion as a source of meaning among informants reflects the presence of individualistic norms. The desire to be "true to oneself" in their search for meaning (Taylor, 1991, pp. 26–29), as expressed by some informants, can be seen as an individualistic voice within a religious and collectivist society (Mason, 2013). However, this study found a dynamic interplay between individualistic and collectivist ideas rather than a strict dichotomy. The findings show a dynamic pattern between individualistic and collectivist ideas (Wissing et al., 2020). An integrated model, where intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, and transpersonal relationships play a role in the formation of meaning (Wissing et al., 2019; Austad et al., 2023).

The Concept of Meaning in Life and Meaning Awareness

The informants' reflections on the concept of meaning in life closely align with established conceptualizations of meaning in life (George & Park, 2016; Martela & Steger, 2016; Schnell, 2009, 2021). Their responses correspond to basic denotative meanings, such as the meaning of a sentence or a sign, as well as existential meaning in life (Baumeister & Landau, 2018). The researchers' findings align with Austad's (2023) research, where clear coherence among the informants' conceptual reflections was not explicitly evident. However, there was a strong sense of connectedness and belonging that clearly emerged in this study (Schnell, 2009, 2021).

Baumeister (1991) begins his famous book Meanings of Life by stating that "when survival is at stake, when each day’s or each hour’s events bring a sense of urgency, the meaning of life becomes irrelevant" (p. 3). Baumeister argues that considerations about the meaning of life require "stepping back from the moment" (p. 3). Since our study explored experiences of meaning and meaning crises considered retrospectively, our material is evidently based on such a step back and reflection. However, an important finding of our research is that informants reported becoming aware of the meaning of life in difficult and critical life situations. The researchers also found that the concept of meaning was in harmony with their life experiences, regardless of their general life situations.

Conclusion and Avenues for Further Research

This article contributes to the study of meaning in life and serves as a starting point for future research by offering an in-depth understanding of the key areas where meaning in life is found among the younger generation of Samin Kudus: family, religion, work, happiness, and survival. Additionally, this article identifies the fundamental sources of meaning in life associated with these areas, where community and generativity are the most prominent. The experience of meaning in life lies in the younger generation's understanding of their beliefs, encompassing collective values and a holistic ontology, but also some individualistic orientations.

Suggestions for future research include investigating the experience of meaning in life and the sources of meaning (Schnell, 2009) quantitatively to measure diverse cultural communities with a larger number of participants. It would be particularly interesting to study the distribution of religious and spiritual sources of meaning and their correlation with the sense of meaning. Based on the findings of this qualitative study, we can assume that religiosity is a highly significant source of meaning for the Samin Kudus community, especially the younger generation. Furthermore, it would also be intriguing to assess the position of religious views, atheism, and other ethnic groups within a larger sample. Additionally, it would be relevant to investigate whether the dimension of "self-actualization" is indeed the least relevant source of meaning in a representative sample, considering the findings of this study where achievement and individualism were the only sources mentioned from that dimension. Based on the collectivist values identified and the presence of some individualistic orientations in this study, we suggest that future research explores the correlation between community, generativity, and meaning, as well as the role of individualism as a source of meaning in various cultures in Indonesia.

Acknowledgements

The research team would like to thank Prof. Dr. Rosyid, M.Ag., and Dr. Fatmalaili Khairunnida, who facilitated access to the informants, conducted, and translated interviews in the local language. We also extend our gratitude to all the informants for their willingness to share their experiences related to this research.

Funding

The authors received financial support for this research from the university.

ORCID iD

Nelly Marhayati https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3557-7913

References

Argo, A. R., Karyono, & Kristiana, I. F. (2014). Kebermaknaan Hidup Mantan Punkers. *Jurnal Psikologi*, *13*(1), 93–101.

Arista, D. (2017). Kebermaknaan hidup dan religiusitas pada mantan narapidana kasus pembunuhan. *Jurnal Psikoborneo*, *5*(3), 2017.

Atsniyah, L., & Supradewi, R. (2019). Makna hidup santri pengabdian pondok pesantren Nurul Amal. *Prosiding Konstelasi Ilmiah Mahasiswa Unissula (KIMU) Klaster Humanoira*.

Austad, A., Cheyeka, A. M., Danbolt, L. J., Kamanga, G., Mwale, N., Stifoss-Hanssen, H., ... & Schnell, T. (2023). Experiences of meaning in life in urban and rural Zambia. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, *45*(3), 247-268.

Bahkruddinsyah, R. (2016). Makna hidup dan arti kebahagiaan pada lansia di panti werdha nirwana puri Samarinda. *Psikoborneo: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi*, *4*(1).

Baumeister, R. F. (1991). Meanings of life. Guilford Press.

Baumeister, R. F., & Landau, M. J. (2018). Finding the meaning of meaning: Emerging insights on four grand questions. Review of General Psychology, 22(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000145

Beyers, J. (2010). What is religion? An African understanding. HTS Teologiese Studies, 66(1), a34. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v66i1.341

Burhan, R. F., Fourianalistyawati, E., & Zuhroni, Z. (2014). Gambaran kebermaknaan hidup orang dengan hiv/aids (odha) serta tinjauannya menurut Islam. *Jurnal Psikogenesis*, *2*(2), 110–122.

Cheyeka, A. M. (2014). Zambia. In T. Riggs (Ed.), Worldmark encyclopedia of religious practices (2nd ed., pp. 556–566). Gale.

Damásio, B. F., Helena Koller, S., & Schnell, T. (2013). Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (SoMe): Psychometric properties and sociodemographic findings in a large Brazilian sample. *Acta de Investigación Psicológica*, 3(3), 1205–1227. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2007-4719(13)70961-X

De Klerk, J. J., Boshoff, A. B., & Van Wyk, R. (2009). Measuring meaning in life in South Africa: Validation of an instrument developed in the USA. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39(3), 314–325.

Delle Fave, A., Brdar, I., Wissing, M. P., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2013). Sources and motives for personal meaning in adulthood. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 8(6), 517–529. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.830761

Gapp, S., & Schnell, T. (2008). Intercultural comparison of meaning in life. *International Journal of Psychology*, 43(3–4), 630.

George, L. S., & Park, C. L. (2016). Meaning in life as comprehension, purpose, and mattering: Toward integration and new research questions. *Review of General Psychology*, 20(3), 205–220. https://doi. org/10.1037/gpr0000077

Ginting, H. (2017, March 23–25). Sources of meaning and meaning in life among Indonesian volunteers [Conference presentation]. International Convention of Psychological Science, Vienna, Austria. https://www.psychologicalscience.org/conventions/archive/2017-icps

Graneheim, U. H., Lindgren, B.-M., & Lundman, B. (2017). Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper. *Nurse Education Today*, 56, 29–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.06.002

Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*, 24(2), 105–112. https://doi. org/10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001

Hermans, H. J. H., & Gieser, T. (2012). Introductory chapter. History, main tenets and core concepts of dialogical self theory. In H. J. H. Hermans & T. Gieser (Ed.), Handbook of dialogical self theory (pp. 1–22). Cambridge University Press.

Inglehart, R. (2018). Cultural evolution: People's motivations are changing, and reshaping the world. Cambridge University Press.

Krüger, J. S., Lubbe, G., & Steyn, H. C. (2009). The human search for meaning: A multireligion introduction to the religions of humankind. Van Schaik.

Lavigne, K. M., Hofman, S., Ring, A. J., Ryder, A. G., & Woodward, T. S. (2013). The personality of meaning in life: Associations between dimensions of life meaning and the Big Five. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 8(1), 34–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2012.736527

Lehmann, A., Wehner, T., & Ramos, R. (2018). Freiwilligenarbeit – psycho-soziale Ressource und sinngenerierende Tätigkeit [Volunteering – psychosocial resource and meaning-making activity]. In B. Badura, A. Ducki, H. Schröder, J. Klose, & M. Meyer (Eds.), Fehlzeiten-Report 2018 (pp. 235–243). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-57388-4_20

Leontiev, D. A. (2007). Approaching worldview structure with ultimate meanings technique. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 47(2), 243–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167806293009

Leontiev, D. A. (2013). Personal meaning: A challenge for psychology. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 8(6), 459–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.830767

Lindegger, G., & Alberts, C. (2012). The dialogical self in the new South Africa. In. In H. J. H. Hermans & T. Gieser (Ed.), Handbook of dialogical self theory (pp. 1–22). Cambridge University Press.

Martela, F., & Steger, M. F. (2016). The three meanings of meaning in life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and significance. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11(5), 531–545. https://doi.org/10.1080/17 439760.2015.1137623

Mason, H. (2013). Meaning in life within an African context: A mixed method study. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 23, 635–638. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2013.10820679

Mavrogiorgou, P., Chmielewski, F., Hanning, S., & Juckel, G. (2020). Persönlichkeit, Lebensbedeutungen und Angst vor dem Tod bei affektiven Störungen [Personality, sources of meaning and death anxiety in affective disorders]. *Psychotherapeut*, 65(4), 304–312. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00278-020-00439-5

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(2), 100–122. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.5.2.100

Nell, W. (2014). Sources of life meaning among South African university students. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 24(1), 82–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2014.904087

Nurdin, N. (2021). Tradisi perlawanan kultural masyarakat Samin. *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama*, *15*(1), 71–86.

Onyedinma, E. E., & Kanayo, N. L. (2013). Understanding human relations in African traditional religious context in the face of globalization: Nigerian Perspectives. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 3(2), 61–70.

Pedersen, H. F., Birkeland, M. H., Jensen, J. S., Schnell, T., Hvidt, N. C., Sørensen, T., & Cour, P. (2018). What brings meaning to life in a highly secular society? A study on sources of meaning among Danes. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology,* 59(6), 678–690. https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12495

Pollet, E., & Schnell, T. (2017). Brilliant: But what for? Meaning and subjective well-being in the lives of intellectually gifted and academically high-achieving adults. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 18(5), 1459–1484. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-9783-4

Priatama, R. P., Supenawinata, A., & Hidayat, I. N. (2019). Makna hidup dibalik seni tradisional: Studi fenomenologi kebermaknaan hidup seniman Sunda. *Jurnal Psikologi Islam Dan Budaya*, *2*(1), 43–64.

Qoriah, H. S., & Ningsih, Y. T. (2020). Gambaran makna hidup pada beberapa kalangan masyarakat di Indonesia (sebuah kajian literatur). *Jurnal Riset Psikologi*, *2020*(3), 1–14.

Rahmalia, D. (2018). Makna hidup pada wanita dewasa madya yang belum menikah. *Jurnal Psikologi Kognisi*, *3*(1), 29–44.

Reker, G. T. (2000). Theoretical perspective, dimensions, and measurement of existential meaning. In G. T. Reker & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), Exploring existential meaning: Optimizing human development across the life span (pp. 39–58). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452233703.n4

Reker, G. T., & Wong, P. T. P. (1988). Aging as an individual process: Toward a theory of personal meaning. In J. E. Birren & V. L. Bengtson (Eds.), Emergent theories of aging (pp. 214–246). Springer.

Rosingana, G. C. (2019). In search of meaning: 'The hours' and meaning construction. *Círculo de Lingüística Aplicada a La Comunicación*, *79*, 187–202.

Schnell, T. (2009). The Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (SoMe): Relations to demographics and well-being. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 4(6), 483–499. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760903271074

Schnell, T. (2011). Individual differences in meaning-making: Considering the variety of sources of meaning, their density and diversity. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 51(5), 667–673. https://doi. org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.06.006

Schnell, T. (2014). Meaning in life operationalized: An empirical approach to existential psychology). In S. Kreitler & T. Urbanek (Eds.), Conceptions of meaning (pp. 173–194). Nova Science Publishers.

Schnell, T. (2021). The psychology of meaning in life. Routledge.

Schnell, T., & Hoof, M. (2012). Meaningful commitment: Finding meaning in volunteer work. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 33(1), 35–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2012.650029

Schnell, T., & Pali, S. (2013). Pilgrimage today: The meaning-making potential of ritual. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture,* 16(9), 887–902. https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2013.766449

Sopaheluwakan, J. E., & Huwae, A. (2022). Kontribusi Spiritualitas Terhadap Kebermaknaan Hidup Masyarakat Waru Maluku Tengah Yang Menjalankan Ritual Mori Tari Mori Uknu. *Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian*, *3*(3), 5453–5464. https://stp-mataram.e-journal.id/JIP/article/view/1783

Sukmayadi, T. (2018). Nilai-nilai kearifan Lokal dalam pandangan hidup masyarakat adat Kampung Kuta. *JPK (Jurnal Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan)*, *3*(1), 19–29.

Taylor, C. (1991.). The ethics of authenticity. Harvard University Press.

Taves, A., Asprem, E., & Ihm, E. (2018). Psychology, meaning making, and the study of worldviews: Beyond religion and non-religion. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 10(3), 207–217. https://doi. org/10.1037/rel0000201

Vötter, B., & Schnell, T. (2019). Bringing giftedness to bear: Generativity, meaningfulness, and self control as resources for a happy life among gifted adults. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, Article 1972. https://doi. org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01972

Wilson, A., Khumalo, I. P., & Mpofu, E. (2021). Meaning in life among Ghanaian university students: Does religious commitment matter?. *Journal of Religion and Health,* 61, 2482–2499. https://doi.org/10.1007/ s10943-021-01405-4268 Archive for the Psychology of Religion 45(3)

Wissing, M. P., Wilson Fadiji, A., Schutte, L., Chigeza, S., Schutte, W. D., & Temane, Q. M. (2020). Motivations for relationships as sources of meaning: Ghanaian and South African experiences. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, Article 2019. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02019

Wong, P. T. P. (2012). The human quest for meaning: Theories, research, and applications (2nd ed.). Routledge

Ethical Statement for The Social Sciences & Humanities Open Journal

At this moment, I Nelly Marhayati consciously assure that for the manuscript "**The Meaning of Life for the Younger Generation of Samin Kudus in Preserving the Samin Religion**" the following is fulfilled:

1) This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.

2) The paper is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.

3) The paper reflects the author's own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.

4) The paper properly credits the meaningful contributions of co-authors and co-researchers.

5) The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.

6) All sources used are properly disclosed (correct citation). Literally copying of text must be indicated as such by using quotation marks and giving proper references.

7) All authors have been personally and actively involved in substantial work leading to the paper, and will take public responsibility for its content.

The violation of the Ethical Statement rules may result in severe consequences.

I agree with the above statements and declare that this submission follows the policies of Solid State Ionics as outlined in the Guide for Authors and in the Ethical Statement.

Date: 21 Oktober 2024

Corresponding author's signature

Nelly Marhayati

Declaration of interests

☐The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

☒The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

Nelly Marhayati reports financial support was provided by Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu State Islamic University. Thank you to Prof. Dr. Rosyid, M.Ag., and Dr. Fatmalaili Khairunnida, who facilitated access to the informants, conducted, and translated interviews in the local language. If there are other authors, they declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Cover Letter

Nelly Marhayati
Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu
Jl. R. Fatah Pagar Dewa Bengkulu

Date: 28 Jun. 25
To: Dr. Mo Ng
Scientific Handling Editor
Social Sciences & Humanities Open
Elsevier

Subject: Resubmission of Revised Manuscript – SSHO-D-24-02629
Title: *Sources of Meaning in Life Among Samin Youth: Ecological Ethics, Spiritual Continuity, and Cultural Resistance*

Dear Dr. Mo Ng,

On behalf of my co-authors, I am pleased to resubmit our revised manuscript titled *"Sources of Meaning in Life Among Samin Youth: Ecological Ethics, Spiritual Continuity, and Cultural Resistance"* (Manuscript No. SSHO-D-24-02629) for further consideration in *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*.

We have carefully addressed all comments and suggestions from the reviewers and the editorial team. Substantial revisions were made to enhance the clarity, originality, and methodological transparency of our work. Major improvements include:

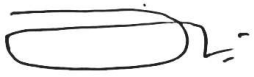
- Full rewriting of the Introduction, Results, and Discussion to reduce similarity and strengthen theoretical synthesis.
- Clearer articulation of research objectives and cultural rationale.
- Enhanced methodological details, including ethical considerations, sampling, and analytic approach.
- Integration of recent literature (2020–2024) to provide current relevance and scholarly grounding.
- Inclusion of an IRB waiver statement and informed consent procedures.

A detailed point-by-point response to each reviewer and editorial comment is attached alongside both the clean and tracked versions of the revised manuscript.

This revised manuscript contributes to the growing body of indigenous and cross-cultural psychology by presenting an emic perspective on meaning-making among the Samin youth in Indonesia. We believe it will be of interest to readers concerned with cultural resilience, ecological ethics, and existential meaning in non-Western contexts.

Thank you for the opportunity to revise and resubmit. We sincerely appreciate your and the reviewers' thoughtful engagement with our work and look forward to your further evaluation.

Thank you for your consideration of this manuscript.
Sincerely,



Nelly Marhayati

Declaration of interests

☐The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

☒The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:

Nelly Marhayati reports financial support was provided by Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu State Islamic University. Thank you to Prof. Dr. Rosyid, M.Ag., and Dr. Fatmalaili Khairunnida, who facilitated access to the informants, conducted, and translated interviews in the local language. If there are other authors, they declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Click here to access/download
Supplementary Material
Plagiasi Article New Samin.pdf

Sources of Meaning in Life Among Samin Youth: Ecological Ethics, Spiritual Continuity, and Cultural Resistance

Abstract

This study investigates how young members of the Samin community in Kudus, Central Java, construct meaning in life through culturally rooted practices. Employing a qualitative thematic analysis, the research examines in-depth narratives from five Samin youth to identify key sources of meaning. Three central themes emerged: ecological ethics grounded in agrarian traditions, spiritual continuity through Agama Adam teachings, and collective responsibility expressed through labor and cultural resilience. These themes align with Schnell's dimensions of meaning particularly self-transcendence, order, and relatedness while de-emphasizing individualistic self-actualization. The findings demonstrate how indigenous youth negotiate meaning in the tension between ancestral values and contemporary challenges, including digital activism and environmental threats. This research contributes to cross-cultural psychology by offering an emic perspective on existential meaning within an indigenous worldview that balances resistance, tradition, and adaptation.

Keywords: meaning in life, indigenous psychology, Samin community, thematic analysis, cultural values

1. Introductions

Meaning in life is a crucial construct in existential psychology, serving not only as a guiding principle but also as a foundation for resilience, emotional strength, and psychological well-being. Empirical evidence suggests that individuals who experience a strong sense of meaning in life are more capable of adapting to stress, navigating crises, and pursuing purposeful goals (Steger, 2017; Wong, 2012; Heintzelman & King, 2014). However, the concept of meaning is multifaceted and not easily defined in a single framework, as it encompasses philosophical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions (Leontiev, 2013; Taves et al., 2018).

To integrate these perspectives, scholars such as George and Park (2016) and Martela and Steger (2016) have proposed three essential components of meaning: purpose, significance, and coherence. Schnell (2021) later introduced a fourth dimension, togetherness, to emphasize the relational nature of existential fulfillment. Building on this, Schnell (2009, 2021) formulated a comprehensive model of meaning based on four dimensions: (1) Self-transcendence both horizontal (e.g., social responsibility, environmental harmony) and vertical (e.g., spirituality and religiosity); (2) Self-actualization, which involves personal growth and potential; (3) Order, which relates to social norms and traditional values; and (4) Well-being and relatedness, emphasizing emotional stability and interpersonal connection.

The model has been applied and validated in multiple cultural settings. Schnell and Danbolt (2023), for example, developed the Meaning and Purpose Scales (MAPS), which identified community, personal growth, and sustainability as strong predictors of meaningfulness among German participants. Ojalammi et al. (2024) found that engagement with nature, spiritual practice, and health were protective against existential distress during the COVID-19 crisis,

whereas ego-centric goals increased vulnerability to a crisis of meaning. These findings reinforce the relevance of communal and ecological values core tenets also found in indigenous belief systems like that of the Samin.

Austad et al. (2023), using Schnell's model in Zambia, demonstrated that sources of meaning were predominantly grounded in religious traditions, family responsibilities, livelihood related work, education, and the daily pursuit of survival. Their findings emphasized that while the core dimensions of meaning in life such as purpose, significance, and coherence may be universally recognizable, the content and distribution of these sources vary widely depending on local belief systems, economic realities, and sociohistorical contexts. In particular, rural communities emphasized the importance of faith and subsistence activities, whereas urban respondents identified formal education and occupational success as more meaningful.

This variability supports McAdams' (2001) narrative identity theory, which proposes that individuals construct personal meaning through life stories informed by culturally embedded scripts. These scripts not only shape the types of experiences that are seen as meaningful, but also influence how those experiences are integrated into a coherent sense of self. The Zambian context thus illustrates how culture functions as both a source and a structure of meaning, mediating what is valued, remembered, and aspired to.

Furthermore, Schnell (2021) contends that sources of meaning are not only influenced by personal agency, but are also socially constructed and maintained, meaning that the salience of certain sources such as faith, nature, or family may be elevated or suppressed depending on the prevailing cultural discourse. In contexts where collective survival and relational interdependence dominate, sources like *vertical self-transcendence* and *relatedness* tend to be prioritized over individualistic pursuits like *self-actualization*. This is particularly evident in both the Zambian case and the Samin community, where meaning is deeply rooted in ancestral values, communal ties, and adaptive strategies to environmental and social change.

Despite this growing literature, there remains a dearth of empirical studies examining how indigenous communities interpret and construct meaning in life especially within the tension between preserving tradition and adapting to modernity. Some studies in Indonesia have explored meaning among marginalized or specific populations such as HIV-positive individuals (Burkan et al., 2014), pesantren students (Atsniyah & Supradewi, 2019), ex-convicts (Arista, 2017), single women (Rahmalia, 2018), and local artist communities (Priatama et al., 2019). However, the existential narratives of indigenous groups like the Samin remain largely underexplored.

The Samin community presents a compelling case for such exploration. Rooted in the *Agama Adam* tradition, the Samin uphold values of simplicity, honesty, peace, and ecological harmony. These values are not taught through formal education but transmitted orally through daily practice and generational storytelling. In Samin belief, meaning is found not in material success but in living in accordance with nature and communal principles.

Unlike Western societies such as Germany where higher education is often associated with social mobility and existential meaning (Schnell, 2021), the Samin community does not prioritize formal schooling. Field observations show that young Samin individuals do not attend school, yet they are active users of digital technologies like smartphones and YouTube, through which they voice environmental concerns. One notable example is the youth-led group

"Wiji Kendeng," a movement of Samin descendants who use media to advocate for sustainability and showcase positive cultural practices.

This adaptation reflects a unique strategy of cultural resistance. Drawing on James Scott's theory, the Samin initially engaged in covert resistance to dominant systems through symbolic cultural practices. Over time, their strategies became more open, involving civil administration, legal formalization, and autonomous community organization (Nurdin, 2021). Despite adapting to modern contexts, the core values of the Samin remain deeply embedded in their experience of meaning in life.

Given this unique sociocultural positioning, the present study aims to explore how meaning in life is experienced, negotiated, and reconstructed by young Samin individuals. By applying *thematic analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and interpreting findings through Schnell's model, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of meaning in life within a dynamic indigenous context where spiritual continuity and cultural adaptation coexist. This study not only contributes to the growing field of cross-cultural psychology but also offers insights into how local wisdom can serve as a foundation for existential strength in an era of global change.

2. Methode

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using *Thematic Analysis* (TA) to explore the lived experiences of meaning in life among the younger generation of the Samin community in Kudus, Central Java. TA was selected for its flexibility and systematic framework for identifying and interpreting patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), while allowing for contextual sensitivity. The analysis was theoretically informed by Schnell's (2009, 2021) *Sources of Meaning* model.

2.2. Participants and Sampling

The study involved five participants, all members of the younger generation of the Samin community, aged between 20 and 35. Participants were selected purposively based on their cultural engagement and ability to reflect on life experiences. From an initial group of 15 individuals interviewed during exploratory fieldwork, five were chosen for in-depth analysis due to the richness and representativeness of their narratives.

2.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with informed consent. Interviews addressed personal views on life purpose, spiritual beliefs, family roles, environmental values, and strategies for negotiating cultural identity in the face of modernity. Field notes and informal observations supported the depth and contextualization of the narratives.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the six-phase process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), incorporating both inductive and deductive strategies. The analysis proceeded as follows:

1. Familiarization: Interview transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve immersion, with early analytic memos capturing initial impressions and contextual details.

2. Initial Coding: Using NVivo 12, the data were coded inductively to capture meaningful expressions without imposing pre-existing categories.
3. Theme Development: Related codes were grouped into candidate themes and checked for coherence, internal consistency, and resonance with participant experiences.
4. Theme Review: Emerging themes were refined and validated against the full data set, with overlaps and redundancies removed.
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Final themes were defined and conceptually mapped to Schnell's dimensions of meaning.
6. Producing the Report: Thematic findings were synthesized and interpreted through the cultural lens of the Samin community and the theoretical structure of meaning.

The final analysis identified three superordinate themes:

Table 1: The Thematic Analysis

Theme	Description	Schnell Dimension
1. *Living in Harmony with Nature*	Meaning derived from ecological balance, simplicity, and agrarian traditions.	Self-transcendence (horizontal)
2. *Spiritual Inheritance & Identity*	Meaning rooted in ancestral values and Agama Adam teachings.	Self-transcendence (vertical), Order
3.*Community Responsibility & Work*	Work as a form of social duty and connection to family and community interdependence.	Well-being and Relatedness

NVivo 12 visualizations such as coding stripes and word trees reinforced the centrality of these themes across participants. Semantic and latent meanings were interpreted through the dual lens of emic cultural knowledge and Schnell's theoretical constructs.

2.5. Reflexive Positioning

As an outsider to the Samin community, the researcher engaged in continuous reflexivity throughout the study. A reflexive journal was maintained to record emotional responses, emerging assumptions, and evolving interpretations during fieldwork and analysis. This process helped the researcher remain self-aware and culturally sensitive. A balance was maintained between emic perspectives and etic theoretical interpretations. Discussions with key community informants were conducted to validate cultural interpretations and ensure respectful engagement with indigenous knowledge. The researcher also remained attentive to potential power asymmetries, adopting a dialogical, non-hierarchical stance during interviews to promote authentic and ethical knowledge co-production.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The institution where this research was conducted does not have a formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) and does not require ethical approval for qualitative, non-clinical interview-based studies. Nevertheless, this study was conducted according to ethical academic research standards. All participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights. Written informed consent was obtained before participation. Participant confidentiality was strictly maintained, and all names have been anonymized as P1–P5.

3. Results

3.1 Living in Harmony with Nature

The theme “Living in Harmony with Nature” captures the deeply rooted ecological awareness and moral philosophy of the Samin community, particularly among its younger generation. Participants described nature not only as a resource, but as a living partner something to be respected, nurtured, and lived with in balance. This worldview is consistent with Samin teachings that emphasize non-exploitation, sustainability, and the spiritual interconnectedness of all living things.

> “We believe that if the forest or river is destroyed, we are also destroyed. There is no separation.” (P3)

For many, meaning was found in maintaining traditional agricultural practices such as organic farming and planting in accordance with natural cycles handed down by ancestors. Nature was personified, treated as both a teacher and a sacred presence. The philosophy of *ora serakah* (not being greedy) was mentioned repeatedly as a principle guiding not only their economic life but their spiritual orientation.

> “We don’t need much to be happy. The land gives what we need, not what we want.” (P5)

This theme is closely aligned with horizontal self-transcendence in Schnell’s (2021) model. Rather than seeking meaning in material accumulation or abstract ideals, participants located it in their immediate, embodied relationship with the land. By placing ecological values at the center of their moral system, the Samin youth illustrate a powerful form of existential fulfillment rooted in daily practice and cultural continuity.

Notably, several participants expressed concern over environmental degradation and modern consumption patterns, framing their resistance not only as a political act but as a moral duty.

> “People from outside bring cement and big machines, but they do not understand. They destroy the hills we protect.” (P2)

This form of environmental stewardship is both culturally inherited and ethically reinforced through community narratives. Similar to findings by Austad et al. (2023), who observed that meaning in rural Zambian communities is anchored in subsistence practices and harmony with the land, the Samin demonstrate that meaning is lived, embodied, and communal.

Moreover, this ecological orientation supports Schnell’s claim that sources of meaning are deeply shaped by social context. While modern societies may emphasize individual purpose or achievement, the Samin highlight interdependence with nature as a pathway to existential coherence, stability, and identity.

3.2 Spiritual Inheritance and Moral Identity

The theme *Spiritual Inheritance and Identity* highlights the central role of ancestral teachings and oral transmission of spiritual values in shaping the Samin community’s sense of meaning. For participants, spirituality was not institutionalized but embedded in everyday life. Their belief system *Agama Adam* is described not as a formal religion, but as a lived tradition emphasizing inner honesty, nonviolence, and harmony.

> "Our religion is not written in a book. It lives in our actions, in how we treat others and nature." (P4)

This spiritual identity is passed down from elders through storytelling, rituals, and shared labor, forming a deeply communal process of meaning-making. Participants expressed pride in their ability to live ethically without formal education, asserting that true knowledge comes from the wisdom of the ancestors.

> "I didn't go to school like others, but I understand life because my father and grandfather taught me. That is enough." (P1)

This reflects vertical self-transcendence in Schnell's model connecting to something greater than oneself, such as spiritual reality or moral principle as well as order, which includes tradition, social structure, and continuity. For the Samin youth, adhering to inherited spiritual values provides existential coherence, a sense of rootedness, and emotional security.

Participants described moral restraint *ora nganggo dora* (do not lie), *ora mateni* (do not kill), *urip resik* (live clean) as non-negotiable pillars of identity. These are practiced not for fear of punishment, but as expressions of alignment with the ancestral way.

This supports McAdams' (2001) theory that identity develops through culturally informed life stories by drawing from culturally embedded scripts. For the Samin, the script is spiritual, non-materialistic, and oriented toward relational harmony rather than individual assertion.

> "I live this way because this is how our ancestors lived. If we stop, we become lost." (P5)

This perspective challenges dominant models of meaning that emphasize personal achievement or institutional religious practice. Instead, the Samin youth find meaning in preserving and living their inherited spiritual path, resisting modern pressures while reaffirming cultural and moral autonomy.

The moral system they follow is neither proselytized nor imposed; it is embodied in silence, discipline, and quiet resistance. This reinforces Schnell's argument (2021) that sources of meaning must be understood within their cultural and social ecosystems, where spirituality may take non-Western, non-theistic, but deeply meaningful forms.

3.3 Community Responsibility and Work

The theme *Community Responsibility and Work* captures how members of the Samin community, especially the younger generation, perceive labor not as an individual pursuit of status or wealth, but as a meaningful act of collective contribution. Work is understood as both a moral duty and a spiritual expression of loyalty to one's family, land, and ancestral teachings.

> "We don't work to become rich. We work so our family can live, so our land stays healthy. That is our success." (P2)

This mindset reflects the well-being and relatedness dimension in Schnell's (2021) model, where meaning is derived from interpersonal connection and care for others. Additionally, it

touches on a form of self-actualization that is fundamentally communal individual potential is fulfilled by sustaining the group, not by individual distinction.

For many participants, daily labor in the fields, participation in cultural rituals, and even quiet forms of resistance (e.g., refusing to adopt extractive development models) were seen as purposeful. The concept of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) was mentioned as a way of life, not merely a tradition.

> "When someone is sick or needs help, we come together. No one asks for money. That is how we live meaningfully." (P5)

This collective ethic was not static. The younger generation has creatively adapted these values in modern contexts. For instance, the *Wiji Kendeng* group founded by youth with Samin heritage uses digital platforms to campaign for environmental justice, promoting the same principles of harmony and protection of the land, but now expressed through film, social media, and organized protest.

> "We have to speak in a way the world can hear us. But the message is the same: don't harm the earth, don't forget our roots." (P1)

This adaptation shows that while the core values remain, the expression of meaning evolves in response to external pressures. It reinforces Schnell and Danbolt's (2023) findings that sustainability and community engagement are increasingly important sources of meaning, especially among younger generations.

The Samin youth view their responsibilities not as burdens, but as pathways to existential purpose. Their work is infused with relational ethics, spiritual conviction, and a strong sense of continuity with the past.

This theme demonstrates how traditional sources of meaning family, spirituality, land can be recontextualized in the digital and political domains without losing their essence. It highlights the resilience of communal worldviews in offering meaning amid shifting cultural landscapes.

4. Discussion

4.1. Meaning through Collective Labor and Resistance

For the younger generation of the Samin Kudus community, labor is deeply embedded in cultural meaning and moral obligation. Work is not perceived through an individualistic lens but as a collective endeavor that affirms identity, sustains the community, and honors ancestral values. This collective orientation provides not only existential meaning but also a platform for subtle resistance against dominant narratives of modernity and development.

> "I don't farm because I want profit. I farm because this is how I care for my family, my land, and what our ancestors taught us." (P1)

This perspective aligns with Schnell's (2021) dimensions of relatedness and self-actualization, but framed through a relational and culturally embedded logic. Labor is meaningful when it serves the well-being of others and reinforces the continuity of moral tradition. Participants

repeatedly emphasized that even small, routine acts helping neighbors, planting according to lunar cycles, refusing chemical fertilizers were spiritually charged and communally valued.

Crucially, these acts of work are not neutral they are expressions of resistance. In the face of economic marginalization, environmental exploitation, and epistemic erasure, Samin youth engage in what Ballard (2022) terms *"everyday resistance."* Unlike overt protests or direct confrontation, everyday resistance is performed through small, often symbolic practices that challenge dominant structures while maintaining social cohesion.

Ballard writes, *"the power of the 'weak' lies not in seizing control, but in persisting with alternative ways of living that expose the limits of dominant narratives"* (p. 305). This insight captures the Samin experience. Their refusal to conform to extractive economic models, their silent defiance of compulsory formal education, and their commitment to ecological harmony are not acts of passivity, but strategic cultural survivals.

> "We may not shout on the streets, but by living like this, we show there's another way to be human." (P4)

Digital activism among Samin youth, especially through *Wiji Kendeng*, illustrates how traditional meaning systems adapt to modern platforms. They use video, social media, and storytelling to amplify their ecological message, transforming quiet resistance into a trans-local moral narrative. This strategy blends inherited wisdom with innovative communication, showing that resistance itself becomes a source of meaning not merely a response to oppression, but a creative reaffirmation of identity.

These findings resonate with Schnell and Danbolt (2023), who assert that meaning can be forged in community-based action, particularly when oriented toward sustainability and collective purpose. In the Samin context, resistance is not framed in antagonistic terms but as a disciplined continuation of a moral order, passed through generations and now re-articulated for contemporary challenges.

In sum, the Samin demonstrate that meaning arises not only in harmony and tradition, but also in resistance-as-practice. Their collective labor affirms identity; their resistance protects it. This interplay between continuity and subversion illustrates that indigenous communities like Samin are not locked in the past but are actively shaping futures grounded in dignity, ecology, and relational ethics.

4.2. Ecological and Cultural Rootedness

The theme *Living in Harmony with Nature* underscores the deep ecological consciousness embedded within the Samin worldview, in which land, water, and forest are not merely resources but living entities to be respected. This echoes global discourses on environmental ethics that emphasize balance, restraint, and spiritual ecology.

Jordan and Kristjánsson (2017), for instance, propose that harmony with nature is not simply a behavioral goal, but a virtue a cultivated moral orientation rooted in humility, respect, and care for the more-than-human world. This moral foundation is clearly observable among the Samin, where ecological moderation (*ora serakah*) is not only tradition but ethical duty.

Similarly, Zu (2022) emphasizes that sustainable development rooted in indigenous frameworks often prioritizes relational balance over exploitation, challenging dominant capitalist models. The Samin ethos of living simply and farming sustainably without chemicals or overproduction aligns with these principles, demonstrating an alternative paradigm of sustainability that is culturally coherent and spiritually grounded.

However, the challenges faced by the Samin community echo Doncaster and Bullock's (2024) assertion that living in harmony with nature may remain a non-ideal vision in many modern contexts, particularly when economic and political systems undermine ecological ethics. Participants in this study expressed frustration over large-scale development projects that threaten their land, forests, and way of life.

> "People come with machines and cement, but they don't see that the mountain is sacred. To them it's just rock." (P3)

This conflict between traditional ecological values and industrial exploitation is not unique. As Weeratunge (2000) explains in her analysis of global/local discourses, local cosmologies like those in South Asia and similarly among the Samin view harmony with nature as a spiritual imperative, not just an environmental strategy. These cosmologies are increasingly endangered by global forces that prioritize short-term development over long-term balance.

Post-pandemic discussions on urban sustainability have also recognized the importance of integrating indigenous ecological principles. Famutimi and Olugbamila (2022) argue that traditional land ethics can inform post-COVID sustainability planning, particularly in resisting ecological alienation and promoting collective resilience. The Samin's lived example of small-scale, cooperative, and spiritually informed land use provides a model of such resilience in practice.

Taken together, these studies reinforce that the Samin community's ecological orientation is not an isolated cultural anomaly, but part of a wider trans-cultural pattern in which meaning in life is found through relational balance, restraint, and reverence for the land. Schnell's (2021) notion of *horizontal self-transcendence* is not only evident here it is lived daily as both a cultural identity and moral commitment.

4.3. Indigenous Spirituality and Moral Continuity

The Samin community's spirituality, as lived and narrated by the younger generation, reflects a form of indigenous moral continuity grounded in oral traditions, nonviolence, and deep-rooted ancestral teachings. Rather than formalized doctrine, *Agama Adam* is preserved through embodied daily practices ranging from communal labor to ritualized storytelling and provides a powerful structure for meaning-making.

> "Our religion is not about going to a building. It is in how we treat others, in how we farm, in how we live honestly." (P1)

This lived spirituality aligns with Schnell's (2021) dimensions of vertical self-transcendence and order, where meaning emerges through connection to something larger ancestral wisdom, moral tradition, spiritual harmony and provides structure, stability, and coherence.

Magaya's (2021) study on sacred spaces and socialization in Zimbabwe offers a compelling parallel. Similar to the Samin, communities in Bocha perceived sacred geography and ritual continuity as central to youth identity formation. This "change within continuity" illustrates how traditional belief systems are not static relics, but dynamic moral frameworks that adjust to generational needs while maintaining core values.

This view is further enriched by Starzyk et al. (2021), who found that connectedness to nature and moral expansiveness were associated with attitudes of reconciliation in Indigenous Canadian contexts. Among the Samin, such connectedness extends not only to nature but also to ancestors and the community, reinforcing an inclusive moral worldview that supports both personal and collective meaning.

> "My grandfather said: always speak kindly, work honestly, and the spirit of the land will stay with you." (P4)

The community's resistance to modern educational and religious systems often framed as incompatible with their values can be interpreted through the lens of master narratives, as discussed by Syed and McLean (2022). In marginalized societies, dominant cultural scripts may exclude or misrepresent indigenous ways of living. The Samin youth, by reaffirming their inherited ethics, demonstrate how counter-narratives offer not only resistance but existential grounding. Their spiritual inheritance is thus not a rejection of change, but a selective adaptation preserving moral clarity in the face of structural marginalization.

Taken together, these findings reinforce that indigenous spirituality operates as a resilient and adaptive meaning system, sustaining psychological well-being and identity continuity in the midst of cultural shifts. The Samin case adds empirical support to Schnell's proposition that sources of meaning must be understood within their socio-cultural matrix, where tradition and transformation coexist.

4.4. Comparative Perspectives from Southeast Asian Indigenous Communities

The experiences of Samin youth in constructing meaning through ecological harmony, ancestral spirituality, and communal labor are not isolated. Similar meaning-making structures can be found among other Southeast Asian indigenous communities, suggesting a broader regional pattern of existential orientation grounded in relationality, land ethics, and resistance to modern disruptions.

For instance, the Baduy people of West Java, Indonesia, share a deep ecological and spiritual bond with their land, practicing a strict form of agrarian asceticism. Like the Samin, the Baduy reject formal education and resist external development projects that threaten their spiritual cosmology. Rosingana (2019) found that meaning among Baduy youth is derived from ritual continuity, ecological stewardship, and oral transmission of identity mirroring the moral and spiritual logic of Agama Adam.

Likewise, the Karen people of Northern Thailand view farming not merely as livelihood but as moral practice. Wissing et al. (2020) note that Karen cosmology emphasizes *kaw* (moral purity), *hi* (respect), and *ta* (care for others), which form the ethical basis of meaning in life. Their resistance to monoculture plantations and dam constructions also parallels the Samin's ecological activism through movements like *Wiji Kendeng*.

In Malaysia, various groups categorized as *Orang Asli* articulate meaning through "land-based spirituality," where sacred landscapes are central to community identity and ritual. As with the Samin, development pressures are seen not only as material threats but existential ones, eroding meaning systems rooted in spiritual geography (Starzyk et al., 2021).

The Lumad of the Philippines further illustrate this pattern. Their youth derive meaning through cultural activism, especially in defending ancestral lands from mining and militarization. Similar to the Samin's strategic use of digital media, Lumad youth utilize *community schools*, traditional art, and indigenous epistemologies to assert moral autonomy. These practices reflect what Ballard (2022) terms "resistance-as-agency," where refusal becomes a pathway to existential affirmation.

These comparative insights suggest that Schnell's (2021) dimensions of meaning especially self-transcendence, order, and relatedness manifest with particular salience among indigenous groups facing similar historical and environmental pressures. Meaning in life, in these contexts, becomes a form of *cultural survival*, a response to both internal coherence and external threats.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study explored how the younger generation of the Samin Kudus community constructs meaning in life through culturally embedded practices, analyzed through Thematic Analysis and interpreted using Schnell's (2009, 2021) Sources of Meaning framework. The findings revealed three central themes Living in Harmony with Nature, Spiritual Inheritance and Identity, and Community Responsibility and Work which illustrate that meaning in life among Samin youth is rooted in ecological ethics, ancestral spirituality, and collective labor.

While Schnell's four-dimensional model self-transcendence, self-actualization, order, and relatedness served as a useful lens, this study shows that meaning is not universally enacted, but rather deeply shaped by cultural worldview. Among the Samin, meaning is not merely sought through individual goals or institutional pathways, but inherited, practiced, and renewed through everyday actions, oral traditions, and relational commitments.

Crucially, this study demonstrates that meaning in life for the Samin youth is not solely defensive as a form of resistance to modern disruption but also creative and affirmative. Their adaptation of ancestral values into modern expressions (e.g., digital environmental activism, reinterpretation of communal labor, revitalization of oral ethics) reflects a cultural agency that affirms identity, reclaims moral authority, and reimagines the future. Resistance, in this context, becomes an ethical choice and a generative act: a way of being that transforms inherited tradition into purposeful, adaptive meaning.

In emphasizing cultural agency, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how indigenous youth not only preserve meaning but also produce it shaping coherent life narratives that bridge past and future, spirituality and activism, silence and voice. Their stories offer valuable insights for global discourses on meaning, resilience, and cultural sustainability in an increasingly plural and precarious world

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study offers empirical support for Schnell's claim that meaning is contextually constructed, while also extending the model through grounded insights from an indigenous,

non-Western context. It highlights how spiritual belief systems, moral traditions, and ecological relationality form coherent, lived structures of meaning outside of dominant paradigms.

In addition, the study aligns with narrative identity theory (McAdams, 2001) and Ballard's (2022) concept of everyday resistance, showing how meaning is transmitted through intergenerational narratives and practiced through culturally meaningful labor and moral action.

5.2. Practical and Policy Implications

Findings from this study provide relevant implications for policymakers, educators, and practitioners working with indigenous communities:

- Cultural Preservation: Support for indigenous populations must extend beyond material concerns to include protection of indigenous meaning systems, which are vital to psychological well-being and identity continuity.
- Contextualized Education: Educational models that incorporate local wisdom such as ecological stewardship, spiritual discipline, and oral history can enhance youth engagement without cultural erosion.
- Sustainable Development: Planning for development in indigenous territories should consider relational and spiritual ontologies as frameworks for long-term sustainability and social harmony.

5.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study was based on a small, purposively selected sample from a single community and is thus not statistically generalizable. However, the depth and cultural richness of the data offer transferable insights that may inform comparative studies across indigenous settings.

Future research may explore, longitudinal shifts in meaning-making across generations, gender-specific narratives of meaning within the Samin context, cross-cultural studies among Southeast Asian or Global South indigenous communities using the Schnell framework.

In conclusion, the Samin experience suggests that meaning is constructed through processes of inheritance, embodiment, and negotiation. It emerges where ecology, spirituality, and community intersect, offering valuable lessons for theory, policy, and practice in an increasingly complex world.

Data transparency

The qualitative data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical considerations and the need to protect participant anonymity. However, selected anonymized excerpts may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Acknowledgements

The research team would like to thank Prof. Dr. Rosyid, M.Ag., and Dr. Fatmalaili Khairunnida, who facilitated access to the informants, conducted, and translated interviews in

the local language. We also extend our gratitude to all the informants for their willingness to share their experiences related to this research.

Funding

The authors received financial support for this research from the university.

AI Declaration

No generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT or similar) were used in the writing, editing, data analysis, or preparation of this manuscript. All content is the original work of the authors.

References

Arista, D. (2017). *Makna hidup mantan narapidana dalam menjalani kehidupan sehari-hari* [Unpublished undergraduate thesis]. Universitas Gadjah Mada.

Atsniyah, N., & Supradewi, R. (2019). Makna hidup santri di pondok pesantren. *Jurnal Psikologi Islam dan Budaya, 2*(1), 22–32.

Austad, A., Cheyeka, A. M., Danbolt, L. J., Kamanga, G., Mwale, N., Stifoss-Hanssen, H., & Schnell, T. (2023). Experiences of meaning in life in urban and rural Zambia. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion, 45*(3), 247–268. https://doi.org/10.1177/00846724231176938

Ballard, R. (2022). Everyday resistance: Theorising how the 'weak' change the world. In B. Ramalingam & J. Gaventa (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Social Change* (pp. 303–314). Routledge.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Burkan, M. I., Efendi, F., & Hayati, E. N. (2014). Makna hidup penderita HIV/AIDS: Sebuah studi fenomenologi. *Jurnal Keperawatan Indonesia, 17*(2), 101–107.

Doncaster, C. P., & Bullock, J. M. (2024). Living in harmony with nature is achievable only as a non-ideal vision. *Environmental Science & Policy, 152*, 103658. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2024.103658

Famutimi, J. T. F., & Olugbamila, O. B. O. (2022). Implications of living in harmony with nature for urban sustainability in post-COVID-19 era. *Urban and Regional Planning Review, 8*(1), 19–33.

George, L. S., & Park, C. L. (2016). Meaning in life as comprehension, purpose, and mattering: Toward integration and new research questions. *Review of General Psychology, 20*(3), 205–220. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000077

Heintzelman, S. J., & King, L. A. (2014). Life is pretty meaningful. *American Psychologist, 69*(6), 561–574. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035049

Jordan, K., & Kristjánsson, K. (2017). Sustainability, virtue ethics, and the virtue of harmony with nature. *Environmental Education Research, 23*(9), 1205–1229. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2016.1157681

Leontiev, D. (2013). Personal meaning: A challenge for psychology. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 8*(6), 459–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.830763

Magaya, A. T. (2021). "Change within continuity": Sacred and holy spaces and socialization in Bocha, Zimbabwe, ca. 1910–1960s. *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa, 13*(1), 31–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2021.1984175

Martela, F., & Steger, M. F. (2016). The three meanings of meaning in life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and significance. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 11*(5), 531–545. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2015.1137623

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology, 5*(2), 100–122. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.5.2.100

Nurdin, A. (2021). *Resistensi Samin di era modern: Studi kasus komunitas Samin Kudus*. Pustaka Pelajar.

Ojalammi, S., Panula, E., Koskela, S., Tikkanen, A., & Lipsanen, J. (2024). Sources of meaning and crisis of meaning: Associations with COVID-19-related distress. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*, 1282643. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1282643

Priatama, T. R., Nurhayati, D., & Arifin, Z. (2019). Makna hidup dalam praktik kesenian masyarakat Sunda. *Humaniora, 31*(1), 88–95. https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.40810

Rahmalia, N. (2018). *Makna hidup pada wanita lajang paruh baya* [Undergraduate thesis]. Universitas Indonesia.

Reker, G. T., & Wong, P. T. P. (1988). Aging as an individual process: Toward a theory of personal meaning. In J. E. Birren & V. L. Bengtson (Eds.), *Emergent theories of aging* (pp. 214–246). Springer.

Rosingana, D. (2019). Identitas budaya dan makna hidup generasi muda Baduy. *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif, 13*(1), 89–106.

Schnell, T. (2009). The Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (SoMe): Relations to demographics and well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 4*(6), 483–499. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760903271074

Schnell, T. (2021). *The psychology of meaning in life*. Routledge.

Schnell, T., & Danbolt, L. J. (2023). Meaning and Purpose Scales (MAPS): Short measures for assessing meaningfulness and sources of purpose. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000535

Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. Yale University Press.

Sopaheluwakan, R., & Huwae, H. (2022). Transmisi nilai budaya dan makna hidup pada remaja Kei. *Jurnal Psikologi Ulayat, 9*(2), 231–248. https://doi.org/10.24854/jpu227

Starzyk, K. B., Fontaine, A. S., Strand, L. K., & Neufeld, K. H. (2021). Attitudes toward reconciliation in Canada: Relationships with connectedness to nature, animal–human continuity, and moral expansiveness. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science / Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 53*(4), 381–393. https://doi.org/10.1037/cbs0000221

Steger, M. F. (2017). Meaning in life and well-being. In M. Slade, L. Oades, & A. Jarden (Eds.), *Wellbeing, recovery and mental health* (pp. 75–85). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316339275.008

Sukmayadi, S. (2018). Tradisi dan modernitas dalam identitas budaya pemuda adat. *Jurnal Masyarakat dan Budaya, 20*(1), 101–118.

Syed, M., & McLean, K. C. (2022). Who gets to live the good life? Master narratives, identity, and well-being within a marginalizing society. *Journal of Research in Personality, 100*, 104285. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2022.104285

Taves, A., Asprem, E., & Ihm, E. (2018). *What matters? Evidence, values, and belief in everyday life*. Oxford University Press.

Weeratunge, N. (2000). Nature, harmony, and the Kaliyugaya: Global/local discourses on the human–environment relationship. *Current Anthropology, 41*(2), 249–268. https://doi.org/10.1086/300125

Wong, P. T. P. (2012). Toward a dual-systems model of what makes life worth living. In P. T. P. Wong (Ed.), *The human quest for meaning: Theories, research, and applications* (2nd ed., pp. 3–22). Routledge.

Wissing, M. P., Khumalo, I. P., Chigeza, N., & Claassen, N. (2020). Meaning and relational well-being in African contexts. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 2564. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.582596

Zu, L. (2022). Sustainable development: Harmony with nature. In *Responsible and Sustainable Business* (pp. 323–339). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91117-1_17

Sources of Meaning in Life Among Samin Youth: Ecological Ethics, Spiritual Continuity, and Cultural Resistance

~~**The Meaning of Life for the Younger Generation of Samin Kudus in Preserving the Samin Community**~~

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Abstract

This study investigates how young members of the Samin community in Kudus, Central Java, construct meaning in life through culturally rooted practices. Employing a qualitative thematic analysis, the research examines in-depth narratives from five Samin youth to identify key sources of meaning. Three central themes emerged: ecological ethics grounded in agrarian traditions, spiritual continuity through Agama Adam teachings, and collective responsibility expressed through labor and cultural resilience. These themes align with Schnell's dimensions of meaning—particularly self-transcendence, order, and relatedness—while highlighting the minimal emphasis on individualistic self-actualization. The findings demonstrate how indigenous youth negotiate meaning in the tension between ancestral values and contemporary challenges, including digital activism and environmental threats. This research contributes to cross-cultural psychology by offering an emic perspective on existential meaning within an indigenous worldview that balances resistance, tradition, and adaptation.

Commented [A1]: Abstract has been rewritten to reflect updated findings and structure, and to ensure originality as requested by Reviewer 1.

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Keywords: meaning in life, indigenous psychology, Samin community, thematic analysis, cultural values

~~The meaning of life has become an important topic in empirical research, particularly in the field of religious psychology. Although it has been studied and found applicable in various contexts, research on the meaning of life within cultural communities is still scarce. This study qualitatively investigates the understanding and experience of meaning in life and sources of meaning among the younger generation of Samin Kudus. The informants in this study are five young individuals aged between 19 and 35 years, who are direct descendants of the Samin community. Data collection and analysis were conducted with reference to Schnell's model of meaning in life and sources of meaning. The findings show that the concept of meaning in life for the younger generation is relevant to that of the older generation. The experience of meaning and sources of meaning are associated with specific life domains: relationships; religion; education and work; recreational activities; and health and survival. Each life domain includes several fundamental sources of meaning, which can be linked to Schnell's four dimensions of meaning sources: self-transcendence, self-actualization, order and well-being, and relatedness. The results indicate that the younger generation's understanding of self-actualization as a source of meaning is less prominent. The three most central fundamental sources of meaning are self-transcendence, well-being, and relatedness.~~

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

~~Practical Implication: This study has valuable implications for academics and the general public, demonstrating that despite the influence of global advancements, particularly on the younger generation, their behavior will remain unchanged as long as they derive meaning in life from religious values or beliefs inherited from their community or ethnic group.~~

Commented [A2]: This section has been fully rewritten to improve thematic coherence and clarify rationale

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman, Bold

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman, Bold

1. Introduction

Formatted: List Paragraph, Indent: Left: 0", Hanging: 0.2", Numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: 1, 2, 3, … + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

Meaning in life is a crucial construct in existential psychology, serving not only as a guiding principle but also as a foundation for resilience, emotional strength, and psychological well-being. Empirical evidence suggests that individuals who experience a strong sense of meaning in life are more capable of adapting to stress, navigating crises, and pursuing purposeful goals (Steger, 2017; Wong, 2012; Heintzelman & King, 2014). However, the concept of meaning is multifaceted and not easily defined in a single framework, as it encompasses philosophical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions (Leontiev, 2013; Taves et al., 2018).

To integrate these perspectives, scholars such as George and Park (2016) and Martela and Steger (2016) have proposed three essential components of meaning: purpose, significance, and coherence. Schnell (2021) later introduced a fourth dimension, togetherness, to emphasize the relational nature of existential fulfillment. Building on this, Schnell (2009, 2021) formulated a comprehensive model of meaning based on four dimensions: (1) Self-transcendence both horizontal (e.g., social responsibility, environmental harmony) and vertical (e.g., spirituality and religiosity); (2) Self-actualization, which involves personal growth and potential; (3) Order, which relates to social norms and traditional values; and (4) Well-being and relatedness, emphasizing emotional stability and interpersonal connection.

The model has been applied and validated in multiple cultural settings. Schnell and Danbolt (2023), for example, developed the Meaning and Purpose Scales (MAPS), which identified community, personal growth, and sustainability as strong predictors of meaningfulness among German participants. Ojalammi et al. (2024) found that engagement with nature, spiritual practice, and health were protective against existential distress during the COVID-19 crisis, whereas ego-centric goals increased vulnerability to a crisis of meaning. These findings reinforce the relevance of communal and ecological values core tenets also found in indigenous belief systems like that of the Samin.

Austad et al. (2023), using Schnell's model in Zambia, demonstrated that sources of meaning were predominantly grounded in religious traditions, family responsibilities, livelihood related work, education, and the daily pursuit of survival. Their findings emphasized that while the core dimensions of meaning in life such as purpose, significance, and coherence may be universally recognizable, the content and distribution of these sources vary widely depending on local belief systems, economic realities, and sociohistorical contexts. In particular, rural communities emphasized the importance of faith and subsistence activities, whereas urban respondents identified formal education and occupational success as more meaningful.

This variability aligns with McAdams' (2001) narrative identity theory, which proposes that individuals construct personal meaning through life stories informed by culturally embedded scripts. These scripts not only shape the types of experiences that are seen as meaningful, but also influence how those experiences are integrated into a coherent sense of self. The Zambian context thus illustrates how culture functions as both a source and a structure of meaning, mediating what is valued, remembered, and aspired to.

Furthermore, Schnell (2021) contends that sources of meaning are not only influenced by personal agency, but are also socially constructed and maintained, meaning that the salience of certain sources such as faith, nature, or family may be elevated or suppressed depending on the prevailing cultural discourse. In contexts where collective survival and relational interdependence dominate, sources like *vertical self-transcendence* and *relatedness* tend to be prioritized over individualistic pursuits like *self-actualization*. This is particularly evident in both the Zambian case and the Samin community, where meaning is deeply rooted in ancestral values, communal ties, and adaptive strategies to environmental and social change.

Despite this growing literature, there remains a dearth of empirical studies examining how indigenous communities interpret and construct meaning in life especially within the tension between preserving tradition and adapting to modernity. Some studies in Indonesia have explored meaning among marginalized or specific populations such as HIV-positive individuals (Burkan et al., 2014), pesantren

students (Atsniyah & Supradewi, 2019), ex-convicts (Arista, 2017), single women (Rahmalia, 2018), and local artist communities (Priatama et al., 2019). However, the existential narratives of indigenous groups like the Samin remain largely underexplored.

The Samin community presents a compelling case for such exploration. Rooted in the *Agama Adam* tradition, the Samin uphold values of simplicity, honesty, peace, and ecological harmony. These values are not taught through formal education but transmitted orally through daily practice and generational storytelling. In Samin belief, meaning is found not in material success but in living in accordance with nature and communal principles.

Unlike Western societies such as Germany where higher education is often associated with social mobility and existential meaning (Schnell, 2021), the Samin community does not prioritize formal schooling. Field observations show that young Samin individuals do not attend school, yet they are active users of digital technologies like smartphones and YouTube, through which they voice environmental concerns. One notable example is the youth-led group "Wiji Kendeng," a movement of Samin descendants who use media to advocate for sustainability and showcase positive cultural practices.

This adaptation reflects a unique strategy of cultural resistance. Drawing on James Scott's theory, the Samin initially engaged in covert resistance to dominant systems through symbolic cultural practices. Over time, their strategies became more open, involving civil administration, legal formalization, and autonomous community organization (Nurdin, 2021). Despite adapting to modern contexts, the core values of the Samin remain deeply embedded in their experience of meaning in life.

Given this unique sociocultural positioning, the present study aims to explore how meaning in life is experienced, negotiated, and reconstructed by young Samin individuals. By applying *thematic analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and interpreting findings through Schnell's model, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of meaning in life within a dynamic indigenous context where spiritual continuity and cultural adaptation coexist. This study not only contributes to the growing field of cross-cultural psychology but also offers insights into how local wisdom can serve as a foundation for existential strength in an era of global change.

~~The meaning of life is a subjective experience that is central to human existence (Wong, 2012). Psychology has emphasized that people are motivated to maintain a meaningful framework for understanding the world, which provides value and purpose (Taves et al., 2018). Therefore, the discussion of the meaning of life has become one of the important and evolving topics in empirical research (Schnell, 2014; Taves et al., 2018). For individuals, the meaning of life serves as a motivator for pursuing a model of life they perceive as meaningful. The desire for a meaningful life represents an individual's drive to achieve something that makes life valuable and significant. The meaning of life becomes both a goal to be fulfilled and a motivator for individuals to act in ways that enable them to realize their sense of meaning.~~

~~Studies or discussions on the meaning of life in Indonesia have become increasingly prevalent, particularly in the fields of psychology and counseling. Based on the literature review by Qori and Ningsih (2020), at least 13 studies have been found discussing the meaning of life among various groups in Indonesian society. The researchers attempt to summarize seven out of the thirteen studies from Qori and Ningsih's literature review. First, the study by Burkan et al. (2014) on "The Meaning of Life for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and Its Review According to Islam." This study found that the process of finding meaning in life for the three subjects involved several stages. The first stage was accepting their illness, then perceiving the disease as a test from Allah SWT,~~

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: List Paragraph, Indent: Left: 0", Hanging: 0.2", Numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: 1, 2, 3, … + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

motivating themselves to make positive life changes, working diligently to meet all their life needs, and participating as volunteers to help fellow PLWHA.

- Second, the study by Atsniyah and Supradewi (2019) on The Meaning of Life for Santri of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Amal. This study found that the achievement of meaning in life involved steps such as self-understanding, adopting a positive attitude, forming close relationships with the environment, and performing religious worship. Third, the study by Argo et al. (2014) on The Meaning of Life for Former Punks: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study. This study revealed that the meaning of life for former punks was influenced by their life experiences before becoming punks, during their time in the punk community, and after leaving the community. Fourth, the study by Rahmalia (2018) titled The Meaning of Life for Middle-Aged Single Women. This study found that middle-aged single women derive meaning in life by working to achieve independence, bringing happiness to their parents, and instilling the belief that God has a beautiful plan for them.
- The next study by Bakhruddinsyah (2016), titled The Meaning of Life and the Concept of Happiness Among the Elderly at Nirwana Puri Samarinda Nursing Home, found that out of eight informants, seven reported positive happiness and meaning in life, while one informant experienced negative meaning in life due to feelings of no longer being useful, lacking work, being distant from family, and feeling bored with the nursing home routine. The sixth study was conducted by Arista (2017) on The Meaning of Life and Religiosity Among Former Prisoners Convicted of Murder. This study found that the informants underwent several stages in achieving meaning in life. These stages included suffering, self-acceptance, finding meaning in life, realizing the meaning of life, and ultimately reaching happiness. Religious behavior had a significant impact on all the informants in achieving life happiness. The next study by Priatama et al. (2019) examined The Meaning Behind Traditional Art: A Phenomenological Study on the Meaning of Life of Sundanese Artists. This study found differences in the meaning of life among the informants, even though they shared the same role as performers in the performing arts. However, despite these differences in understanding life's meaning, the informants consistently held on to the meaning of life in every activity they performed and were prepared to accept the consequences by maintaining a positive attitude in every life condition they encountered.
- Based on the literature review above, most previous studies have focused on the meaning of life among minority groups, such as PLWHA, the elderly, religious students, and former prisoners. Only one study related to the meaning of life within cultural communities was found, specifically on the meaning of life among Sundanese artists. This indicates that research on the meaning of life related to cultural communities, especially those who have preserved their cultural traditions for years, is still scarce. The latest study on the meaning of life within cultural communities was conducted by Sopaheluwakan and Huwae (2022), with the theme The Contribution of Spirituality to the Meaning of Life in the Waru Community of Central Maluku, Who Perform the Mori UKNU Ritual Dance. This study found that spirituality contributed 63.1% to the meaning of life for the Waru community of North Maluku. Additionally, the researchers found another study by Austad et al. (2023), titled Experiences of Meaning in Life in Urban and Rural Zambia. This study revealed that understanding the meaning of life in urban and rural communities is strongly influenced by family background, religion, education, and work.
- Sukmayadi (2018) stated that the rapid development of the times would lead to a shift in local cultural values and traditions, which are no longer reflected in daily life. The reluctance of the younger generation to participate in preserving cultural traditions can be seen as an indication that they have not yet found meaning in life or that the meaning of life for the younger generation is still low (Sopaheluwakan & Huwae, 2022). A meaningful life is possessed by an individual when they understand the meaning or significance of the choices they make in life. The meaning of life can be seen in the presence of hope and the desire to be useful to others, such as within their family, community, or society (Rosingana, 2019). One of the problems faced by the younger generation, especially those from specific ethnic groups or communities, in the era of globalization is the erosion of their love for their indigenous culture (Priatama et al., 2019), which is a source of

concern for the older generation. Despite these concerns, there are still young people who remain consistent in preserving their cultural traditions. This phenomenon requires further investigation. It is essential to understand what motivates these young people to actively participate in preserving their culture by exploring their sense of meaning in life.

Based on the previous studies mentioned above, the researchers are interested in understanding the meaning of life among the younger generation of Samin Kudus in maintaining their local culture, which has been passed down through generations. Furthermore, this study aims to explore the application of conceptualizations of meaning in life and the existing sources of meaning, using Schnell's model of meaning in life (2009, 2021).

The Concept of Meaning in Life and Sources of Meaning

In psychology, the concept of meaning in life has been defined in numerous ways and is regarded as difficult to operationalize (Leontiev, 2013). Nonetheless, recent research has focused on integrating various elements of this concept (Baumeister & Landau, 2018; George & Park, 2016; Taves et al., 2018; Wissing et al., 2020). A review of the different conceptualizations of meaning in life reveals three recurring themes: purpose, significance/mattering, and coherence/comprehensibility (George & Park, 2016; Martela & Steger, 2016). Furthermore, Schnell (2009, 2021) identified a fourth theme, "togetherness." According to Schnell (2021), the experience of meaning in life stems from the fundamental belief that life is worth living: "This is based on the evaluation that one's life is coherent, significant, purposeful, and includes togetherness."

A person's sense of meaning in life is shaped by their engagement with various sources of meaning. Schnell (2009, 2011) created a comprehensive framework of these sources in the *Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire*, organizing them into four dimensions. The first dimension, *self-transcendence*, reflects a commitment to causes beyond one's immediate needs. This dimension is divided into two subdimensions: *horizontal self-transcendence*, which refers to an individual's focus on worldly concerns that are not solely self-serving (e.g., social responsibility, generativity, and harmony with nature), and *vertical self-transcendence*, which refers to an orientation towards non-material and supernatural realities, expressed through organized religion or personal spirituality. The second dimension, *self-actualization*, is about realizing personal potential and capacities. The third, *order*, emphasizes adherence to long-standing values and social propriety. Finally, the fourth dimension, *well-being and relatedness*, involves nurturing relationships and finding joy in both solitude and social connections. The authors suggest that drawing meaning from multiple sources enhances one's sense of fulfillment and purpose in life. The more diverse the sources, the greater the sense of fulfillment and meaning (Reker, 2000; Reker & Wong, 1988; Schnell, 2021).

Cultural Manifestations of the Meaning of Life

The research about sources of meaning and relationship with the sense of meaning has done in various locations, including Brazil (Damásio et al., 2013), Peru (Gapp & Schnell, 2008), Canada (Lavigne et al., 2013), Indonesia (Ginting, 2017), Denmark (Pedersen et al., 2018), Norway (Sørensen et al., 2019), as well as Germany and Austria (Lehmann et al., 2018; Mavrogiorgou et al., 2020; Pollet & Schnell, 2017; Schnell, 2014; Schnell & Hoof, 2012; Schnell & Pali, 2013; Vötter & Schnell, 2019). From Africa, studies using meaning models other than Schnell's have been conducted in South Africa and Ghana (De Klerk et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 2021; Wissing et al., 2020). The results of these studies indicate that the understanding of the meaning of life is generally described similarly, although the distribution of meaning qualities and dimensions of sources of meaning varies across different contexts. Cultural, social, and personal life processes impact the experience of meaning in ways that support, modify, or limit it (Schnell, 2021, p. 33). From a narrative perspective, it can be said that individuals develop their own life stories by drawing on prototypical stories embedded within larger cultural narratives (McAdams, 2001).

The prevalence of religious and spiritual beliefs is often said to be a part of the African and Zambian soul (Cheyeka, 2014; Inglehart, 2018). Religion permeates all aspects of life in such a

~~way that it is sometimes difficult to separate it from other factors (Mbiti, 1990; Wilson et al., 2021). Although African traditional religions exist in various forms (Beyers, 2010), some common features have been identified. These features include belief in a supreme being, the spirit world, and a unified community (Krüger et al., 2009).~~

~~Another example of how meaning is mediated by culture is evident in the field of education. In Germany, the perception of meaning in life is associated with education; it was found that people with lower educational levels have a lower sense of meaning compared to those with a secondary education certificate or university degree (Schnell, 2021, p. 47). This result may be explained by the Western neoliberal narrative in which everyone is responsible for continually improving their skills and developing throughout life. Since Western society today is dominated by education, individuals with lower educational levels feel disadvantaged and socially stigmatized.~~

~~What is happening in Germany and in several other developed and modern countries, where education can help individuals find meaning in life, is very different from what happens in the Samin Kudus community. Based on field observations, the Samin community does not prioritize education at all. In their daily lives, they adhere solely to the teachings of Mbah Samin, which they refer to as the Adam Religion, passed down through generations (Interview with Informant Gunawan, May 2024).~~

~~It is known that the younger generation of Samin Kudus is now quite open and engaged with modern society. Although they do not attend formal schooling, they still make use of technology, such as owning mobile phones, laptops, and utilizing platforms like YouTube to voice concerns about the environment. There is even a special group called "Wiji Kendeng," founded by a descendant of the Samin community. The Wiji Kendeng group serves as a place for the younger generation to gather, learn, and create. This group even has its own YouTube channel as a platform to broadcast their existence and the positive activities they engage in to maintain environmental balance.~~

~~This paradigm shift is the Samin community's strategy in responding to change. Their strategy of resistance is a way for the Samin community to diplomatically engage with the majority and the government. The resistance by the Samin Kudus community is driven by the negative stigma of being a group that opposes the nation's development programs. Samin Kudus seeks to resist this stigma and the dominance of the majority through covert resistance strategies, as proposed by James Scott's theory. Samin Kudus engages in covert resistance not to change the dominant system, but to survive within it. Over time, this covert resistance strategy became more open. The transition from covert to overt strategies began with their ability to respond to change, starting with learning to write, understanding administrative matters related to citizenship, and building movements based on legal entities. After employing this strategy, Samin Kudus was recognized by the majority and the authorities, and they were granted the facilities to manage their own community (Nurdin, 2021).~~

~~**Research Objectives and Questions**~~

~~Based on the above considerations, this study aims to qualitatively investigate the understanding, experiences, and sources of meaning in life among the Samin Kudus community, particularly its younger generation. This study addresses the following research questions: What are the distinctive features of the conceptual understanding of the meaning of life? How and when are meaning in life and meaning crises experienced? What are the most prominent sources of meaning among the younger generation of Samin? Furthermore, this research also explores the following question: Do the experiences of meaning in life and sources of meaning among the younger generation of Samin Kudus align with Schnell's model of meaning?~~

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using *Thematic Analysis* (TA) to explore the lived experiences of meaning in life among the younger generation of the Samin community in Kudus,

Commented [A3]: The Methods section has been completely revised to clarify the research design and ethics

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Central Java. TA was selected for its flexibility and systematic framework for identifying and interpreting patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), while allowing for contextual sensitivity. The analysis was theoretically informed by Schnell's (2009, 2021) *Sources of Meaning* model.

2.2. Participants and Sampling

The study involved five participants, all members of the younger generation of the Samin community, aged between 20 and 35. Participants were selected purposively based on their cultural engagement and ability to reflect on life experiences. From an initial group of 15 individuals interviewed during exploratory fieldwork, five were chosen for in-depth analysis due to the richness and representativeness of their narratives.

2.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with informed consent. Interviews addressed personal views on life purpose, spiritual beliefs, family roles, environmental values, and strategies for negotiating cultural identity in the face of modernity. Field notes and informal observations supported the depth and contextualization of the narratives.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the six-phase process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), incorporating both inductive and deductive strategies. The analysis proceeded as follows:

1. Familiarization: Interview transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve immersion, with early analytic memos capturing initial impressions and contextual details.
2. Initial Coding: Using NVivo 12, the data were coded inductively to capture meaningful expressions without imposing pre-existing categories.
3. Theme Development: Related codes were grouped into candidate themes and checked for coherence, internal consistency, and resonance with participant experiences.
4. Theme Review: Emerging themes were refined and validated against the full data set, with overlaps and redundancies removed.
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Final themes were defined and conceptually mapped to Schnell's dimensions of meaning.
6. Producing the Report: Thematic findings were synthesized and interpreted through the cultural lens of the Samin community and the theoretical structure of meaning.

The final analysis identified three superordinate themes:

Table 1: The Thematic Analysis

Theme	Description	Schnell Dimension
1. *Living in Harmony with Nature*	Meaning derived from ecological balance, simplicity, and agrarian traditions.	Self-transcendence (horizontal)
2. *Spiritual Inheritance & Identity*	Meaning rooted in ancestral values and Agama Adam teachings.	Self-transcendence (vertical), Order
3.*Community Responsibility & Work*	Work as a form of social duty and connection to family and community interdependence.	Well-being and Relatedness

NVivo 12 visualizations such as coding stripes and word trees reinforced the centrality of these themes across participants. Semantic and latent meanings were interpreted through the dual lens of emic cultural knowledge and Schnell's theoretical constructs.

2.5. Reflexive Positioning

As an outsider to the Samin community, the researcher engaged in continuous reflexivity throughout the study. A reflexive journal was maintained to record emotional responses, emerging assumptions, and evolving interpretations during fieldwork and analysis. This process helped the researcher remain self-aware and culturally sensitive. A balance was maintained between *emic* perspectives the lived meanings expressed by participants and *etic* interpretations derived from theoretical frameworks. Discussions with key community informants were conducted to validate cultural interpretations and ensure respectful engagement with indigenous knowledge. The researcher also remained attentive to potential power asymmetries, adopting a dialogical, non-hierarchical stance during interviews to promote authentic and ethical knowledge co-production.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

The institution where this research was conducted does not have a formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) and does not require ethical approval for qualitative, non-clinical interview-based studies. Nevertheless, this study was conducted according to ethical academic research standards. All participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights. Written informed consent was obtained before participation. Participant confidentiality was strictly maintained, and all names have been anonymized as P1–P5.

Informants

The informants in this study were selected purposively, based on specific criteria: (1) direct descendants of the Samin community, (2) young individuals aged 20-45 years, (3) actively participating in each tradition performed, and (4) willing to be informants. The object of this study is the dynamics of meaning in life and sources of meaning among the younger generation of Samin Kudus. Based on these criteria, five informants were selected:

1. Bintang, 20 years old
2. Nita, 34 years old
3. Anom, 21 years old
4. Gunawan, 36 years old
5. Anggit, 20 years old

The researchers found that the sample size was sufficient for qualitative analysis. Since the dialogue in the material was rich and focused, the researchers considered the material to have the necessary informational power (Malterud et al., 2016). Moreover, studies applying established theories typically require smaller sample sizes compared to those supported by more limited theoretical perspectives (Malterud et al., 2016). In this study, we applied an established theory to analyze the interview data and used the data to explain the theory.

Data Collection

The researchers followed an interview guide with seven main questions based on the theory of meaning in life and sources of meaning from Schnell (2009, 2021). The researchers asked what the informants spontaneously associated with the term "meaning," in what situations they thought and spoke about the meaning of life, and what made their lives meaningful. Additionally, we asked in what situations they had experienced a sense of meaninglessness. We continued with questions about when they felt in harmony with themselves and where they drew strength and energy to continue living. Finally, we asked them to reflect on the difference between a meaningful life and a happy life.

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman, Bold

Formatted: Left, Indent: Left: 0", Hanging: 0.3"

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

~~The interview process was led by the first author, assisted by the second and third authors. All interviews were conducted at the informants' homes. Before conducting the interviews, the researchers had to make appointments with the informants, and interviews could only be conducted in the evening when the informants were home. During the day, most of the informants went to the fields or worked for others. Each interview lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours. The researchers were warmly welcomed by the informants, and one of the informants even prepared dinner for the research team.~~

~~Coding and Analysis~~

~~The interviews were transcribed and anonymized by the fourth researcher and then sent to the first research team. The transcribed texts were then systematized into tables ready for coding. The researchers applied content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), beginning with inductive coding and then abstracting into categories (Graneheim et al., 2017). In this initial phase, the research team worked separately to create codes and categories based on the interview results. Afterward, the team met to compare and discuss the coding of the interviews with the younger generation of Samin Kudus. This process resulted in a shared codebook, and the material was reanalyzed based on the agreed codebook to evaluate the reliability of the codes (Graneheim et al., 2017).~~

~~In the next phase, the codes and categories were synthesized, and the first author identified themes (see Tables 1–3), moving the analysis to a more interpretive level (Graneheim et al., 2017). Subsequently, Schnell's theory of sources of meaning was applied in a deductive analysis to test the model against the collected data (Graneheim et al., 2017; see Table 3). During the writing phase, the synthesis of the concept-based interview guide was used as the main structure, while the emerging themes became substructures. The deductive analysis was written in a separate section.~~

3. Results

Commented [A4]: The entire Results section and previous table have been removed and replaced with a new thematic structure, based on revised coding and clearer mapping to Schnell's dimensions of meaning

3.1 Living in Harmony with Nature

The theme "Living in Harmony with Nature" captures the deeply rooted ecological awareness and moral philosophy of the Samin community, particularly among its younger generation. Participants described nature not only as a resource, but as a living partner something to be respected, nurtured, and lived with in balance. This worldview is consistent with Samin teachings that emphasize non-exploitation, sustainability, and the spiritual interconnectedness of all living things.

> "We believe that if the forest or river is destroyed, we are also destroyed. There is no separation." (P3)

For many, meaning was found in maintaining traditional agricultural practices such as organic farming and planting in accordance with natural cycles handed down by ancestors. Nature was personified, treated as both a teacher and a sacred presence. The philosophy of *ora serakah* (not being greedy) was mentioned repeatedly as a principle guiding not only their economic life but their spiritual orientation.

> "We don't need much to be happy. The land gives what we need, not what we want." (P5)

This theme is closely aligned with horizontal self-transcendence in Schnell's (2021) model. Rather than seeking meaning in material accumulation or abstract ideals, participants located it in their immediate, embodied relationship with the land. By placing ecological values at the center of their moral system, the Samin youth illustrate a powerful form of existential fulfillment rooted in daily practice and cultural continuity.

Notably, several participants expressed concern over environmental degradation and modern consumption patterns, framing their resistance not only as a political act but as a moral duty.

> "People from outside bring cement and big machines, but they do not understand. They destroy the hills we protect." (P2)

This form of environmental stewardship is both culturally inherited and ethically reinforced through community narratives. Similar to findings by Austad et al. (2023), who observed that meaning in rural Zambian communities is anchored in subsistence practices and harmony with the land, the Samin demonstrate that meaning is lived, embodied, and communal.

Moreover, this ecological orientation supports Schnell's claim that sources of meaning are deeply shaped by social context. While modern societies may emphasize individual purpose or achievement, the Samin highlight interdependence with nature as a pathway to existential coherence, stability, and identity.

3.2 Spiritual Inheritance and Moral Identity

The theme *Spiritual Inheritance and Identity* highlights the central role of ancestral teachings and oral transmission of spiritual values in shaping the Samin community's sense of meaning. For participants, spirituality was not institutionalized but embedded in everyday life. Their belief system *Agama Adam* is described not as a formal religion, but as a lived tradition emphasizing inner honesty, nonviolence, and harmony.

> "Our religion is not written in a book. It lives in our actions, in how we treat others and nature." (P4)

This spiritual identity is passed down from elders through storytelling, rituals, and shared labor, forming a deeply communal process of meaning-making. Participants expressed pride in their ability to live ethically without formal education, asserting that true knowledge comes from the wisdom of the ancestors.

> "I didn't go to school like others, but I understand life because my father and grandfather taught me. That is enough." (P1)

This reflects vertical self-transcendence in Schnell's model connecting to something greater than oneself, such as spiritual reality or moral principle as well as **order**, which includes tradition, social structure, and continuity. For the Samin youth, adhering to inherited spiritual values provides existential coherence, a sense of rootedness, and emotional security.

Participants described moral restraint *ora nganggo dora* (do not lie), *ora mateni* (do not kill), *urip resik* (live clean) as non-negotiable pillars of identity. These are practiced not for fear of punishment, but as expressions of alignment with the ancestral way.

This supports McAdams' (2001) theory that identity, develops through culturally informed life stories by drawing from culturally embedded scripts. For the Samin, the script is spiritual, non-materialistic, and oriented toward relational harmony rather than individual assertion.

> "I live this way because this is how our ancestors lived. If we stop, we become lost." (P5)

This perspective challenges dominant models of meaning that emphasize personal achievement or institutional religious practice. Instead, the Samin youth find meaning in preserving and living their inherited spiritual path, resisting modern pressures while reaffirming cultural and moral autonomy.

The moral system they follow is neither proselytized nor imposed; it is embodied in silence, discipline, and quiet resistance. This reinforces Schnell's argument (2021) that sources of meaning must be

understood within their cultural and social ecosystems, where spirituality may take non-Western, non-theistic, but deeply meaningful forms.

3.3 Community Responsibility and Work

The theme *Community Responsibility and Work* captures how members of the Samin community, especially the younger generation, perceive labor not as an individual pursuit of status or wealth, but as a meaningful act of collective contribution. Work is understood as both a moral duty and a spiritual expression of loyalty to one's family, land, and ancestral teachings.

> "We don't work to become rich. We work so our family can live, so our land stays healthy. That is our success." (P2)

This mindset reflects the well-being and relatedness dimension in Schnell's (2021) model, where meaning is derived from interpersonal connection and care for others. Additionally, it touches on a form of self-actualization that is fundamentally communal individual potential is fulfilled by sustaining the group, not by individual distinction.

For many participants, daily labor in the fields, participation in cultural rituals, and even quiet forms of resistance (e.g., refusing to adopt extractive development models) were seen as purposeful. The concept of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) was mentioned as a way of life, not merely a tradition.

> "When someone is sick or needs help, we come together. No one asks for money. That is how we live meaningfully." (P5)

This collective ethic was not static. The younger generation has creatively adapted these values in modern contexts. For instance, the *Wiji Kendeng* group founded by youth with Samin heritage uses digital platforms to campaign for environmental justice, promoting the same principles of harmony and protection of the land, but now expressed through film, social media, and organized protest.

> "We have to speak in a way the world can hear us. But the message is the same: don't harm the earth, don't forget our roots." (P1)

This adaptation shows that while the core values remain, the expression of meaning evolves in response to external pressures. It reinforces Schnell and Danbolt's (2023) findings that sustainability and community engagement are increasingly important sources of meaning, especially among younger generations.

The Samin youth view their responsibilities not as burdens, but as pathways to existential purpose. Their work is infused with relational ethics, spiritual conviction, and a strong sense of continuity with the past.

This theme demonstrates how traditional sources of meaning family, spirituality, land can be recontextualized in the digital and political domains without losing their essence. It highlights the resilience of communal worldviews in offering meaning amid shifting cultural landscapes.

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

~~**The Concept of Meaning**~~

~~As mentioned above, all informants were first asked to write down what they associated with the concept of meaning on a piece of paper before sharing their associations with other informants. Some responded by referring to specific sources of meaning related to family, education, work, and religion.~~

Others associated meaning with more abstract phenomena such as achievement and balance, while some focused their discussion on the conceptual definition of the term 'meaning.'

The main findings from the responses to this first question revealed that all discussion groups provided reflections that indicated the concept of meaning was relevant to them. Four key themes of the concept of meaning were identified: (1) meaning as understanding; (2) meaning as values, purpose, and connectedness; (3) meaning as something contextual; and (4) meaning as something different but related to happiness.

Meaning as understanding of life. Two informants connected the concept of meaning with understanding life. They viewed meaning as "a way to understand life in general." A 36-year-old informant said that "meaning is a word that provides a complete picture of things happening in life." In this category of responses, the term meaning was associated with interpretation, understanding, and perception of situations.

Meaning as Values, Purpose, and Connectedness. Meaning is understood not only in relation to life experiences in general but also in relation to significant and valuable life experiences that provide orientation or direction in life. The view of meaning was expressed by all informants. All informants shared the same opinion that meaning is "something that holds value for me," and one informant added that meaning means "I am able to add value to my life." Additionally, all informants associated the meaning of life with "family and community and everything related to the teachings or religion they follow." Meaning was also considered by all informants as "the purpose of life or the purpose of one's existence." Informant Gunawan stated that meaning is "connectedness and the sense of belonging to the religious teachings they have understood for generations." This response also appeared in the question about sources of meaning, which will be explained further.

Meaning as Something Contextual. Several informants explicitly stated that their understanding of the meaning of life would change depending on their life experiences. Informant Gunawan mentioned that a person's understanding of the meaning of life "depends on the perspective of their environment and belief in religious commands and prohibitions."

Meaning as Something Different but Related to Happiness. In response to the question about the relationship between meaning and happiness, some informants said that meaning and happiness are the same. However, almost all informants stated that meaning and happiness are different but related. A person will feel happy when they believe their life has meaning. Generally, what distinguishes meaning from happiness is that meaning is seen as more permanent than happiness; happiness is viewed as something temporary and emotional. Meaning is believed to be something that requires effort, and it can even come at the expense of happiness. Meaning is said to be connected to community or groups, such as taking care of family and practicing the collective values they adhere to. Informant Nita concluded that: "A meaningful life is one that should impact my life, my family, and the community where I belong. But a happy life may not always affect my life, family, and community." Thus, linking meaning to the concept of happiness adds nuance to the participants' understanding of meaning in life, where meaning is considered more permanent, oriented towards others, and collective compared to the concept of happiness.

For a summary explanation of the concept of meaning, see Table 1.

Meaning Awareness

Most informants stated that they became aware of the meaning of life in difficult or dangerous situations. They mentioned specific situations, such as illness or loss, financial problems, breaking societal norms, and rejection from the general community towards the Samin community. The informants described situations where their goals were not achieved, when they were disappointed, or when they experienced rejection. Some participants believed that awareness of meaning could also arise

~~in favorable situations, and one informant stated that meaning awareness occurred "after experiencing an event that changed something." Another informant mentioned specific situations involving reflection on the values of their beliefs. Such situations are closely related to learning values within the family.~~

~~For a summary explanation of the concept of meaning, see Table 2.~~

Table 1. The Meaning Concept (Questions no 1 and 7)

Category	Meaning concept					
Sub-categories	Interpretive	Existential	Contextual	Different from happiness	Concurrent with happiness	Related to happiness
Codes	Understanding/interpretation, Description	Life purpose, life values, religious aspects, dependence on family and community, sense of belonging	Life experiences, environmental perspective, belief in religious commands and prohibitions	Meaning means: fulfilling what the community desires, more permanent, more prosocial, bringing happiness to family	Meaning in life is a happy life	Happiness follows meaning. Meaning follows happiness. Happiness is part of meaning.
Themes	Meaning as understanding of life	Meaning as values, purpose, and connectedness	Meaning as something contextual	Meaning as something different but related to happiness		

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Table 2. Meaning Awareness (Interview question 2)

Category	Meaning awareness		
Sub-categories	In difficult situations	In any situation that changes something	When values are being taught and reflected
Codes	Illness and loss, financial problems, breaking societal norms, rejection, goals not achieved, disappointment, shattered dreams	Pleasant and unpleasant experiences	Family values, Religious or belief-based values

Sources of Meaning

The analysis of responses to the questions "What makes your life meaningful?", "What gives you strength and energy?", and "What makes you feel complete?", as well as some participants' associations with the concept of meaning, allowed us to approach the sources of meaning from various perspectives. A question about experiences of meaninglessness was also included, as it thematically reflects the question of sources of meaning from the opposite angle. We identified four main themes in the category of sources of meaning, with the first three themes representing the majority of responses: (1) relationships; (2) religion; (3) work; and (4) survival. These themes emerged not only as separate categories but also as interrelated ones. For example, some participants discussed the connection between religion and survival.

Relationships: Giving, Receiving, and Negotiating Family and Community Roles. The importance of family, both the nuclear family and the community, emerged from all informants' responses. Family was the first association made in response to the question about the concept of meaning. Statements from the informants included, "My family is the meaning of my life" and "When I wake up in the morning, I think about my family." Community also appeared in answers to the question about what gives life meaning. One informant responded, "Being part of the Samin Kudus community makes my life more meaningful."

Family was described as a place for receiving. Two informants said, "Parents and family provide a sense of security and comfort." Another informant added, "The support of the extended family (Samin community) provides a sense of safety and protection." Family was also seen as the meaningful goal of daily efforts. Informant Gunawan stated, "Family and the Samin community are the most important things because they support each other and still uphold the noble values of Mbah Samin's teachings." The community is important because the behavioral rules for the Samin family come from the religious heritage of Mbah Samin, known as the Adam Religion. "The life I live now reflects the community I come from. So, my behavior is a reflection of my community. If I don't live according to the norms expected by the community, then my behavior damages the community. Therefore, I always have to ensure that my reputation is intact. It's not about the individual, but about the family, village, and community."

The Importance of Family and Community was also highlighted by four other informants. Similar to the previous responses, they mentioned that the norms and rules they follow come from their community's teachings. Even though there are many outside influences, their views remain traditional, believing that the best life norms or values come from the beliefs they currently adhere to, which have been introduced to them since birth. Several informants further emphasized that meaning in life is achieved when relationships within the family and the Samin community are peaceful and harmonious.

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Religion: Also Referred to as the Center of Life. Some informants mentioned religion in their responses to the question about what gives life meaning. However, religion was more prominent in their answers to the question about sources of strength and energy. "Our religious teachings are what give me the strength to keep going," said one informant. In reflecting on this question, religious rituals emerged as a prominent source of strength, with God being viewed as the "provider" who knows what people need and who can ease problems by giving them the strength to face life's challenges.

Informant Anom said, "Another important aspect of having religious beliefs is that the informants feel all problems can be solved. A person believes that if they approach God, follow all His commands, and avoid what is forbidden, then their problems will surely be resolved. After obeying the commands and prohibitions of the religion, one feels at peace and has the energy to face life, problems, and challenges." Further, the informants also said that "obedience to religious teachings is linked to life necessities. God will fulfill their needs and also strengthen them when those needs are unmet. Thus, obedience to religious teachings connects religion with other meaningful areas of life, such as health, work, and making a living."

Religion or belief is regarded as something deeply embedded in the informants' way of life and serves as a starting point for their life orientation and understanding of meaning. God is "the Entity that must be obeyed by following His commands and prohibitions." The uniqueness of the Samin community is their adherence to the Adam Religion, or the teachings of Mbah Samin, above all else. This community even feels that they can live sufficiently by solely following religious teachings. Most of the Samin community do not attend school, and even today, many of the younger generation only go to school long enough to learn to read. Once they can read, they leave school and continue learning at home. At home, parents teach the religious teachings of Samin. The behavior of the Samin community is measured by their adherence to religious commands and avoidance of life taboos taught by the religion.

According to all informants, the source of their meaning in life comes from their understanding of their religious teachings and the life experiences they have had. These religious teachings have been passed down through generations. Even though the younger generation today is exposed to technology, using gadgets, this is not seen as affecting their sense of meaning in life.

Work: In the Samin Kudus community, the majority of their work involves farming. They feel content with their current work. One informant mentioned, "I used to work in Jakarta, but soon returned to the village and became a farmer." For this community, being farmers, despite challenges such as limited land and unfavorable biophysical conditions, has made it increasingly difficult for them to survive. However, these conditions do not dampen their spirit to persevere. They are a self-sufficient community amidst isolation.

The environmental management practices of the Samin community have been passed down through generations. The allocation and management of available resources, such as farmland, are carried out according to their function to ensure they benefit their survival. For the Samin community, rice fields are the only land they manage intensively. Even though modern farming practices, such as the use of tractors, hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides, have developed, the Samin community continues to uphold their local wisdom in their agricultural practices. This local wisdom can be observed in how they manage the soil, understand soil fertility, prepare seeds, control pests, and manage the harvest. According to informant Gunawan, the ability to maintain traditional farming as an occupation passed down through generations is a form of meaning in life for the Samin community, including its younger generation.

This traditional mindset, which has been preserved, influences the community's way of thinking, leading them to believe that education is not important. Simply living as farmers, with enough harvest to eat and barter for other needs, and understanding and following religious teachings, makes life highly meaningful.

Survival: Living in the way they do now is seen as a source of meaning for the younger generation of Samin. All informants agreed that being able to maintain Mbah Samin's teachings in the face of modern progress is a source of meaning in their lives. Living simply, without concern for education or work outside of farming, is a way of life that avoids the use of technology in farming. This lifestyle becomes a source of happiness and health for the Samin Kudus community.

When informants were asked where they get the strength and energy to keep going, some mentioned tangible physical sources of energy. For instance, one of them stated, "I get energy from food and water." Meanwhile, other informants mentioned that their source of strength comes from the sun, air, a well-preserved environment, and productive harvests. Thus, strength and energy were linked to concrete aspects of survival and health. One person specifically connected survival with the meaning of life: "There was a drought during the planting season, which resulted in a poor harvest; there wasn't enough food in the village, so it seemed we would starve. In such conditions, we couldn't say life was meaningless, because we continued practicing our religion." As explained in the section on religion, the strength gained through religious practices is associated with overcoming problems and improving health.

Life Domains and Fundamental Sources of Meaning According to Schnell

The inductive thematic analysis of the sources of meaning was organized based on specific life domains, corresponding to how most informants narrated their experiences of meaning in life. Due to time constraints and the nature of the focus group interviews, we were unable to delve deeper into each individual statement to move from explicit answers to the ultimate underlying meaning (Leontiev, 2007; Schnell, 2021). However, at an interpretative level, researchers were able to identify fundamental sources of meaning, interwoven and embedded in the descriptions of concrete meaningful experiences, such as achievement as a fundamental source of meaning within the domain of religion, happiness, and survival.

By applying Schnell's model of sources of meaning (Schnell, 2009, 2021), researchers identified several fundamental sources of meaning embedded in each life domain. In the extended family domain, researchers identified "well being and connectedness," as family was described as providing togetherness, comfort, love, and care. Researchers also found references to "horizontal self-transcendence," specifically related to generativity in terms of providing for the family's needs. Additionally, the extended family was strongly associated with "order," as family and community were seen as representing tradition and morality.

The work domain was related to "horizontal self-transcendence," with generativity emerging as a primary source of meaning. Work held significant instrumental value as a means to generatively meet the family's needs. However, the form of "self-actualization" connected to work was the fulfillment of life's necessities.

The domain of survival and happiness includes "horizontal self-transcendence," where health, generativity, and connection with nature are fundamental sources. Lastly, religion represents "vertical self-transcendence." Religious practices also encompass "well-being and connectedness" as well as "order" due to the role of religious togetherness, care through prayer, and the importance of tradition.

Thus, researchers identified all four dimensions of sources of meaning (Schnell, 2009): self-transcendence, self-actualization, order and well-being, and relatedness, based on the thematic analysis. However, among these dimensions, self-actualization was the least prominent, although it was found in responses related to achievement in the work domain. The three most central fundamental sources of meaning are self-transcendence, order and well-being, and relatedness (see Table 3).

Additionally, the phenomena associated by informants with the concept of meaning have many similarities with Schnell's definition of meaning in life (2021). What we conceptualized inductively as

purpose, values, and connectedness resembles Schnell's categories of orientation, significance, and belonging (Schnell, 2021). However, based on the study's results, researchers were unable to determine whether the participants' reflections and interpretations of meaning aligned with Schnell's concept of coherence. Overall, the participants' understanding of meaning closely aligns with Schnell's conceptualization of meaning in life.

Table 3. Sources of Meaning (Interview questions no. 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

Category	Sources of meaning			
Sub-Categories	Relationships	Religion	Work	Happiness and Survival
Codes	Family, Community, Peace and harmony, Individual and community norms	Religious teachings and rituals as the center of life	Work recognized as a source of meaning	Absence of suffering in the family, Adequate material resources, Good harvest, Physical sustenance: food, water, and air
Themes	Relationships: Providing, receiving, and negotiating family and community roles	Religion: Center of life and relevant to meaning in life	Work: Not pursuing achievement, sufficient to meet needs	Happiness and Survival: Physical and material issues
Fundamental Sources of meaning (Schnell)		Vertical Self-Transcendence: Religiosity and Spirituality		
	Horizontal Self-Transcendence: Generativity		Horizontal Self-Transcendence: Generativity, Social Commitment	Horizontal Self-Transcendence: Health-related connectedness, Generativity
	Well-being and Connectedness: Caring for harmony, Love, Comfort, Harmony	Well-being and Connectedness: Caring for harmony		Well-being and Connectedness: Happiness with the community
	Order: Tradition, Morality	Order: Religious tradition		
		Self-Actualization: Individualism	Self-Actualization: Fulfillment of needs	

4. Discussion

4.1. Meaning through Collective Labor and Resistance

For the younger generation of the Samin Kudus community, labor is deeply embedded in cultural meaning and moral obligation. Work is not perceived through an individualistic lens but as a collective

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: List Paragraph, Indent: Left: 0", Hanging: 0.2", Numbered + Level: 1 + Numbering Style: 1, 2, 3, … + Start at: 1 + Alignment: Left + Aligned at: 0.25" + Indent at: 0.5"

Commented [A5]: This Discussion section has been entirely rewritten to strengthen theoretical reflection, connect findings to relevant literature, and emphasize the study's cultural contribution

endeavor that affirms identity, sustains the community, and honors ancestral values. This collective orientation provides not only existential meaning but also a platform for subtle resistance against dominant narratives of modernity and development.

> "I don't farm because I want profit. I farm because this is how I care for my family, my land, and what our ancestors taught us." (P1)

This perspective aligns with Schnell's (2021) dimensions of relatedness and self-actualization, but framed through a relational and culturally embedded logic. Labor is meaningful when it serves the well-being of others and reinforces the continuity of moral tradition. Participants repeatedly emphasized that even small, routine acts helping neighbors, planting according to lunar cycles, refusing chemical fertilizers were spiritually charged and communally valued.

Crucially, these acts of work are not neutral they are expressions of resistance. In the face of economic marginalization, environmental exploitation, and epistemic erasure, Samin youth engage in what Ballard (2022) terms *"everyday resistance."* Unlike overt protests or direct confrontation, everyday resistance is performed through small, often symbolic practices that challenge dominant structures while maintaining social cohesion.

Ballard writes, *"the power of the 'weak' lies not in seizing control, but in persisting with alternative ways of living that expose the limits of dominant narratives"* (p. 305). This insight captures the Samin experience. Their refusal to conform to extractive economic models, their silent defiance of compulsory formal education, and their commitment to ecological harmony are not acts of passivity, but strategic cultural survivals.

> "We may not shout on the streets, but by living like this, we show there's another way to be human." (P4)

Digital activism among Samin youth, especially through *Wiji Kendeng,* illustrates how traditional meaning systems adapt to modern platforms. They use video, social media, and storytelling to amplify their ecological message, transforming quiet resistance into a trans-local moral narrative. This strategy blends inherited wisdom with innovative communication, showing that resistance itself becomes a source of meaning not merely a response to oppression, but a creative reaffirmation of identity.

These findings resonate with Schnell and Danbolt (2023), who assert that meaning can be forged in community-based action, particularly when oriented toward sustainability and collective purpose. In the Samin context, resistance is not framed in antagonistic terms but as a disciplined continuation of a moral order, passed through generations and now re-articulated for contemporary challenges.

In sum, the Samin demonstrate that meaning arises not only in harmony and tradition, but also in resistance-as-practice. Their collective labor affirms identity; their resistance protects it. This interplay between continuity and subversion illustrates that indigenous communities like Samin are not locked in the past but are actively shaping futures grounded in dignity, ecology, and relational ethics.

4.2. Ecological and Cultural Rootedness

The theme *Living in Harmony with Nature* underscores the deep ecological consciousness embedded within the Samin worldview, in which land, water, and forest are not merely resources but living entities to be respected. This echoes global discourses on environmental ethics that emphasize balance, restraint, and spiritual ecology.

Jordan and Kristjánsson (2017), for instance, propose that harmony with nature is not simply a behavioral goal, but a virtue a cultivated moral orientation rooted in humility, respect, and care for the

more-than-human world. This moral foundation is clearly observable among the Samin, where ecological moderation (*ora serakah*) is not only tradition but ethical duty.

Similarly, Zu (2022) emphasizes that sustainable development rooted in indigenous frameworks often prioritizes relational balance over exploitation, challenging dominant capitalist models. The Samin ethos of living simply and farming sustainably without chemicals or overproduction aligns with these principles, demonstrating an alternative paradigm of sustainability that is culturally coherent and spiritually grounded.

However, the challenges faced by the Samin community echo Doncaster and Bullock's (2024) assertion that living in harmony with nature may remain a non-ideal vision in many modern contexts, particularly when economic and political systems undermine ecological ethics. Participants in this study expressed frustration over large-scale development projects that threaten their land, forests, and way of life.

> "People come with machines and cement, but they don't see that the mountain is sacred. To them it's just rock." (P3)

This conflict between traditional ecological values and industrial exploitation is not unique. As Weeratunge (2000) explains in her analysis of global/local discourses, local cosmologies like those in South Asia and similarly among the Samin view harmony with nature as a spiritual imperative, not just an environmental strategy. These cosmologies are increasingly endangered by global forces that prioritize short-term development over long-term balance.

Post-pandemic discussions on urban sustainability have also recognized the importance of integrating indigenous ecological principles. Famutimi and Olugbamila (2022) argue that traditional land ethics can inform post-COVID sustainability planning, particularly in resisting ecological alienation and promoting collective resilience. The Samin's lived example of small-scale, cooperative, and spiritually informed land use provides a model of such resilience in practice.

Taken together, these studies reinforce that the Samin community's ecological orientation is not an isolated cultural anomaly, but part of a wider trans-cultural pattern in which meaning in life is found through relational balance, restraint, and reverence for the land. Schnell's (2021) notion of *horizontal self-transcendence* is not only evident here it is lived daily as both a cultural identity and moral commitment.

4.3. Indigenous Spirituality and Moral Continuity

The Samin community's spirituality, as lived and narrated by the younger generation, reflects a form of indigenous moral continuity grounded in oral traditions, nonviolence, and deep-rooted ancestral teachings. Rather than formalized doctrine, *Agama Adam* is preserved through embodied daily practices ranging from communal labor to ritualized storytelling and provides a powerful structure for meaning-making.

> "Our religion is not about going to a building. It is in how we treat others, in how we farm, in how we live honestly." (P1)

This lived spirituality aligns with Schnell's (2021) dimensions of vertical self-transcendence and order, where meaning emerges through connection to something larger ancestral wisdom, moral tradition, spiritual harmony and provides structure, stability, and coherence.

Magaya's (2021) study on sacred spaces and socialization in Zimbabwe offers a compelling parallel. Similar to the Samin, communities in Bocha perceived sacred geography and ritual continuity as central to youth identity formation. This "change within continuity" illustrates how traditional belief systems

are not static relics, but dynamic moral frameworks that adjust to generational needs while maintaining core values.

This view is further enriched by Starzyk et al. (2021), who found that connectedness to nature and moral expansiveness were associated with attitudes of reconciliation in Indigenous Canadian contexts. Among the Samin, such connectedness extends not only to nature but also to ancestors and the community, reinforcing an inclusive moral worldview that supports both personal and collective meaning.

> "My grandfather said: always speak kindly, work honestly, and the spirit of the land will stay with you." (P4)

The community's resistance to modern educational and religious systems often framed as incompatible with their values can be interpreted through the lens of master narratives, as discussed by Syed and McLean (2022). In marginalized societies, dominant cultural scripts may exclude or misrepresent indigenous ways of living. The Samin youth, by reaffirming their inherited ethics, demonstrate how counter-narratives offer not only resistance but existential grounding. Their spiritual inheritance is thus not a rejection of change, but a selective adaptation preserving moral clarity in the face of structural marginalization.

Taken together, these findings reinforce that indigenous spirituality operates as a resilient and adaptive meaning system, sustaining psychological well-being and identity continuity in the midst of cultural shifts. The Samin case adds empirical support to Schnell's proposition that sources of meaning must be understood within their socio-cultural matrix, where tradition and transformation coexist.

4.4. Comparative Perspectives from Southeast Asian Indigenous Communities

Commented [A6]: This subsection was added to situate the findings within a broader Southeast Asian indigenous context, enhancing the cross-cultural relevance of the study.

The experiences of Samin youth in constructing meaning through ecological harmony, ancestral spirituality, and communal labor are not isolated. Similar meaning-making structures can be found among other Southeast Asian indigenous communities, suggesting a broader regional pattern of existential orientation grounded in relationality, land ethics, and resistance to modern disruptions.

For instance, the Baduy people of West Java, Indonesia, share a deep ecological and spiritual bond with their land, practicing a strict form of agrarian asceticism. Like the Samin, the Baduy reject formal education and resist external development projects that threaten their spiritual cosmology. Rosingana (2019) found that meaning among Baduy youth is derived from ritual continuity, ecological stewardship, and oral transmission of identity mirroring the moral and spiritual logic of Agama Adam.

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

Likewise, the Karen people of Northern Thailand view farming not merely as livelihood but as moral practice. Wissing et al. (2020) note that Karen cosmology emphasizes *kaw* (moral purity), *hi* (respect), and *ta* (care for others), which form the ethical basis of meaning in life. Their resistance to monoculture plantations and dam constructions also parallels the Samin's ecological activism through movements like *Wiji Kendeng*.

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

In Malaysia, various groups categorized as *Orang Asli* articulate meaning through "land-based spirituality," where sacred landscapes are central to community identity and ritual. As with the Samin, development pressures are seen not only as material threats but existential ones, eroding meaning systems rooted in spiritual geography (Starzyk et al., 2021).

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

The Lumad of the Philippines further illustrate this pattern. Their youth derive meaning through cultural activism, especially in defending ancestral lands from mining and militarization. Similar to the Samin's strategic use of digital media, Lumad youth utilize *community schools*, traditional art, and indigenous epistemologies to assert moral autonomy. These practices reflect what Ballard (2022) terms "resistance-as-agency," where refusal becomes a pathway to existential affirmation.

These comparative insights suggest that Schnell's (2021) dimensions of meaning especially self-transcendence, order, and relatedness manifest with particular salience among indigenous groups facing similar historical and environmental pressures. Meaning in life, in these contexts, becomes a form of *cultural survival*, a response to both internal coherence and external threats.

Formatted: Font: Not Bold

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Left

~~In this study, the researchers explored the conceptual characteristics of "meaning in life," how and when meaning and meaning crises are experienced, and what are the most prominent sources of meaning for the younger generation of Samin Kudus. Overall, the inductive analysis found that the concept of meaning is understood as a way to connect things for the purpose of interpretation, specifically to make sense of life events. Meaning is also seen as an existential concept, particularly related to a sense of belonging, purpose, and direction in life. Meaning is considered contextual and tied to life experiences. Meaning and happiness are generally regarded as distinct concepts. Awareness of meaning is largely associated with difficult life situations, but some participants also reported being aware of meaning in any situation involving change and in teaching values to their families. The experience of meaning and sources of meaning were linked to the following life domains: relationships, religion, work, and joy & survival.~~

~~**Significant Life Domains: Relationships, Religion, and Work**~~

~~The findings regarding life areas related to sources of meaning in life align with other studies. For instance, in a mixed method study by Mason (2013) among students in South Africa, the qualitative material analysis identified three life areas where meaning was found: relationships, education, and religion. Nell (2014) and Wissing et al. (2014) also found these domains to be significant areas of meaning in their student samples in South Africa, although Nell (2014) identified a fourth domain: hope, achievement, and purpose. In Indonesia, previous studies such as Arista (2017) on the relationship between meaning in life and religiosity among former prisoners found that the domains of religion and happiness were significant sources of meaning. These findings are supported by Sopaheluwakan and Huwae (2022), with the theme of The Contribution of Spirituality to the Meaning of Life in the Waru Community of Central Maluku Performing the Mori UKNU Ritual Dance. In this study, it was found that spirituality contributed 63.1% to the meaning of life for the Waru community of North Maluku.~~

~~**Family and Community**~~

~~In this study, family (both nuclear and extended) was not only explicitly mentioned by participants in response to questions about meaning, but it also appeared implicitly in the narratives related to other life domains. For example, family was discussed in relation to the importance of work. Community and family were also considered as providers of collective norms and values. This supports findings from several studies in Africa and Asia, where people find fulfillment not as individuals but as part of the community to which they belong (Mason, 2013; Nell, 2014; Onyedinma & Kanayo, 2013; Wissing et al., 2020; Sopaheluwakan & Huwae, 2022). The importance of family as a source of meaning in life was also found in other research (Delle Fave et al., 2013; Schnell, 2021, pp. 91–92). Family is also linked to togetherness, care, tradition, and generativity (Schnell, 2021, pp. 91–95). The difference is that studies in Africa and Asia tend to imagine themselves as more interdependent, emphasizing the role of family and communal relationships in what can be conceptualized as an "extended self" (Hermans~~

& Gieser, 2012, p. 8). Meanwhile, Western societies value autonomy and independence (Lindegger & Alberts, 2012).

Religious Orientation

Religion or understanding of beliefs emerged as an important source of meaning in our study. This dimension was often mentioned in explanations of other dimensions, especially in relation to questions about sources of strength. All participants agreed that the religion they adhere to is a significant source of meaning in their lives. Our findings differ from those of Austad et al. (2023), who found that education was a major source of meaning. Education, particularly academic education, was seen as the main hope for a wage-earning job.

The difference between our study and Austad et al. (2023) is that in African societies, religion and daily life are so intertwined that religion is no longer seen as a tool in the search for meaning in life. Religion is more often viewed as a source of strength rather than a source of meaning. Similarly, the emphasis placed on material aspects of life as a source of strength may reflect the holistic ontology of Africa, where the sacred and the profane are interconnected (Beyers, 2010; Thorpe, 1991).

Individualism and Collectivism

Although collective sources of meaning, such as community and generativity, were the most prominent in our study, and self-actualization appeared to be the least mentioned dimension of the sources of meaning, there were some references and studies regarding individualism. The question of religion as a source of meaning among informants reflects the presence of individualistic norms. The desire to be "true to oneself" in their search for meaning (Taylor, 1991, pp. 26–29), as expressed by some informants, can be seen as an individualistic voice within a religious and collectivist society (Mason, 2013). However, this study found a dynamic interplay between individualistic and collectivist ideas rather than a strict dichotomy. The findings show a dynamic pattern between individualistic and collectivist ideas (Wissing et al., 2020). An integrated model, where intrapersonal, interpersonal, social, and transpersonal relationships play a role in the formation of meaning (Wissing et al., 2019; Austad et al., 2023).

The Concept of Meaning in Life and Meaning Awareness

The informants' reflections on the concept of meaning in life closely align with established conceptualizations of meaning in life (George & Park, 2016; Martela & Steger, 2016; Schnell, 2009, 2021). Their responses correspond to basic denotative meanings, such as the meaning of a sentence or a sign, as well as existential meaning in life (Baumeister & Landau, 2018). The researchers' findings align with Austad's (2023) research, where clear coherence among the informants' conceptual reflections was not explicitly evident. However, there was a strong sense of connectedness and belonging that clearly emerged in this study (Schnell, 2009, 2021).

Baumeister (1991) begins his famous book Meanings of Life by stating that "when survival is at stake, when each day's or each hour's events bring a sense of urgency, the meaning of life becomes irrelevant" (p. 3). Baumeister argues that considerations about the meaning of life require "stepping back from the moment" (p. 3). Since our study explored experiences of meaning and meaning crises considered retrospectively, our material is evidently based on such a step back and reflection. However, an important finding of our research is that informants reported becoming aware of the meaning of life in difficult and critical life situations. The researchers also found that the concept of meaning was in harmony with their life experiences, regardless of their general life situations.

Conclusion and Avenues for Further Research

This article contributes to the study of meaning in life and serves as a starting point for future research by offering an in-depth understanding of the key areas where meaning in life is found among the younger generation of Samin Kudus: family, religion, work, happiness, and survival. Additionally, this

~~article identifies the fundamental sources of meaning in life associated with these areas, where community and generativity are the most prominent. The experience of meaning in life lies in the younger generation's understanding of their beliefs, encompassing collective values and a holistic ontology, but also some individualistic orientations.~~

5. Conclusion and Implications

Commented [A7]: The Conclusion has been completely rewritten to provide a stronger synthesis of findings and to clearly state the study's theoretical and practical contributions

This study investigated how the younger generation of the Samin Kudus community constructs meaning in life through culturally embedded practices, using *Thematic Analysis* framed by Schnell's (2009, 2021) *Sources of Meaning*. The three central themes *Living in Harmony with Nature*, *Spiritual Inheritance and Identity*, and *Community Responsibility and Work* demonstrated that meaning is enacted through ecological ethics, ancestral spirituality, and collective responsibility.

While Schnell's four-dimensional model of meaning self-transcendence, self-actualization, order, and relatedness provided a valuable analytic lens, this study illustrates that the substance of meaning is profoundly shaped by local worldviews. Among the Samin, meaning is not merely sought through individual goals or institutional pathways, but inherited, practiced, and renewed through everyday actions, oral traditions, and relational commitments.

Crucially, this study demonstrates that meaning in life for the Samin youth is not solely defensive as a form of resistance to modern disruption but also creative and affirmative. Their adaptation of ancestral values into modern expressions (e.g., digital environmental activism, reinterpretation of communal labor, revitalization of oral ethics) reflects a cultural agency that affirms identity, reclaims moral authority, and reimagines the future. Resistance, in this context, becomes an ethical choice and a generative act: a way of being that transforms inherited tradition into purposeful, adaptive meaning.

In emphasizing cultural agency, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how indigenous youth not only preserve meaning but also produce it shaping coherent life narratives that bridge past and future, spirituality and activism, silence and voice. Their stories offer valuable insights for global discourses on meaning, resilience, and cultural sustainability in an increasingly plural and precarious world

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study offers empirical support for Schnell's claim that meaning is contextually constructed, while also extending the model through grounded insights from an indigenous, non-Western context. It highlights how spiritual belief systems, moral traditions, and ecological relationality form coherent, lived structures of meaning outside of dominant paradigms.

In addition, the study aligns with narrative identity theory (McAdams, 2001) and Ballard's (2022) concept of everyday resistance, showing how meaning is transmitted through intergenerational narratives and practiced through culturally meaningful labor and moral action.

5.2. Practical and Policy Implications

Findings from this study provide relevant implications for policymakers, educators, and practitioners working with indigenous communities:

- Cultural Preservation: Support for indigenous populations must extend beyond material concerns to include protection of indigenous meaning systems, which are vital to psychological well-being and identity continuity.

- Contextualized Education: Educational models that incorporate local wisdom such as ecological stewardship, spiritual discipline, and oral history can enhance youth engagement without cultural erosion.
- Sustainable Development: Planning for development in indigenous territories should consider relational and spiritual ontologies as frameworks for long-term sustainability and social harmony.

5.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study was based on a small, purposively selected sample from a single community and is thus not statistically generalizable. However, the depth and cultural richness of the data offer transferable insights that may inform comparative studies across indigenous settings.

Future research may explore, longitudinal shifts in meaning-making across generations, gender-specific narratives of meaning within the Samin context, cross-cultural studies among Southeast Asian or Global South indigenous communities using the Schnell framework.

In conclusion, the Samin experience affirms that meaning is not merely found, but inherited, embodied, and negotiated. It emerges where ecology, spirituality, and community intersect, offering valuable lessons for theory, policy, and practice in an increasingly complex world.

Data transparency

The qualitative data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical considerations and the need to protect participant anonymity. However, selected anonymized excerpts may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

~~Suggestions for future research include investigating the experience of meaning in life and the sources of meaning (Schnell, 2009) quantitatively to measure diverse cultural communities with a larger number of participants. It would be particularly interesting to study the distribution of religious and spiritual sources of meaning and their correlation with the sense of meaning. Based on the findings of this qualitative study, we can assume that religiosity is a highly significant source of meaning for the Samin Kudus community, especially the younger generation. Furthermore, it would also be intriguing to assess the position of religious views, atheism, and other ethnic groups within a larger sample. Additionally, it would be relevant to investigate whether the dimension of "self-actualization" is indeed the least relevant source of meaning in a representative sample, considering the findings of this study where achievement and individualism were the only sources mentioned from that dimension. Based on the collectivist values identified and the presence of some individualistic orientations in this study, we suggest that future research explores the correlation between community, generativity, and meaning, as well as the role of individualism as a source of meaning in various cultures in Indonesia.~~

Acknowledgements

The research team would like to thank Prof. Dr. Rosyid, M.Ag., and Dr. Fatmalaili Khairunnida, who facilitated access to the informants, conducted, and translated interviews in the local language. We also extend our gratitude to all the informants for their willingness to share their experiences related to this research.

Funding

The authors received financial support for this research from the university.

AI Declaration

Commented [A8]: This statement was added to clarify data transparency and participant confidentiality, in accordance with ethical research standards

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Commented [A9]: AI Declaration added to comply with ethical standards and transparency requirements

Formatted: Font: Bold

Formatted: Font: Bold

No generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT or similar) were used in the writing, editing, data analysis, or preparation of this manuscript. All content is the original work of the authors.

References

Arista, D. (2017). *Makna hidup mantan narapidana dalam menjalani kehidupan sehari-hari* [Unpublished undergraduate thesis]. Universitas Gadjah Mada.

Atsniyah, N., & Supradewi, R. (2019). Makna hidup santri di pondok pesantren. *Jurnal Psikologi Islam dan Budaya*, *2*(1), 22–32.

Austad, A., Cheyeka, A. M., Danbolt, L. J., Kamanga, G., Mwale, N., Stifoss-Hanssen, H., & Schnell, T. (2023). Experiences of meaning in life in urban and rural Zambia. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, *45*(3), 247–268. https://doi.org/10.1177/00846724231176938

Ballard, R. (2022). Everyday resistance: Theorising how the 'weak' change the world. In B. Ramalingam & J. Gaventa (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Social Change* (pp. 303–314). Routledge.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Burkan, M. I., Efendi, F., & Hayati, E. N. (2014). Makna hidup penderita HIV/AIDS: Sebuah studi fenomenologi. *Jurnal Keperawatan Indonesia*, *17*(2), 101–107.

Doncaster, C. P., & Bullock, J. M. (2024). Living in harmony with nature is achievable only as a non-ideal vision. *Environmental Science & Policy*, *152*, 103658. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2024.103658

Famutimi, J. T. F., & Olugbamila, O. B. O. (2022). Implications of living in harmony with nature for urban sustainability in post-COVID-19 era. *Urban and Regional Planning Review*, *8*(1), 19–33.

George, L. S., & Park, C. L. (2016). Meaning in life as comprehension, purpose, and mattering: Toward integration and new research questions. *Review of General Psychology*, *20*(3), 205–220. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000077

Heintzelman, S. J., & King, L. A. (2014). Life is pretty meaningful. *American Psychologist*, *69*(6), 561–574. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035049

Jordan, K., & Kristjánsson, K. (2017). Sustainability, virtue ethics, and the virtue of harmony with nature. *Environmental Education Research*, *23*(9), 1205–1229. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2016.1157681

Leontiev, D. (2013). Personal meaning: A challenge for psychology. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, *8*(6), 459–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.830763

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Commented [A10]: References have been updated and reformatted to ensure consistency, include recent sources (2020–2024), and follow APA 7th edition style

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Commented [A11]: Although this is an older source, it is still considered a foundational reference for qualitative methodology

Magaya, A. T. (2021). “Change within continuity”: Sacred and holy spaces and socialization in Bocha, Zimbabwe, ca. 1910–1960s. *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, *13*(1), 31–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2021.1984175

Martela, F., & Steger, M. F. (2016). The three meanings of meaning in life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and significance. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, *11*(5), 531–545. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2015.1137623

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, *5*(2), 100–122. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.5.2.100

Nurdin, A. (2021). *Resistensi Samin di era modern: Studi kasus komunitas Samin Kudus*. Pustaka Pelajar.

Ojalammi, S., Panula, E., Koskela, S., Tikkanen, A., & Lipsanen, J. (2024). Sources of meaning and crisis of meaning: Associations with COVID-19-related distress. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15*, 1282643. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1282643

Priatama, T. R., Nurhayati, D., & Arifin, Z. (2019). Makna hidup dalam praktik kesenian masyarakat Sunda. *Humaniora*, *31*(1), 88–95. https://doi.org/10.22146/jh.40810

Rahmalia, N. (2018). *Makna hidup pada wanita lajang paruh baya* [Undergraduate thesis]. Universitas Indonesia.

Reker, G. T., & Wong, P. T. P. (1988). Aging as an individual process: Toward a theory of personal meaning. In J. E. Birren & V. L. Bengtson (Eds.), *Emergent theories of aging* (pp. 214–246). Springer.

Rosingana, D. (2019). Identitas budaya dan makna hidup generasi muda Baduy. *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif*, *13*(1), 89–106.

Schnell, T. (2009). The Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (SoMe): Relations to demographics and well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *4*(6), 483–499. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760903271074

Schnell, T. (2021). *The psychology of meaning in life*. Routledge.

Schnell, T., & Danbolt, L. J. (2023). Meaning and Purpose Scales (MAPS): Short measures for assessing meaningfulness and sources of purpose. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000535

Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. Yale University Press.

Sopaheluwakan, R., & Huwae, H. (2022). Transmisi nilai budaya dan makna hidup pada remaja Kei. *Jurnal Psikologi Ulayat*, *9*(2), 231–248. https://doi.org/10.24854/jpu227

Starzyk, K. B., Fontaine, A. S., Strand, L. K., & Neufeld, K. H. (2021). Attitudes toward reconciliation in Canada: Relationships with connectedness to nature, animal–human continuity, and moral expansiveness. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science /*

Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, *53*(4), 381–393. https://doi.org/10.1037/cbs0000221

Steger, M. F. (2017). Meaning in life and well-being. In M. Slade, L. Oades, & A. Jarden (Eds.), *Wellbeing, recovery and mental health* (pp. 75–85). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316339275.008

Sukmayadi, S. (2018). Tradisi dan modernitas dalam identitas budaya pemuda adat. *Jurnal Masyarakat dan Budaya*, *20*(1), 101–118.

Syed, M., & McLean, K. C. (2022). Who gets to live the good life? Master narratives, identity, and well-being within a marginalizing society. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *100*, 104285. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2022.104285

Taves, A., Asprem, E., & Ihm, E. (2018). *What matters? Evidence, values, and belief in everyday life*. Oxford University Press.

Weeratunge, N. (2000). Nature, harmony, and the Kaliyugaya: Global/local discourses on the human–environment relationship. *Current Anthropology*, *41*(2), 249–268. https://doi.org/10.1086/300125

Wong, P. T. P. (2012). Toward a dual-systems model of what makes life worth living. In P. T. P. Wong (Ed.), *The human quest for meaning: Theories, research, and applications* (2nd ed., pp. 3–22). Routledge.

Wissing, M. P., Khumalo, I. P., Chigeza, N., & Claassen, N. (2020). Meaning and relational well-being in African contexts. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 2564. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.582596

Zu, L. (2022). Sustainable development: Harmony with nature. In *Responsible and Sustainable Business* (pp. 323–339). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91117-1_17

~~Argo, A. R., Karyono, & Kristiana, I. F. (2014). Kebermaknaan Hidup Mantan Punkers. *Jurnal Psikologi*, *13*(1), 93–101.~~

~~Arista, D. (2017). Kebermaknaan hidup dan religiusitas pada mantan narapidana kasus pembunuhan. *Jurnal Psikoborneo*, *5*(3), 2017.~~

~~Atsniyah, L., & Supradewi, R. (2019). Makna hidup santri pengabdian pondok pesantren Nurul Amal. *Prosiding Konstelasi Ilmiah Mahasiswa Unissula (KIMU) Klaster Humanoira*.~~

~~Austad, A., Cheyeka, A. M., Danbolt, L. J., Kamanga, G., Mwale, N., Stifoss-Hanssen, H., ... & Schnell, T. (2023). Experiences of meaning in life in urban and rural Zambia. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, *45*(3), 247–268.~~

~~Bahkruddinsyah, R. (2016). Makna hidup dan arti kebahagiaan pada lansia di panti werdha nirwana puri Samarinda. *Psikoborneo: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi*, *4*(1).~~

~~Baumeister, R. F. (1991). Meanings of life. Guilford Press.~~

~~Baumeister, R. F., & Landau, M. J. (2018). Finding the meaning of meaning: Emerging insights on four grand questions. Review of General Psychology, 22(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000145~~

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Beyers, J. (2010). What is religion? An African understanding. HTS Teologiese Studies, 66(1), a34. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v66i1.341

Burhan, R. F., Fourianalistyawati, E., & Zuhroni, Z. (2014). Gambaran kebermaknaan hidup orang dengan hiv/aids (odha) serta tinjauannya menurut Islam. *Jurnal Psikogenesis*, *2*(2), 110–122.

Cheyeka, A. M. (2014). Zambia. In T. Riggs (Ed.), Worldmark encyclopedia of religious practices (2nd ed., pp. 556–566). Gale.

Damásio, B. F., Helena Koller, S., & Schnell, T. (2013). Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (SoMe): Psychometric properties and sociodemographic findings in a large Brazilian sample. *Acta de Investigación Psicológica*, 3(3), 1205–1227. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2007-4719(13)70961-X

De Klerk, J. J., Boshoff, A. B., & Van Wyk, R. (2009). Measuring meaning in life in South Africa: Validation of an instrument developed in the USA. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *39*(3), 314–325.

Delle Fave, A., Brdar, I., Wissing, M. P., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2013). Sources and motives for personal meaning in adulthood. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 8(6), 517–529. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.830761

Gapp, S., & Schnell, T. (2008). Intercultural comparison of meaning in life. *International Journal of Psychology*, 43(3–4), 630.

George, L. S., & Park, C. L. (2016). Meaning in life as comprehension, purpose, and mattering: Toward integration and new research questions. *Review of General Psychology*, 20(3), 205–220. https://doi. org/10.1037/gpr0000077

Ginting, H. (2017, March 23–25). Sources of meaning and meaning in life among Indonesian volunteers [Conference presentation]. International Convention of Psychological Science, Vienna, Austria. https://www.psychologicalscience.org/conventions/archive/2017-icps

Graneheim, U. H., Lindgren, B.-M., & Lundman, B. (2017). Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper. *Nurse Education Today*, 56, 29–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.06.002

Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*, 24(2), 105–112. https://doi. org/10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001

Hermans, H. J. H., & Gieser, T. (2012). Introductory chapter. History, main tenets and core concepts of dialogical self theory. In H. J. H. Hermans & T. Gieser (Ed.), Handbook of dialogical self theory (pp. 1–22). Cambridge University Press.

Inglehart, R. (2018). Cultural evolution: People's motivations are changing, and reshaping the world. Cambridge University Press.

Krüger, J. S., Lubbe, G., & Steyn, H. C. (2009). The human search for meaning: A multireligion introduction to the religions of humankind. Van Schaik.

Lavigne, K. M., Hofman, S., Ring, A. J., Ryder, A. G., & Woodward, T. S. (2013). The personality of meaning in life: Associations between dimensions of life meaning and the Big Five. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 8(1), 34–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2012.736527

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

~~Lehmann, A., Wehner, T., & Ramos, R. (2018). Freiwilligenarbeit – psycho-soziale Ressource und sinngenerierende Tätigkeit [Volunteering – psychosocial resource and meaning making activity]. In B. Badura, A. Ducki, H. Schröder, J. Klose, & M. Meyer (Eds.), Fehlzeiten-Report 2018 (pp. 235–243). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-57388-4_20~~

~~Leontiev, D. A. (2007). Approaching worldview structure with ultimate meanings technique. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 47(2), 243–266. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167806293009~~

~~Leontiev, D. A. (2013). Personal meaning: A challenge for psychology. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 8(6), 459–470. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.830767~~

~~Lindegger, G., & Alberts, C. (2012). The dialogical self in the new South Africa. In. In H. J. H. Hermans & T. Gieser (Ed.), Handbook of dialogical self theory (pp. 1–22). Cambridge University Press.~~

~~Martela, F., & Steger, M. F. (2016). The three meanings of meaning in life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and significance. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 11(5), 531–545. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2015.1137623~~

~~Mason, H. (2013). Meaning in life within an African context: A mixed method study. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 23, 635–638. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2013.10820679~~

~~Mavrogiorgou, P., Chmielewski, F., Hanning, S., & Juckel, G. (2020). Persönlichkeit, Lebensbedeutungen und Angst vor dem Tod bei affektiven Störungen [Personality, sources of meaning and death anxiety in affective disorders]. *Psychotherapeut*, 65(4), 304–312. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00278-020-00439-5~~

~~McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(2), 100–122. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.5.2.100~~

~~Nell, W. (2014). Sources of life meaning among South African university students. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 24(1), 82–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2014.904087~~

~~Nurdin, N. (2021). Tradisi perlawanan kultural masyarakat Samin. *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama*, *15*(1), 71–86.~~

~~Onyedinma, E. E., & Kanayo, N. L. (2013). Understanding human relations in African traditional religious context in the face of globalization: Nigerian Perspectives. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 3(2), 61–70.~~

~~Pedersen, H. F., Birkeland, M. H., Jensen, J. S., Schnell, T., Hvidt, N. C., Sørensen, T., & Cour, P. (2018). What brings meaning to life in a highly secular society? A study on sources of meaning among Danes. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 59(6), 678–690. https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12495~~

~~Pollet, E., & Schnell, T. (2017). Brilliant: But what for? Meaning and subjective well-being in the lives of intellectually gifted and academically high-achieving adults. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 18(5), 1459–1484. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-9783-4~~

~~Priatama, R. P., Supenawinata, A., & Hidayat, I. N. (2019). Makna hidup dibalik seni tradisional: Studi fenomenologi kebermaknaan hidup seniman Sunda. *Jurnal Psikologi Islam Dan Budaya*, *2*(1), 43–64.~~

~~Qoriah, H. S., & Ningsih, Y. T. (2020). Gambaran makna hidup pada beberapa kalangan masyarakat di Indonesia (sebuah kajian literatur). *Jurnal Riset Psikologi*, *2020*(3), 1–14.~~

~~Rahmalia, D. (2018). Makna hidup pada wanita dewasa madya yang belum menikah. *Jurnal Psikologi Kognisi*, *3*(1), 29–44.~~

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Reker, G. T. (2000). Theoretical perspective, dimensions, and measurement of existential meaning. In G. T. Reker & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), Exploring existential meaning: Optimizing human development across the life span (pp. 39–58). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452233703.n4

Reker, G. T., & Wong, P. T. P. (1988). Aging as an individual process: Toward a theory of personal meaning. In J. E. Birren & V. L. Bengtson (Eds.), Emergent theories of aging (pp. 214–246). Springer.

Rosingana, G. C. (2019). In search of meaning: 'The hours' and meaning construction. *Círculo de Lingüística Aplicada a La Comunicación*, *79*, 187–202.

Schnell, T. (2009). The Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (SoMe): Relations to demographics and well-being. The Journal of Positive Psychology, 4(6), 483–499. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760903271074

Schnell, T. (2011). Individual differences in meaning-making: Considering the variety of sources of meaning, their density and diversity. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 51(5), 667–673. https://doi. org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.06.006

Schnell, T. (2014). Meaning in life operationalized: An empirical approach to existential psychology). In S. Kreitler & T. Urbanek (Eds.), Conceptions of meaning (pp. 173–194). Nova Science Publishers.

Schnell, T. (2021). The psychology of meaning in life. Routledge.

Schnell, T., & Hoof, M. (2012). Meaningful commitment: Finding meaning in volunteer work. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 33(1), 35–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2012.650029

Schnell, T., & Pali, S. (2013). Pilgrimage today: The meaning-making potential of ritual. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 16(9), 887–902. https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2013.766449

Sopaheluwakan, J. E., & Huwae, A. (2022). Kontribusi Spiritualitas Terhadap Kebermaknaan Hidup Masyarakat Waru Maluku Tengah Yang Menjalankan Ritual Mori Tari Mori Uknu. *Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian*, *3*(3), 5453–5464. https://stp-mataram.e-journal.id/JIP/article/view/1783

Sukmayadi, T. (2018). Nilai-nilai kearifan Lokal dalam pandangan hidup masyarakat adat Kampung Kuta. *JPK (Jurnal Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan)*, *3*(1), 19–29.

Taylor, C. (1991.). The ethics of authenticity. Harvard University Press.

Taves, A., Asprem, E., & Ihm, E. (2018). Psychology, meaning making, and the study of worldviews: Beyond religion and non-religion. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 10(3), 207–217. https://doi. org/10.1037/rel0000201

Vötter, B., & Schnell, T. (2019). Bringing giftedness to bear: Generativity, meaningfulness, and self control as resources for a happy life among gifted adults. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, Article 1972. https://doi. org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01972

Wilson, A., Khumalo, I. P., & Mpofu, E. (2021). Meaning in life among Ghanaian university students: Does religious commitment matter?. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 61, 2482–2499. https://doi.org/10.1007/ s10943-021-01405-4268 Archive for the Psychology of Religion 45(3)

Wissing, M. P., Wilson Fadiji, A., Schutte, L., Chigeza, S., Schutte, W. D., & Temane, Q. M. (2020). Motivations for relationships as sources of meaning: Ghanaian and South African experiences. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, Article 2019. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02019

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: Times New Roman

Wong, P. T. P. (2012). The human quest for meaning: Theories, research, and applications (2nd ed.). Routledge

Response to Reviewers and Editor

Manuscript No.: SSHO-D-24-02629
Title: The Meaning of Life for the Younger Generation of Samin Kudus in Preserving the Samin Religion

Note on Title Revision:

In light of the substantial revisions made to the manuscript, including the restructuring of the Introduction, Results, and Discussion, we have updated the manuscript title to more accurately reflect the core themes and contributions of the study. The new title, *"Sources of Meaning in Life Among Samin Youth: Ecological Ethics, Spiritual Continuity, and Cultural Resistance"*, better represents the findings and theoretical focus of the revised manuscript.

Reviewer #1

Comment:
"The first paragraph under 'The concept of meaning' is a literal copy of a paragraph from Austad et al., although it is not characterized as such. … Even the quotes are overlapping."

Response:
We sincerely apologize for the oversight. We have completely rewritten the section *"The Concept of Meaning in Life and Sources of Meaning"*. All overlapping text has been removed and clearly attributed. The changes are visible in tracked version pages 1–4.

Reviewer #2

1. Objectives & Rationale

Comment:
"Objectives are not clearly linked to literature … no rationale for the study context."

Response:
We fully rewrote the *Introduction* to present a coherent thematic literature review, justify the focus on Samin youth in context of cultural challenges, and clearly state the aims. Recent studies (2020–2024) have been integrated. Changes visible in pages 1–3.

2. Materials & Methods

Comment:
"Research design unspecified, recruitment unclear, no ethics statement, focus groups mentioned but not used."

Response:
The entire section was replaced. We specify qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke), detail purposive recruitment, clarify that only interviews were conducted, and include ethical

considerations (IRB waiver, informed consent, confidentiality, pseudonyms P1–P5). We also added a reflexivity paragraph. Revisions show in pages 3–4**.**

3. Results

Comment:
"Results unclear, overlaps, lacking thematic structure."

Response:
We fully removed and rewrote the *Results,* presenting three clearly defined themes with supporting quotes, aligned to Schnell's model and accompanied by a new thematic summary table. Paragraphs are more focused and coherent. See changes in pages 4-6.

4. Discussion

Comment:
"Discussion superficial, lacking synthesis and cultural interpretation."

Response:
The *Discussion* was entirely rewritten. We deepen theoretical reflection, compare with recent cross-cultural studies, highlight indigenous youth perspectives, and stress cultural resilience, environmental and spiritual contributions. Revisions appear in pages 7-9

Additional Note on Comparative Reflection:

In response to the broader goal of strengthening theoretical and cultural reflection, we have added a new subsection titled *"Comparative Perspectives from Southeast Asian Indigenous Communities"* in the *Discussion* (pages 9-10). This section connects our findings to relevant patterns observed in other Southeast Asian indigenous groups, based on regional studies and thematic similarities. This contextualization aims to enhance the interpretive richness and cultural resonance of our study

5. Conclusion

Comment:
"Conclusion needs to present theoretical and practical implications."

Response:
The *Conclusion* has been completely rewritten to summarize key themes, reaffirm contributions to indigenous psychology and ecological ethics, outline practical implications for youth empowerment, and deliver a cohesive closing argument. Updated version on page 9-10.

Editor

1. **Ethical Statement & Informed Consent**

We clarified IRB waiver, academic ethical standards, full informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymization as P1–P5, per section 2.6 in the tracked manuscript (Pages 4).

2. **Data Transparency**

   Although qualitative transcripts are not publicly available, we have added a *Data Availability Statement* before References:

   "The qualitative data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical considerations and the need to protect participant anonymity. However, selected anonymized excerpts may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request."

3. **Similarity Reduction**

   Overlapping sections with Austad et al. have been rewritten; checked against similarity report. Tracked version shows all changes. Rewritten in pages 1-9

4. **Authorship Consistency**

   Author order is now consistent throughout the revised manuscript and submission system.

5. **Participant Pseudonyms**

   Used anonymized identifiers (P1–P5) consistently in text and tables. (Pages 4-9)

6. **AI Declaration**

   We did not use generative AI in writing or analysis. A statement confirming this is appended to the end of the manuscript. See changes in pages 11.

7. **Updated Literature & Formatting**

   While we have updated the manuscript to include several recent and relevant studies (2020–2024), a few older references have been retained intentionally because they are foundational works in the field of existential psychology and qualitative methodology.

8. **Submission Package**

   We are submitting:
   1. Revised manuscript with track changes
   2. Clean revised manuscript
   3. This *Response to Reviewers and Editor*

Ethical Statement for The Social Sciences & Humanities Open Journal

At this moment, I Nelly Marhayati consciously assure that for the manuscript "**Sources of Meaning in Life Among Samin Youth: Ecological Ethics, Spiritual Continuity, and Cultural Resistance'** meets the following ethical requirements for submission to *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*:

1. This manuscript is the authors' original work and has not been published or submitted elsewhere.
2. The manuscript reflects the authors' independent research and analysis based on original qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews.
3. Ethical procedures were followed throughout the study. Although our institution does not operate a formal Institutional Review Board (IRB), a formal waiver was granted internally. All participants provided written informed consent, and their identities have been anonymized using codes (P1–P5) to ensure confidentiality.
4. The data have been interpreted and reported truthfully and respectfully, with reflexive awareness of cultural and power dynamics during fieldwork.
5. All authors contributed significantly to the conceptualization, data analysis, writing, and final approval of the manuscript. They accept full responsibility for the integrity and content of the work.
6. All sources have been properly acknowledged and cited. Any prior overlap with existing publications has been thoroughly addressed in this revised submission, with rewritten sections and clearly attributed references.
7. No generative AI tools were used in the production of this manuscript.
8. To further ensure compliance with academic integrity, we have conducted a similarity check and are submitting the plagiarism report as part of our resubmission materials.

I confirm that this submission complies with the journal's ethical standards and guidelines for authors.

I agree with the above statements and declare that this submission follows the policies of Solid State Ionics as outlined in the Guide for Authors and in the Ethical Statement.

Date: 28 Juni 2025

Corresponding author's signature

Nelly Marhayati