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**How Does One's Vocational Identity
Correlate With Their Sense Of Well-being?**

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Abstract

How significant is the impact of vocation on one's sense of overall well-being? This study seems to indicate that vocation can have a significant impact on the well-being of an individual – specifically their sense of eudemonic and hedonic well-being. One of the main conclusions of the study is that those who strongly identify with their vocation seem to be substantially happier than those with a low vocational identity.

A sample of 25 participants was gathered and surveyed on their vocational identity, alongside three pre-developed surveys aimed to gauge their overall well-being. These surveys aim to quantify a person's degree of hedonic happiness, the amount of meaning in life they currently felt, and the degree to which they were still searching for meaning in life.

The results gathered in the survey, also display three nebulous groups of individuals. Firstly, those with high vocational identity, who are not in search of meaning in life are shown to be significantly happy (>~9). Whilst the second group portrays the contrary, those with low vocational identity who are not in the search for meaning in life are relatively unhappy (<~5). Lastly, individuals who are strongly searching for meaning in life are generally somewhat happy, regardless of the strength of their vocational identity (~7). Refer to the graph (Figure 1) in the appendix.

The results drawn from this project reveal two different approaches that may help adolescents make vital career choices. The first is based on the idea that a stronger vocational identity, generally results in substantially having a more content and satisfying life. The second approach is based on the idea to keep actively searching for meaning in life as the results show that hedonic well-being is shown to be >~7, where the strength of one's vocational identity doesn't play a role.

Background Research

Vocation plays a massive role in one's life; it occupies a great amount of time and has the potential to impact one's sense of well-being. An individual's vocational identity is defined as a reflection of their goals, abilities, and talents through their choice of occupation. This study investigates the relationship between vocational identity and the two most common and extensive types of well-beings– hedonic and eudemonic. Hedonic well-being encompasses a spectrum of external experiences an individual encounters, ranging from pleasure to pain, whereas eudemonic well-being is happiness attained through internal self-realization and purpose in life.

Over the years, psychologists have created measures and scales in order to quantitatively delineate the relationship between vocational identity and well-being. These scales were tested and validated, on both large sample populations and across many subscales to ensure their reliability,

To measure hedonic well-being, Diener *et al.* developed the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)¹, in which 176 participants answered five questions on a scale of one to seven. In a similar way, Lyubomirsky and Lepper's Subjective Happiness scale gauges eudemonic well-being through four questions, also scored from one to seven, in order to derive participants sense of happiness and fulfillment in life². A large and diverse sample population (2,732 participants from different countries, ages, cultures, and backgrounds) and validation against five other measures of happiness and well-being ensured this scale had high internal consistency and excellent reliability.

Another measure of eudemonic well-being, the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)³, was developed by researchers Michael and Frazier, created to determine one's sense of the presence of, and search for, meaning in life. This 10-question measure, containing a one (absolutely untrue) to seven (absolutely true) scale, was used across 3 studies (containing sample sizes of 151- 400

undergraduate psychology students), which proved its internal consistency, temporal stability, and validity. The measure was also tested against several other well-being and happiness surveys and consistently had a > 70 reliability score, which confirmed its reliability and accuracy.

To measure vocational identity, the Vocational Identity Measure was developed by Gupta *et al.*⁴ to measure how aware individuals are of stable career goals, interests, and abilities. It contains 23 questions (some specifically targeted to university students, so required some rewording), on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree) and acquired a reliability score of 0.97.

While the measures detailed above deal with one aspect of well-being or vocational identity, no studies have yet investigated their relationship to each other. This study aims to examine that link specifically for secondary schools to help adolescents understand the importance of fulfilling vocational choices related to their interests. This project aims to investigate the correlation between vocational identity and one's sense of well-being, revealing the best ways to approach the idea of making appropriate and suitable career choices that will keep one content and striving in. This project is a building block in a body of knowledge and explores a relationship between two significant, yet different, aspects of a person's life.

Method

Participants

The sample group consists of 25 staff at Onslow College. With a strained timeframe due to COVID & school exams, this sample size was the most practical for maintaining good communication and organization.

An email was scripted, thoroughly explaining an overview of the project, its purpose, and participant requirements as a part of good ethical practice. This email and the survey questions were then sent to each staff member, allowing 20+ days for data gathering, which concluded with 25 responses.

Measures

This study uses the four measures detailed above, in *Background Research* section, as pre-developed, reliable surveys to quantify each individual's vocational identity and well-being.

A survey tool – *Qualtrics* was used to condense all four measures, creating one big survey consisting of all the different questions from each measure. As the Vocational Identity measure was initially targeted to university students, some questions were rephrased to better suit the target audience of this project.

Eudemonic well-being was divided into two aspects, the presence of meaning in life or the search for meaning in life, in line with research by Michaels and Frazier.

Refer to the Appendix for the final survey.

Trials

A trial survey was given to eight students at Onslow College with casual/part-time jobs, to point out any technical difficulties or errors and gauge the overall duration. The trial pointed out minor errors in the survey which were fixed before the final confirmation, and triallist responses were not analysed as a part of the results.

Analysis

Participant responses were analysed with R Studio to investigate correlation patterns and trends. The data was imported into the program so it could be cleaned, and a suite of statistical measures was employed.

Results

We initially investigated the overall correlational pattern of the variables in our study. We show the results in Table 1 which displays the R-values, ranging from -1 to 1 , represent the different correlation scores between variables. Variables that are positively related to one another, move in the same direction, which shows that if a participant scores high on one aspect, they are likely to score highly on the other as well. Negative scores portray the reverse pattern, so when scoring highly on one variable will mean scoring low on the other. Importantly, this does not imply casual relationships and the relationship between vocational identity and sense of well-being is simply correlative.

We found that vocational identity was most strongly associated with hedonic well-being ($r(25) = .72$, $p < .001$) followed closely by vocational identity with meaning presence ($r(25) = .67$, $p < .001$).

Looking at the scores above, we see the likelihood of there being a correlation between one sense of vocational identity and hedonic well-being is high, >0.70 . The correlation likelihood between vocational identity and someone with a sense of a meaningful life, follows closely with 0.67 . Contrastingly, the correlation between one's sense of vocational identity and those in search for meaning is significantly low, 0.04 which indicates the low likelihood of high vocational identity and search for meaning being linked together.

The P-value helps determine the significance of the results in regard to the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis states that the two variables being studied have no relationship between them, therefore, the hypothesis proves that whatever you are trying to investigate, didn't happen. This indicates that the results have occurred through the factor of chance, therefore the data is insignificant and fails to support what the investigation was trying to prove.

Table 1
Cross-sectional Correlation of Study Measures

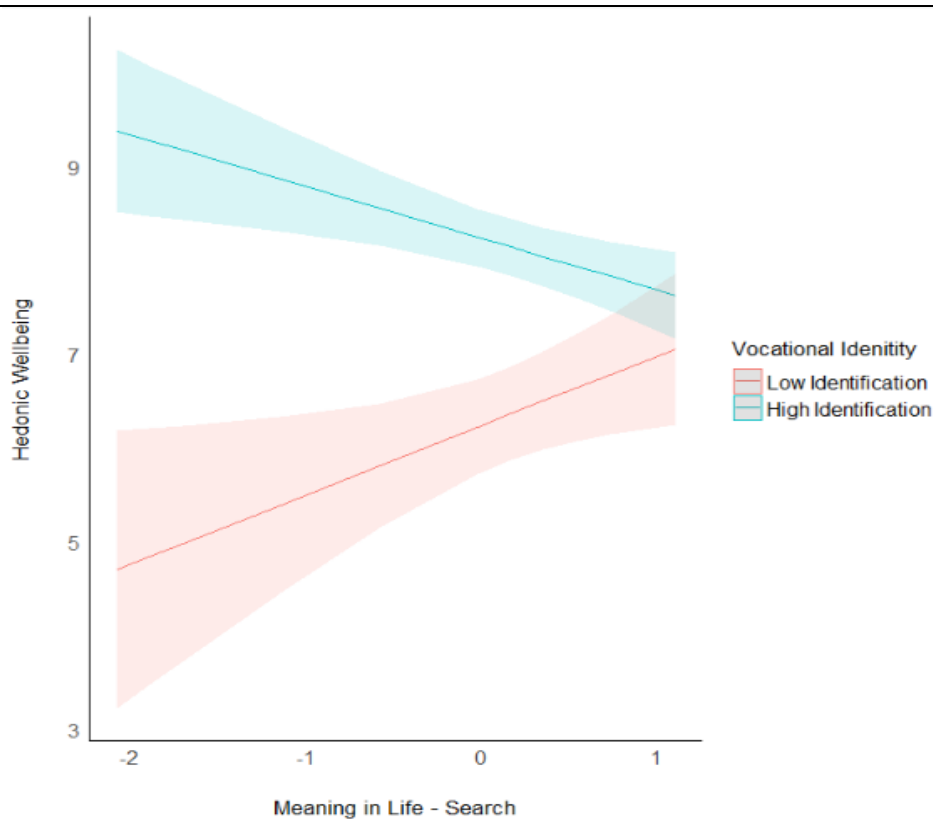
	Meaning- Presence	Meaning- Search	Hedonic Well- being
Meaning- Search	-.09		
Hedonic Well- being	.49*	-.14	
Vocational Identity	.67***	.04	.72***

Note. *** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

This investigation was mainly interested in the relationship between vocational identity and well-being, we fitted a linear regression in which hedonic well-being was predicted by vocational identity, the search for meaning, and their interaction. Overall, we found a significant main effect - the direct relationship of a variable while we also have interaction in the model, of vocational identity, represented by a standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .799$, $p < .001$), a non-significant main effect of meaning in life search ($\beta = -.169$, $p = .255$) which were qualified by a significant interaction between meaning in life search and vocational identity ($\beta = -.397$, $p = .015$). We show a visualization

of our results in Figure 1. Overall, the interaction indicates that participants with a high vocational identity experienced elevated hedonic well-being (happiness) if they weren't searching strongly for meaning in life. Still, their happiness significantly lowered as their search for meaning in life increased. Contrastingly, participants with low vocational identity displayed the opposite trend. Those with low vocational identity are generally significantly "unhappy" (with a low sense of hedonic well-being), compared to those with high vocational identity. Those with low vocational identity who are not in search of meaning in life tend to have the lowest sense of hedonic well-being. However, those who are searching for meaning in life, and contain low vocational identity seem to contain some sense of hedonic well-being, which can be interpreted by the red line.

Figure 1
Interactive effect of Meaning in Life Search and Vocational Identity on Hedonic Well-being



Note. Meaning in Life Search and Vocational Identity were mean centred and scaled prior to the analysis.

Discussion

The main derived correlation is that when individuals with a high sense of vocational identity, who are not searching for meaning in their lives, are significantly happy and content with their life. However, if they identify strongly with their work, and feel like they are lacking meaning in life (high in search of happiness), they become substantially less content with their life. Their sense of hedonic well-being is similar to those who identify less with their job and are searching for meaning in their lives. This could be due to them feeling more proactive about their life choices and a feeling of hope that things can change, making them substantially happier than those with low vocational identity,

hedonic well-being and who aren't searching for meaning. This can be due to the ruptured feeling of hope that there is happiness and the lack of satisfaction in their job. The graph shows us that a high sense of vocational identity is generally correlated to higher happiness, no matter the degree of searching for meaning in life which is evident through the placement of the blue line always being above the red line. This indicates that a high vocational identity actually mitigates the risk and often results in an individual being significantly more content and satisfied with their life, which could be something to emphasise during the time where adolescents are grappling with their future career choices.

Figure 1 displays people with a high vocational identity have more hedonic well-being compared to those that have a low vocational identity. However, interestingly, if individuals are less sure about their meaning in life (high search for meaning), this difference converges at a relatively high level of happiness. This may be because people with high vocational identity may feel niggling doubts which contribute to making them less content with life, which lowers their sense of hedonic well-being, as they seem to be in search for that 'something more.'

The results show us that if one strongly identifies with their vocation, they are shown to contain a relatively high sense of hedonic well-being than those with low vocational identity. This goes to prove the initial hypothesis as we can derive that an individual's sense of well-being and the level to which they are searching for meaning in life, can be based on their vocational identity. There is an opportunity to incorporate these perspectives in the career conversations with adolescents when they are contemplating decisions around their career choices. There are two key things to emphasise during this career decision-making process. The first is the idea that a stronger vocational identity, generally results in substantially having a more content and satisfying life. We can potentially conclude that, pursuing a vocation based on their personal interests and skills will give them more confidence, which may contribute to how content they feel with their life. The other approach is to encourage them to continue actively searching for meaning in life. In this approach, the strength of one's vocational identity doesn't play a role.

Conclusion

In conclusion, how highly one identifies with their vocation, can determine their general sense of hedonic well-being and how inclined they may be to search for further meaning in life. With a high sense of vocational identity, we see overall trends of the individual being more content and satisfied with their life, unaffected by how much one's in search of meaning in life. This could be due to, vocation playing a significant role in an individual's life. The time, energy, and effort consumed by this aspect of life can greatly impact the level of general happiness they feel about their life.

The results derived from the project points out two approaches for the adolescent career decision-making process. Either the idea that a high vocational identity generally ensures a higher level of happiness or being deliberate in the search for meaning in life which may not result in higher sense of happiness compared to the first approach but can still provide a relative degree of happiness.

The project wanted to investigate if there was any relationship between one's vocational identity and their sense of well-being as these are two vital aspects that will continue to impact an individual during the course of their life. The project hypothesized that if there was a strong correlation between one's vocational identity and their sense of well-being, the process of career choices, in adolescents could be made more informative, directing students to career choices that are aligned with their own passions and interests. This project revealed two ways to approach the decision-making phase towards an individual's career choices. This project successfully proves that if one strongly identifies with their vocation, they are substantially happier, as they are more likely to have proceeded with a career

path based on their interests. Based on this evidence, adolescents will gain greater confidence as they pursue their career and will have a greater sense of control as they progress, which can have an impact on their overall sense of general well-being. The project also showed that if individuals sustain their search for meaning in life, keeping themselves busy discovering new hobbies and interests, their sense of happiness may not be as high as the other approach, however, their sense of happiness will be substantially higher than those with low vocational identity and those who are not in search for meaning in life.

These results were deduced by conducting the research with a small sample size, which could have affected the overall reliability and accuracy of the study. In future studies, a large sample size (e.g., greater than 75), must be accumulated in order to produce higher reliability of data. Future studies should also include a range of individuals from different employers, as this could skew the data depending on if the employer was particularly good or bad. This would affect all the employees equally, regardless of their role, impacting their sense of well-being in that vocation. Another aspect would be to introduce demographic data such as age, gender, and ethnicity to further investigate underlying correlations within the data and discover any trends. Lastly, how the level of search for meaning in life is quantified and what it is determined by, whether it has a link with another hidden outside factor, could be further investigated.

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Appendix

Matrix One.

Correlation Scores

	Mlq_p	Mlq_s	Hed	Val
Mlq_p	1.00	-0.09	0.49	0.67
Mlq_s		1.00	-0.14	0.04
Hed			1.00	0.72
Val				1.00

Survey.

Matrix Two.

Probability Scores

	Mlq_p	Mlq_s	Hed	Val
Mlq_p	0.00			
Mlq_s	0.70	0.00		
Hed	0.03	0.58	0.00	
Val	0.00	0.86	0.00	0.00

Table A1: Question One

Question 1. Below are a list of statements about everyday feelings and behaviours. Please rate how accurately each statement describes you in general. Do not spend too much time thinking about the questions and please answer honestly.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
1. It is clear to me what I want to do for a living and that I have the right abilities to do well in it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	12. I am having a difficult time choosing what type of work I would like to do.
2. I feel confident that I will perform well in whatever I choose to do for a living.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	13. I know which type of occupation I would enjoy doing in the future.
3. My abilities match my work interest.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	14. I have made a firm decision regarding what I want to do for a living.
4. I know what occupational path I want to carry on with for the rest of my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	15. I know what kind of work suits me best.
5. I have a clear sense of my occupational interests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	16. I can readily envision what kind of work I want to be doing through the future.
6. I could easily describe my ideal job to a recruiter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	17. I cannot make a decision about what I want to do for a living.
7. I know what type of work I would like to do for the rest of my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	18. I have a pretty good sense of what type of work I would like to be doing in the future.
8. I have a strong sense of who I am related to the world of work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	19. I feel that the vocation of my choice will be the best possible fit for me.
9. My interests match my vocational goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	20. I feel like I am on a definite vocational path for the future.
10. I have no problem deciding what I want to do for a living.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	21. I have certain vocational goals that I would like to pursue for the rest of my life.
11. I have a firm sense of what type of work I would like to do for a living.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	22. Whatever I choose to do for a living will be the most important part of who I am.
								23. It is clear to me what I want to keep doing for a living.

Table A2: Question Two

Question 2. For each of the following statements and/or questions, please select the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I am satisfied with my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Table A3: Question Three

Question 3A. 1. In general, I consider myself:

Not a very happy person	Not a happy person	Somewhat not a happy person	Neutral	Somewhat a happy person	A happy person	A very happy person
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Question 3B. 2. Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

Not a very happy person	Not a happy person	Somewhat not a happy person	Neutral	Somewhat a happy person	A happy person	A very happy person
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Question 3C. 3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

Not a very happy person	Not a happy person	Somewhat not a happy person	Neutral	Somewhat a happy person	A happy person	A very happy person
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Question 3D. 4. Some people are generally NOT very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

Not a very happy person	Not a happy person	Somewhat not a happy person	Neutral	Somewhat a happy person	A happy person	A very happy person
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Table A4: Question Four

Question Four. For each of the following statements and/or questions, please select the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

	Absolutely untrue	Untrue	Somewhat Untrue	Neither true nor untrue	Somewhat True	True	Absolutely true
1. I understand my life's meaning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I am always looking to find my life's purpose.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. My life has a clear sense of purpose.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I am seeking a purpose or mission for my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. My life has no clear purpose.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I am searching for meaning in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Graph: Figure 1

