

Life Crafting and Good Life

—Antecedents, Outcomes and Mechanisms—

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The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on how individuals perceive life and approach work (Tang et al., 2023). Although the pandemic appears to be waning, it still caused unexpected disruptions in the lives of many, significantly affecting both physical and mental health (Frenzel et al., 2022). Some individuals even developed symptoms such as PTSD and grief due to the pandemic (De Jong et al., 2020; Schippers, 2020). Therefore, in the face of these psychological disturbances, how to reconstruct a sense of meaning in life is particularly important for restoring an individual's mental health (De Jong et al., 2020; Schippers & Ziegler, 2019; Updegraff et al., 2008). However, how to effectively add more meaning to one's life remains a topic of interest and exploration for researchers. First, exploring the relationship between meaning and well-being and health requires considering both presence of meaning and search for meaning dimensions (Steger et al., 2006; Yang et al., 2016). However, search for meaning does not necessarily lead to greater presence of meaning and happiness, and in some ways, search for meaning is even positively associated with negative affect (Park et al., 2010; Steger et al., 2008). Considering that search for meaning is a process of action, individuals who encounter significant frustration and painful experiences during this journey may see a decline in their well-being and presence of meaning. Therefore, a more structured approach to finding meaning, such as psychological interventions, may be necessary. One such intervention is the concept of life crafting, which was developed to help people find fulfillment and happiness (Schippers & Ziegler, 2019).

Life crafting is defined as the conscious behavior of individuals who seek to create meaning in their lives by reshaping their cognitions of life, seeking social supports, and actively seeking challenges for personal growth. As a proactive life intervention behavior, life crafting is thought to be linked to several positive outcomes, such as work engagement and mental health. Given that life crafting is a novel concept in counselling psychology, there is a paucity of knowledge regarding its antecedents, outcomes, and influential mechanisms. Accordingly, the present study primarily integrates theories from two major intersecting fields of psychology: lifespan developmental psychology (Psychology of Aging Experiences, Dittmann-Kohli et al., 1997; Strength and Vulnerability Integration, Charles, 2010) and organizational psychology (Proactivity Theory, Parker et al., 2010) to address these issues. Two online samples of Chinese residents were used across three research designs to reveal the antecedents, outcomes, and possible influential mechanisms of life crafting. The hypotheses proposed in this study were fully supported by the data.

In Pilot study, cross-sectional data were collected from 185 individuals, including life crafting, and QOL; in the formal study, a questionnaire was administered in two phases with a two-week interval, which resulted in 481 valid data. The focal variables included in Study 1 & 2 are:

Study1: demographic variables (Time 1), wisdom (Time 1), positive affect (Time 1), autonomy needs (Time 1), life crafting (Time 1), life meaning (Time 2), and QOL (Time 2);

Study 2: demographic variables (Time 1), life crafting (Time 1), positive & negative affect (Time 1), aging experiences (Time 1), and QOL (Time 2).

The results of the pilot study suggested that life crafting positively related to QOL after controlling for

demographic variables. The results of study1 indicated that the three proactive motivation categories of Can do (wisdom), Energized to do (positive affect), and Reason to do (autonomy needs) could positively predict QOL through the indirect effects of life crafting; Moreover, the results of the study further indicated that the positive effects of life crafting on QOL were stronger among those with higher levels of life meaning. As for the second stage moderated mediation modeling we proposed, the results showed that the three types of proactive motivation, Can do (wisdom), Energized to do (positive affect), and Reason to do (autonomy needs), can positively and indirectly affect QOL through the mediating effect of life crafting, which is more stronger for people with higher levels of life meaning. The results of study 2 showed that life crafting can have a positive effect on positive affect and QOL by increasing positive aging experiences, and on the other hand, life crafting can also reduce the negative effect of negative affect on QOL by reducing negative aging experiences, for the magnitude of the coefficients of the indirect effect of the two chain mediation paths , we find that life crafting has a stronger effect on the strength pathway, which further confirms the positive effect of life crafting. Our findings demonstrate that life crafting can be effective in improving QOL under specific conditions. Therefore, counselors should focus on the practical application of life crafting, while psychology researchers should invest more effort in the future to further uncover the antecedents of life crafting and its potential mechanisms of influence. These findings have significant implications for developmental and positive psychology theory, as well as counseling practice. (臨床死生学・老年行動学)