



From trauma to growth: A mixed-methods analysis of psychological factors in women's experiences of temporary marriage

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Abstract: Temporary marriage is not only about surviving the trauma and crisis but also offers the potential to emerge from difficulties due to its ability to provide meaning from past events. This study aims to measure the level of meaning in the life of female victims of temporary marriage in Singkawang, Indonesia, by exploring their experiences as an optimization to generate positive effects on their lives. Employing a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the research utilizes an inventory technique to investigate the meanings of life experienced by ten respondents. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with five women who had been impacted by temporary marriage in order to delve into their pursuit of a meaningful life, all of whom consented to the intervention. The findings indicate that women often find themselves as victims of temporary marriage at a middle economic level. The pursuit of a purpose in life emerged as a primary concern, surpassing other factors such as spirituality, self-acceptance, materialism, and problem-solving in the quest for life's meaning. This situation is often hindered by psychological trauma stemming from challenges encountered within the context of temporary marriage. Through introspection and self-acceptance, individuals embarked on a journey of personal growth, gaining insights and heightened awareness that could serve as a form of intervention through social connection, prayer, close relationships, positive behaviors, experiences, and self-motivation. This research provides an understanding of the fact that difficulties or problems in life can have positive implications by motivating the desire to grow from the temporary marriage experience.

Keywords: meaning in life; personal growth; psychological factor; temporary marriage

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To cite this article (APA Style):

Casmini, C., Musthofa, M., Saptani, S., Anwar, M. K., & Abubakar, L. (2024). From trauma to growth: A mixed-methods analysis of psychological factors in women's experiences of temporary marriage. *Psikohumaniora: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, 9(1), 59-82. <https://doi.org/10.21580/pjpp.v9i1.20616>

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<https://journal.walisongo.ac.id/index.php/Psikohumaniora>

Submitted: 11 Mar 2024; Received in revised form: 12 May 2024; Accepted: 22 May 2024; Published regularly: May 2024

Introduction

In addressing their biological and economic needs, some women opt for temporary marriages (Khandelwal & Patwa, 2018) as a means of adhering to halal practices rather than resorting to adultery (Nuraeny & Kuswandi, 2019). Despite being perceived as deviant behavior from social, cultural, religious and legal standpoints, temporary marriage persists in certain segments of Indonesian society. Instances of such marriages have been documented in locations such as Cisarua Bogor (Arivia & Boangmanalu, 2015); Singkawang (Suhud & Syabai, 2014); and Jepara (Suhud & Willson, 2016), which underscore the need for focused attention on the phenomenon due to the psychological trauma it may leave in its wake. Such trauma can have lasting effects on both physical and mental well-being (Gross et al., 2019). However, previous researchers have interpreted that the meaning of the event continues to evolve well after the trauma itself has passed (Dickinson, 2021).

The concept of temporary marriage is subject to varying interpretations within society. Some view it as a means to legitimize adultery (Rahman, 2019), while others see it as a strategy to escape poverty and financial hardship, often treating it as a form of economic transaction (Ausman, 2003; Suhud & Sya'bani, 2014). Research findings suggest that individuals entering into temporary marriages may openly express materialistic and sexual motivations without feeling any sense of moral obligation (Suhud & Syabai, 2014). This trend highlights a diminishing influence of traditional family values in the face of modernization, consumerism and materialistic tendencies.

Various regions across Indonesia, such as Bogor, Singkawang, and Yogyakarta, have been the subject of research focusing on temporary marriage practices (Citra et al., 2016), and warrant further investigation and intervention. The characteristics of temporary marriage cases differ

across these areas. In Bogor, it is the Arab-Indonesian community that predominately engages in temporary marriage, with economic and religious factors not being the main drivers of such cases (Riswandari, 2023). In Singkawang, temporary marriages are prevalent among the ethnic Chinese-Indonesian community (AS et al., 2020). Conversely, in Yogyakarta, students often partake in temporary marriages, with non-economic factors playing a significant role (Lukito, 2022). Despite the common use of religious, economic, gender and legal strategies to address temporary marriage issues, these approaches have not fully resolved the complexities associated with such unions (Nemati et al., 2022). This study offers an original positive psychology approach that reveals the positive side of temporary marriage events experienced by some women in Singkawang. Notably, marital commitment and mental well-being emerge as crucial indicators of marriage quality, underlining the necessity to consider psychological aspects in order to gain more in-depth understanding and to enhance the dynamics within temporary marriages (Ausman, 2003).

In numerous instances, temporary marriage has evolved into a commercial enterprise involving multiple stakeholders, networks and trafficking activities, encompassing both humans and babies (Suhud & Willson, 2016). In practice, some participants in temporary marriages do not engage in it willingly, but are coerced by external factors, often stemming from the poverty they endure (Hasanah, 2019). Such marriages have repercussions on women and their offspring born into such circumstances (Lumingkewas, 2022). Unwillingly, women involved in temporary marriages become divorced (Bone, 2020) and subsequently assume the role of single parents in raising their children. Concurrently, the mental well-being of the children is adversely affected, leading to developmental and personality disruptions that persist throughout their lives.

Occurrences such as temporary marriages have an impact on individuals' quality of life and happiness, as evidenced by various studies (Mintarsih & Mahdami, 2021; Reker et al., 1987; Ryff, 1989; Wilchek-Aviad & Malka, 2016). Some individuals may experience trauma related to reproductive health (Kinasih et al., 2019), as well as effects on physical and mental health (Brassai et al., 2011; de Medeiros et al., 2024; Gross et al., 2019; Heintzleman & King, 2014; Martela & Steger, 2016); overall well-being (Altmaier, 2019); and subjective well-being (Shoshani & Russo-Netzer, 2017). However, for other women who are victims of temporary marriages, the challenges they encounter can imbue their lives with significance. Such events may be seen as not just a question of surviving a crisis, but also offer the potential for growth from adversity (Sadaghiyani et al., 2023); benefit-finding (Affleck & Tennen, 1996); flourishing (Ryff & Singer, 1998); better understanding of the mechanisms of personality development (Bühler et al., 2024); positive meanings (Davis, et al., 2000; King et al., 2006), and post-traumatic growth (Taylor, 2023).

Meaning in life is not something that is constructed, but instead is uncovered through a process of exploration (King & Hicks, 2021; Lewis, 2019; Schnell, 2020). Its pursuit often arises following experiences of suffering, and involves self-awareness, acceptance, positive thinking, and constructive actions aimed at gaining recognition or value (Musofa et al., 2019). Meaning in life is attained through processes of self-actualization (Baumeister, 1991) and is derived from three distinct sources: creative, experiential and attitudinal values (Frankl, 1963; Pattakos & Dundon, 2017; Uemura, 2018). Life acquires meaning or purpose when individuals identify reasons to persevere during challenging times (Frankl, 1992; Vohs et al., 2019), highlighting the significance of assuming responsibility for seeking meaning and purpose in life (Debats et al., 1995). Such meaning differs from happiness, but

meaningfulness determines happiness (Baumeister et al., 2013; Oishi & Westgate, 2022). Meaning in life also contributes to healing, views on future life, and better in quality of life (Wilchek-Aviad & Malka, 2016). As a result, meaning in life is seen as one of the moderating variables that helps individuals find happiness.

Research related to temporary marriage during the period 1995 to 2020 recorded 1802 relevant cases with different results, namely 1) sexually transmitted infections/human immunodeficiency virus; 2) early marriage; 3) unplanned pregnancy and induced abortion; 4) violence; 5) psychosocial disorders; and 6) other problems (Valizadeh et al., 2021). Recent studies have revealed that meaning in life is positively linked to life satisfaction, and that the relationship is stronger for someone with a high level of search for meaning (Steger et al., 2011). This suggests that the pursuit of meaning plays a significant role in enhancing life satisfaction. An experimental study found that participants who were asked to contemplate potential stressors in their lives increased their search for meaning (J. Park & Baumeister, 2017). Furthermore, the authors propose that meaning acts as a buffer, allowing individuals to maintain control over their lives, thus enhancing their resilience to stress. By seeking meaning in the face of future stressors, individuals can better understand and cope with impending adverse events (Steger et al., 2008). The strategy for addressing the challenges encountered by women who are victims of temporary marriage not only focuses on material aspects, but also on strategic measures that seek to stimulate emotions or convictions regarding the significance of life.

Based on the previous study on women victims of temporary marriage and meaning in life, several novelties emerge, and also differences from previous research. First, research on temporary marriage has previously focused on religious aspects (Hanum et al., 2024; Helandri et al., 2023);

economic ones (Al-Ghanim, 2020; Lafortune & Low, 2023; Silbaugh, 1998); gender (Arivia & Boangmanalu, 2015; Valizadeh et al., 2021); and legal approaches (Izat, 2020; Lubis et al., 2021; Mintarsih & Mahdami, 2021; Santiara & Azzulfa, 2024; Umarama et al., 2020). On the other hand, this study was conducted with a positive psychology approach. Second, methodologically, this study combines quantitative and qualitative research methods to allow respondents to provide detailed information about temporary marriage or meaning in life, whereas previous studies focused on one method, either the qualitative (Nafis, 2021; Nuranisa et al., 2022; Susilo et al., 2022), or the quantitative (Brassai et al., 2011; J. Park & Baumeister, 2017; Steger et al., 2008). Third, previous studies have examined the correlation of variables affecting meaning in life or experimental studies, whereas this study measured the level of meaning in life and explored in-depth the experience of finding such meaning.

The research therefore explores the process of discovering purpose in life, and the journey from trauma to growth that can enhance an individual's psychological wellness and stability. The exploration of women's life experiences while marriage is important, and begins with analysis of the factors that affect their life-meaning.

Methods

Research Design

This research follows a mixed-method design that integrates qualitative and quantitative methodologies to comprehensively explore the experiences of women who have encountered temporary marriage in their quest for life's significance (Jeanty & Hibel, 2014; Keptner, 2014; Terrell, 2015). By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, researchers can uncover new information that would not have been possible if using separate approaches (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The mixed-methods model used is sequential explanatory design (SED), which begins

with quantitative data collection and then continues with qualitative to help explain and describe the results obtained by the former (Creswell, 2011). The SED model is shown in Figure 1.

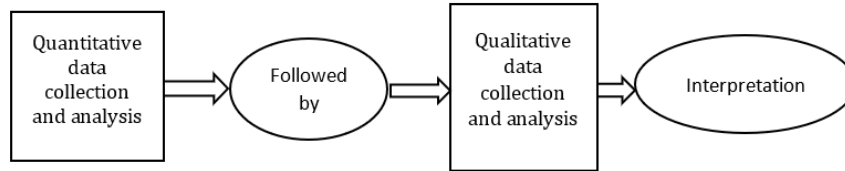
The results provide an overview of the quantitative data in the form of the level of meaning of life based on the psychological factors that affect women's temporary marriages. This is then extended by an explanatory narrative that emphasizes the experience of finding the meaning of life behind the events of temporary marriage. Quantitative techniques were employed to assess the level of life meaning and the factors that impact women involved in temporary marriages. On the other hand, qualitative research adopts a positive and social psychological-interpretative phenomenology framework (Alase, 2017) centred on the respondents' viewpoints and experiences (Langdridge, 2017). Interpretative phenomenology involves conducting in-depth interviews that delve into creative, experiential, and attitudinal values, together with the treatments or interventions have undergone. This approach aims to gather specific and detailed data on victims of temporary marriage, including their emotions and the support available to help them escape their circumstances. The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method directs analytical focus toward participants' efforts to derive meaning from their experiences (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

Respondents and Informants

Participants were selected using non-probability sampling techniques, namely snowball sampling, because it was difficult to access a large number of participants directly. Women victims of temporary marriage are limited in number and have particular problems related to privacy issues. According to Creswell (2015) and Collins et al. (2006) the sample size for mixed case study or phenomenological research requires a minimum of 3-5 or 5-10 participants respectively.

Figure 1

Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design (Creswell, 2011)



Determining the number of participants in phenomenological research differs from the approach in quantitative research, mainly because the philosophical basis is distinct from the logic of positivism (Grass, 2024). The logic of sample representativeness and the number of participants (or external validity) that underlies quantitative research does not apply to phenomenological research, as demonstrated in research conducted by Casmini and Hasanah (2024), Casmini and Supardi (2020), Salama and Chikudate (Salama & Chikudate, 2021) and Salama and Chikudate (Salama & Chikudate, 2023). These studies are grounded in the fact that the primary objective of descriptive phenomenological research is to describe and uncover a person's life experience or a particular life-world, which encompasses the entire constellation of sensory, affective and cognitive events that are observed subjectively and are limited to a particular person, time and space (Englander & Morley, 2023).

The interviews were audio-taped (with permission from the participant) in order to ensure an accurate account of what was said, allowing for replays for analytic purposes. Anonymity was ensured during the research process. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study or terminate the interview at any time before commencing the session.

The selection of fifteen participants (ten for quantitative data and five for qualitative) was supported by local enumerators in Singkawang,

who helped the researchers by using their personal contacts and social networks to reach women victims of temporary marriage. The snowball technique was employed to identify more participants for data collection through scales and interviews, focusing on the meaning in life experiences of women victims of temporary marriage. This technique works like a chain in order to reach potential research participants. The enumerators assisted in locating home addresses; provided comprehensive information on willingness to participate; and coordinated meetings. However, one married couple expressed their willingness to participate in the study because they met the researchers during the funeral of one of their mothers. The local enumerators played a crucial role in identifying and recruiting participants, leveraging their personal networks to reach the target population. The snowball technique was used to expand the participant pool, ensuring that the data collection process was representative of the experiences of women victims of temporary marriage (Palinkas et al., 2015). Snowball sampling was utilized to recruit five informants through a process of seeking key individuals and obtaining their names and addresses (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). However, this technique often proved inadequate, as some key individuals declined to be interviewed for personal reasons; were reluctant to discuss their distressing experiences, viewing them as painful memories they preferred to suppress; or were facing ongoing struggles with depression, leading them to avoid interactions with unfamiliar individuals. Consequently, the process of

identifying suitable informants became a complex endeavor. The researchers encountered challenges associated with the Indonesian-Chinese culture prevalent in Singkawang's Chinatown, which appeared insular primarily due to language barriers.

Table 1 shows the subject identification of the interview process. This involved the responses of five women who had undergone temporary marriages, with participant selection facilitated by individuals in their social circles who were willing to engage in the research.

Additionally, researchers should consider the question of data saturation, as this informs the determination of the sample size. In this case, such saturation in relation to the women victims of temporary marriage refers to the point at which no new information is being gathered from additional participants. When the data reach saturation point, the participants are considered to have fulfilled what was required. By providing a clear justification for the sample size and discussing the sampling technique and data saturation, researchers determine the validity of their findings and demonstrate the rigor of their methodology (Naeem et al., 2024).

Data Collection

Data on the women involved in temporary marriage was gathered from various sources,

including newspapers and articles about the issue of consent in Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Women victims of such marriage were also approached outside office hours and were given information regarding the nature and rationale of the research (Khan, 2014). The data were used as supplementary evidence in conjunction with those collected through scales and interviews to provide insight into the experiences of women affected by temporary marriage.

The quantitative data collection instrument utilized was the Meaning in Life scale, adapted from the Tarumanagara Meaning in Life scale (Suyasa, 2008), which has been validated and proven to be reliable.

The scale comprises 75 items with seven response options scored from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater levels of meaning in life. The scale assesses five factors: self-acceptance, purpose in life, spirituality, problems, and materialism.

The quantitative data analysis provided insights into the levels of meaning in life and its associated factors among female victims of temporary marriage. The qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews aligned with the research objectives and are iterated upon to address any gaps or uncertainties (Creswell & Poth, 2013; Lieblich et al., 1998).

Table 1

Subject Identification in the Interview Process

Subject	Name (Initials)	Age at time of temporary marriage	Marriage period	Factors/reasons for marriage
S.1	JF	27	2 years, extended by 2 years	Low education, economic
S.2	KS	19	2 years	Economic, lifestyle
S.3	HS	18	2 years	Economic
S.4	IY	17	2 years	Economic
S.5	SY	20	2 years	Economic

The qualitative narrative in this study was based on the stories shared by women with experience of temporary marriage, emphasizing participant-centred listening activities to elicit narratives naturally without undue influence from the researcher's questions.

The semi-structured, in-depth interviews were tailored to the preferences of the participants to comfortably facilitate information sharing. Each interview session lasted approximately 30 minutes, and not all interviews were recorded in order to respect the confidentiality and comfort of the participants, as was agreed upon between the researcher and the participants. Then, the temporary marriages were finished.

The semi-structured interview question list was as follows:

1. Tell us when you entered into a temporary marriage and how the process unfolded.
2. Tell us the reasons for entering into a temporary marriage; was it of your own volition, or at the insistence of others such as parents or close family members?
3. Share memorable experiences during the temporary marriage.
4. Share distressing experiences during the temporary marriage.
5. How did people around you react during a temporary marriage or subsequently?
6. What did you do when experiencing distressing life events during or after the temporary marriage? How did you feel after doing so?

Data Analysis

The quantitative data analysis involved the utilization of exploratory factor analysis and descriptive analysis to examine the five components of meaning in life: self-acceptance, purpose in life, spirituality, problems, and materialism. The findings were classified based on the cumulative score derived from these

components, with scores falling within the ranges of 1-75, indicating lowest levels; 76-175, indicating low levels; 176-350, indicating moderate levels; 351-360, indicating high levels; and 361-525, indicating highest levels of meaning in life.

Following the framework proposed by Smith and Shinebourne (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012), the qualitative data analysis was structured into several distinct steps that focused on the narrative of meaning in life. These steps were instrumental in developing a comprehensive counselling approach centred on meaning in life for individuals affected by temporary marriages. The initial step involved a thorough examination of the interview narratives to gain a holistic psychological understanding of temporary marriage victims, with specific emphasis on the themes of this study. The subsequent steps entailed identifying integrated meaning units; deriving emergent themes; composing super-ordinate themes; and finalizing the themes and narratives concerning the empirical evidence.

Accuracy

The data accuracy was divided into two schemes. First, the accuracy of the quantitative data ensured the utilization of the Tarumanagara meaning of life instrument, which was subjected to rigorous validity and reliability assessments, indicating an internal reliability of (α) = 0.806 for Self-Acceptance (SA) and of (α) = .764 for Purpose in Life (PiL). The researchers could only observe two reliability factors on the instrument because there were few items; the more meaningful one's life, the more able one is to accept oneself, and the meaning of one's life is identical to the purpose of life, so for the other three factors (spirituality, problems and materialism) were not considered in detail in relation to reliability (Suyasa, 2008), reflecting the unique cultural setting of Indonesia. Attention was paid to the precise arrangement of items in the research process in order to maintain accuracy during the data analysis

and to ensure the precise measurement of respondents' levels of meaning in life.

Second, qualitative objectivity was rigorously upheld by the researchers, as advocated by Creswell and Poth (2013), with focus on precision, as emphasized by Bradbury-Jones (2007). This commitment to objectivity and precision ensured that the researcher's stance with the informants remained consistent throughout all stages of the research. Consequently, data validation was achieved by cross-checking the information obtained from the interviews with insights from family, friends or individuals familiar with the subject's life, thereby enhancing the accuracy and authenticity of the data and reflecting the subject's actual circumstances.

Results

In this section, the two types of data are discussed, outlining both quantitative and qualitative insights into women's temporary marriages and their perspectives on the meaning of life.

1. Quantitative Validation of Women's Experience of Temporary Marriages

Table 2 shows the perspectives of the ten women who have experienced temporary marriages with regard to the significance of life,

with a focus on assessing their perspectives, ranging from moderate to lowest levels.

Table 3 illustrates the aspects of meaning in life that were identified by five informants, quantified. These data serve as a reference point for understanding the measurement of the extent to which the women experienced facets of meaning in life within their temporary marriages.

2. Exploring Qualitative meanings During Women's Temporary Marriages

Table 4 shows data on the significance of life, as reported by five informants concerning three categories of experiences within women's temporary marriages. Three overarching themes emerge from the data, illustrating the informants' experiences in discovering the meanings of life through the intervention.

Theme 1: The meaning of life is a personal experience. Researchers have encountered challenges in fully understanding the emotional and psychological experiences of women who have been victims of temporary marriage. Despite efforts to delve into their narratives, these women's true sentiments, thoughts and actions remain elusive. Exploration of the meaning of life for these individuals is hindered by their complex pasts, which often bring back painful memories and emotions. Some women expressed reluctance

Table 2

Level of Meaning in Life of the Women Victims of Temporary Marriages

Subject	SA	PiL	S	P	M	Total Score
1	40	64	119	38	16	277
2	32	46	99	34	7	218
3	38	64	102	62	17	283
4	37	55	94	38	14	238
5	38	52	102	40	10	242
6	41	57	116	47	11	272
7	22	31	61	38	4	156
8	28	43	82	42	15	210
9	41	64	113	56	14	288
10	42	50	104	44	8	248

Table 3
Components of Meaning in Life

Component	Percentage
SA	89.3%
PiL	98.3%
S	89.1%
P	63.2%
M	75.2%

Table 4
Five Themes on the Process of Finding Meaning in Life

Stage	Theme	Categories	Subcategory 1	Subcategory 2
Early	Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memories before temporary marriage • Reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The life expectancy of communication and agreement • Establish life goals 	-
		Memories of temporary marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship formation and adaptation • Challenge management • Personal growth • Traumatic 	Resilience
		Memories after temporary marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship evaluation • Reflection 	Feelings of uselessness
		Trigger in searching for the meaning of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own experience • Couple's experience 	
Transition	Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle • Guidelines • Self-acceptance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-development • Decision making • Self-description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Negative
Quest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral • Affective • Cognitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray, worship • Living in society • Contemplation • Reflection • Evaluation 		Comfortable, but feelings of emptiness
Termination	Gratitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support • The life lived 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and families • Friends • NGOs 	Delight and fullness, but not wealth
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose • Hope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better life • Willingness to life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self • Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupation • Financial • Pride • Excitement and complacency, but sense of uncertainty

to participate in the interviews due to the distressing nature of recalling their experiences.

“... I actually objected to being interviewed ... because it was a painful moment for me ...” (S4, IY).

The inquiry into the significance of life for women affected by temporary marriage involved an examination of their internal world and the conflicts that arise between their inner feelings and external circumstances.

“... The life I have gone through ... sometimes feels meaningless ... sometimes I live in despair ... even feel weak, but in front of others, I show happiness.” (S2, KS).

“... We carry everything within ourselves; there is God... heaven... hell... earth, life and death, even the whole history of my life. What is visible outside... yes, it is like sadness... joy is just a tool. Everything we need is within ourselves.” (S1, JF).

Theme 2: The meaning of life is judgment. Experiences of positive moods serve as an excellent source of meaning in life, which is not simply an experience that happens to women victims of temporary marriage, but also self-judgment in making an evaluation. “I want to say, Mom... Dad..., I am happy and still grateful... I also feel that life’s journey is very beautiful and meaningful. Even when I have to leave my husband because the contract agreement has expired” (S3, HS). Self-reflection on the life experienced by women victims of temporary marriage is made to find meaning in life. They attempt to contemplate the values they believe in, their life goals, and their decision-making over choices to find and create their meaning. Although it is difficult, women victims of temporary marriage try to evaluate what has been achieved, strive to experience, and consider how far their life aligns with the values or expectations they set.

“I often reflect on what I have experienced... questions often swarm around: did I live in a temporary marriage? ... especially when the

temporary marriage was extended and there were children. What was my life goal in temporary marriage?” (S5, SY)

“Whatever happens, for me life is beautiful... I live it with full meaning, even though it is sometimes difficult. However, I often feel tired... but I know this is also part of life that must be endured with sincerity... gratitude is also important.” (S1, JF).

Theme 3: The meaning of life is achieved through a long process. Finding meaning in life is a process, starting from the most painful and heroic experiences, to finding meaning and being happy. The interview findings show that JF admitted to finding the meaning of life through winding experiences. It began with a 2-year temporary marriage with SR, which was then extended to help his business success. JF honestly acknowledged that during the temporary marriage, there were no dreams of success; that the time was full of anxiety and worry; and that a sense of gratitude never crossed her mind. Her thoughts and feelings focused on the aftermath of the temporary marriage, especially when she discovered she was pregnant. Her efforts to make her husband happy were able to soften her feelings and make her think about extending the temporary marriage to a permanent one.

This experience is contrary to that of HS. During her temporary marriage, she found neither material nor spiritual success. She felt deceived by her matchmaker, who had arranged the marriage, and felt she was treated like a domestic servant by her husband while in Hong Kong, being very grateful when she could return to Indonesia.

“Sometimes I remember that time... like a trauma ... it made me unaware of what my life purpose was.” (S3, HS).

Anxiety and distress intensified her daily life and she was often unable to sleep due to feelings of unrest and discomfort. Success for her was when she could return to Indonesia, and only then did she begin her recovery from the trauma she

experienced during her temporary marriage and living in a foreign country. HS needed quite a long time to calm her mind and feelings; only after six years was she able to regain enthusiasm to continue living.

Meaning in life often becomes a prominent theme when humans are pushed into potentially meaningless situations. Some arguments stem from women victims of temporary marriage that they persist in painful conditions. Their belief plays a central role in giving meaning to life by surviving horrific experiences.

“At first, honestly, I was sad... desperate because it didn't match what I expected in terms of getting the money as promised at the beginning.” (S1, JF).

Living a meaningless life sometimes results in despair. IY lost meaning in life in Taiwan and felt she was living an unworthy life as a wife. She was treated like a servant, caring for her husband's parents; working in the fields without pay (claiming to have been bought); and working as a store assistant day and night, with treatment unsuitable for a wife. Feelings of discomfort and turmoil from her experiences made her realise that she needed to persevere and find meaning.

“I felt I could not face those times... but I still had to persevere. So, I tried little by little to understand my life and make it 'beautiful and meaningful'. I implanted that belief and had to believe I could definitely get through.” (S5, SY).

The search for meaning in life can be a significant challenge for any individual. Such meaning for women victims of temporary marriage can develop through self-acceptance, close relationships with others, and improved personal evolution. The process of achieving meaning in life goes through several stages, including a suffering stage, in which women victims of temporary marriage may experience life without meaning, before finally finding true meaning in life. Therefore, in facing testing times, it is important to understand that meaning in life can

be found through close relationships, self-acceptance, and improved personal evolution.

Discussion

This study explores how women who are victims of temporary marriages cope with the events they experience and the associated traumatic conditions, and then find meaning in life and happiness. The findings demonstrate that such women, after being released from their contracts within two years, generally exhibit a moderate level of resilience. It is significant that life problems can be transformed and changed over time into a positive self-image. The study has discovered that the stages of the process differ, and these are discussed in detail in the sub-section below.

1. *Discovery of Meaning in Life through a Process*

The concept of meaning in life holds significant importance for individuals, as noted by Frankl (Frankl, 1992) and Pattakos and Dundon (Pattakos & Dundon, 2017); it is also considered a crucial element of subjective well-being (Shoshani & Russo-Netzer, 2017). This notion is particularly relevant for women who have experienced temporary marriages in Singkawang, Indonesia. The attainment and realization of meaning in life and purpose are closely intertwined, forming essential aspects of human existence. The foundation of such meaning typically commences with an individual's outlook on life and their aspirations, which serve as motivating factors for their continued existence (King & Hicks, 2021). For women affected by temporary marriages, the meaning of life can be discerned throughout their life journey, irrespective of the adversities they encounter. Their sense of purpose often derives from positive experiences, as well as from moments of hardship, when their capacity for introspection, learning and deriving wisdom from their trials becomes evident.

Women who are victims of temporary marriages may derive meaning in life from social experiences and how they confront the inevitable suffering. The women undergo stages similar to those outlined in Bastaman's (2007) theory, which encompasses phases of suffering, self-acceptance, identification of life's purpose, and acknowledgement of a purposeful existence. During the suffering phase, such women may feel powerless within their circumstances and endure both physical and psychological distress, yet they exhibit an attitude of resignation towards their destiny. With time, they may progress towards accepting their predicament, recognizing the positive aspects of life, and ultimately gaining the impetus to strive for improvement and uncover a fulfilling life imbued with contentment.

During the self-acceptance phase, women whose temporary marriages have impacted them are able to come to terms with their personal strengths and weaknesses, and to demonstrate a willingness to engage in ongoing learning. In this phase, they also embrace the belief that their circumstances are guided by divine will and can be altered through spiritual practises and life experiences. As they progress to discovering life's significance, these individuals may identify core values and beneficial attributes that can serve as guiding principles for their aspirations, fostered through creativity, gratitude and a positive mindset. Furthermore, they can learn from past errors and approach challenges in a constructive manner. Upon reaching the stage of recognition of life's purpose, women affected by temporary marriages may exhibit a keen interest in participating in personal or communal activities, displaying dedication to their pursuits such as career advancement or lifestyle enhancement. Finally, in the phase related to leading a purposeful existence, the women may find contentment and tranquillity in cultivating a more fulfilling lifestyle than that in their previous circumstances.

In the process of finding meaning in life for these women, at each stage four typologies of

psychological situations are found: feeling satisfied but not useful; feeling fulfilled but also uncertain; feeling comfortable but meaningless; and feeling happy but not wealthy. The findings of the research have revealed that two years after their temporary marriage

These psychological typologies occur due to the influence of self-reflection, relation and support, lessons learned, adaptation, acceptance of one's status and contributions to others. Each aspect of the psychological typologies is illustrated in Figure 2. The differences in the process of searching for the meaning in life of women who are victims of temporary marriages are influenced by factors such as social support, spirituality in worship, closeness of relationships, positive actions, experiences, and self-motivation.

2. *Acquiring Positive Meaning from Temporary Marriage Experiences*

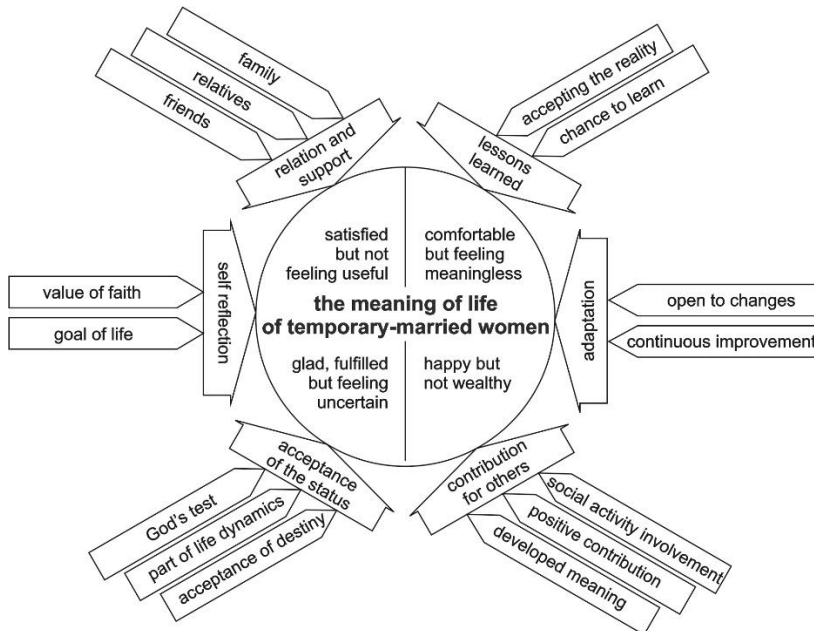
Women who have been impacted by temporary marriages can benefit significantly from a strong sense of life purpose, which influences their self-presentation and interactions with others (Stillman et al., 2011). Although facing challenges within the marriage bond, such women maintain personal values and life aspirations (Brassai et al., 2011).

Scholars have identified three key dimensions through which the concept of life meaning can be understood in this context: coherence, purpose and significance (Martela & Steger, 2016). "Coherence refers to the sense of understanding and meaningfulness in one's life; purpose relates to core objectives and direction; and significance pertains to the inherent value and quality of life" (Martela & Steger, 2016).

Research indicates that the primary factor influencing the perception of meaning in life is the purpose of one's existence. Women demonstrate resilience in establishing personal values despite enduring emotional distress. These values serve

Figure 2

Process of Finding Meaning in Life for Women in Temporary Marriages



as a catalyst for envisioning a better future and are viewed as a source of personal growth and goal orientation. This life event is leveraged to foster a sense of order and connection with one's purpose, aiding in pursuing and attaining one's objectives (Kimble & Ellor, 2001).

Belief and optimism play a crucial role in individuals' quest for meaning in life (Yu & Chang, 2019). Women who have experienced temporary marriages are still able to maintain faith in the meaningfulness of their lives; to set clear objectives; and to nurture positive relationships which contribute to finding purpose and fulfilment. Conversely, those who lose faith in themselves and their aspirations may experience a sense of emptiness. Variations in individuals' interpretations of their experiences, which are influenced by personal traits, life perspectives, and post-marriage pursuits, can explain the differences in achieving life satisfaction and realising their potential. The pursuit of life meaning is perceived as a continuous journey, even for those with relatively fulfilling lives, highlighting the persistent

effort required to discover purpose and motivation (Frankl, 1992).

3. *Live with Positive Activities*

Living a meaningful life is pursued through three paths: what we contribute to life (creative value); what we take from life (appreciating the values of beauty, truth and love); and the attitude we adopt towards the conditions or fate that we can change (Frankl, 1963; Lewis, 2019). Taking action and being creative by engaging in activities can distract from the disappointment of engaging in temporary marriages. This is in line with Ward and King (2017) and Yuen and Yau (2015), who found that meaning in life can be obtained through involvement in social activities, thus creating a sense that one is engaged in something that is valuable to life.

Engaging in various activities and fulfilling tasks with dedication and responsibility has been emphasized as a means of attaining a sense of purpose in life (Pattakos & Dundon, 2017). Demonstrating perseverance and commitment to

tasks signifies a personal contribution and the discovery of life's meaning through meaningful experiences. A positive outlook and enthusiasm for engagement indicate personal investment and the discovery of the significance of life (Pattakos & Dundon, 2017).

Regardless of the pursuit, such as work or engagement in activities after temporary marriages, individuals, particularly women, can derive value from their experiences by reflecting on the lessons learned (Pattakos & Dundon, 2017). Embracing and valuing principles such as truth, virtue, beauty, faith and love can serve as guiding forces in the quest for life's meaning. Individuals who have experienced temporary marriages can find purpose and significance in their lives by internalizing and believing in these values.

Love plays a pivotal role in fostering meaningful experiences for individuals, particularly women who have gone through temporary marriages. Through giving and receiving love, individuals can cultivate a sense of fulfilment and joy in their lives. While the process of loving and being loved may pose challenges for those who have faced trauma from temporary marriages, efforts to overcome these obstacles can lead to the cultivation of love within oneself.

The events experienced by women who are victims of trauma are individual ones that are etched on the mind as fully detailed memories. In contrast, significant traumatic events often provide a psychological shield, a sense of denial, and a feeling of unreality. By employing appropriate coping strategies and utilizing internal resources, together with the support of those around them, those who have experienced traumatic events can achieve mental well-being (Wallin & Ahlström, 2005).

Acts of kindness towards family, children and loved ones, characterized by care, responsibility, respect and understanding serve as expressions of love (Hall & Lindzey, 1985). They become a means

to transition from traumatic events to mental well-being. The potential of love serves as the power of spirituality in managing trauma and fostering well-being and happiness. When individuals face challenging times, religion and spirituality can serve as a solution for overcoming and understanding traumatic experiences (Davis, et al., 2000). Activities such as reflection, prayer and worship serve as coping mechanisms that redirect feelings of trauma into a sense of calm and self-confidence, thus facilitating recovery.

4. *The Winding Path of Life in Discovering Meaning*

A successful marriage can be a dream for women, including those who enter into temporary ones. Aspirations for enhanced economic circumstances represent a shared objective for both parents and women partaking in such unions, albeit with varying degrees of realization. The process of self-actualization unfolds through engagement in various activities such as employment, the food trade, agriculture or animal husbandry, enabling individuals to derive purpose from their endeavors (Pattakos & Dundon, 2017).

The realization of life's meaning is accomplished when individuals can achieve self-actualization and transcend the challenges posed by temporary marriages. Inner peace and solace are acquired through a sense of surrender to God, facilitating a fresh start in life. Gratitude emerges as a key component of the self-actualization process, fostering an awareness of one's authentic life purpose. This discovery aligns with Seligman's (2002) assertion that individuals derive joy from gratitude, resilience and a sense of fulfilment derived from life experiences. Gratitude functions as a coping strategy, enabling individuals to navigate challenges and envision a more promising future.

Attaining contentment by adopting a constructive perspective on life experiences allows

individuals to reframe negative memories through the lens of gratitude (Bryngersdottir & Halldorsdottir, 2022; Lambert et al., 2009). The pursuit of meaning or satisfaction in life is perceived as a means of satisfying the heart, encompassing the enhancement of living standards, social engagement, and diversified interests in the mitigation of feelings of despondency (Harith & Noon, 2012; Kim et al., 2015). In addition, Martela and Steger's (Martela & Steger, 2016) concepts of seeking meaning in life are characterized as individuals' endeavors to establish or enrich their comprehension of life's significance, purpose and value. Women engaged in temporary marriages embark on a quest for exploration of meaning and life satisfaction, as corroborated by previous research (see Heng et al., 2020; Oishi & Westgate, 2022; N. Park et al., 2010; Steger et al., 2011). Individuals who do not actively seek meaning in their lives are prone to lower levels of life satisfaction (Park & Jeong, 2016).

5. *Endurance, Patience, Sincerity and Courage, the Characteristics that Give Meaning to Life*

Women in temporary marriages often face challenges that require endurance, patience and courage in the midst of difficult circumstances. Despite the inherent complexities of these situations, the development of a resilient mindset in navigating deceitful treatments during temporary marriages is attainable. Embracing their role as temporary wives with sincerity is inevitable, and enduring challenges can be a transformative step towards acquiring wisdom. By adopting a high level of interpretation, individuals can effectively manage their attitudes, thereby maintaining significance even in uncomfortable and adverse conditions.

Experiences of temporary marriage often led women to feelings of frustration and a loss of life's purpose when they realize that the arrangements do not align with their aspirations. This realization

can result in existential emptiness, impacting both physical and mental well-being (Frankl, 1963, 1992; Gross et al., 2019; Lewis, 2019). Women in temporary marriages may either conform to societal norms or succumb to external pressures, further exacerbating their sense of emptiness and potentially leading to psychological distress such as boredom, apathy, stress or depression. As noted by Frankl (Frankl, 1963), these psychological symptoms are often rooted in moral and spiritual conflicts.

Individuals in such circumstances often undertake actions to find meaning in their lives through cognitive and emotional growth, despite their prolonged challenges. Discovering significance in their current situation ensures that the potential for meaning remains significant and experiential (Casmini & Supardi, 2020). By uncovering and realizing meaning in the present or future, individuals can even retroactively attribute meaning to past experiences characterized by existential emptiness.

The findings presented in this study support the theory proposed by Westerhof et al. regarding the origins of meaning in life (Reker et al., 1987; Wong, 2011). According to the theory, individuals derive meaning in life from internal sources such as personal traits, character, self-development, achievements, self-acceptance, pleasure, fulfilment and peace. Additionally, the relationship with one's environment, including communal awareness, has been highlighted as a factor that enhances one's ability to discover meaning in life. Furthermore, aspects such as physical well-being, engagement in work activities, and the meeting of basic needs have been identified as contributing factors to the pursuit of meaning, particularly for women engaged in temporary marriages (Wong, 2011).

6. *Interventions in Developing Meaning in Life*

Regarding interventions aimed at fostering meaning in life, it was revealed through the in-

depth interviews that the participants had not received targeted psychological treatment for the challenges faced by them in their unsuccessful temporary marriages. Instead, each individual sought therapy independently to address their physiological and psychological issues. The adverse experiences encountered were leveraged to enrich their sense of purpose in life (Vohs et al., 2019).

Clandestine unions characterize temporary marriages and are often kept confidential due to their lack of legal recognition. Consequently, women involved in temporary marriages may feel compelled to conceal their experiences from society despite the prevalence of such arrangements in Singkawang. These women endure feelings of distress, anxiety and stress in isolation, as they typically lack familial support, given that it is the parents or close relatives who frequently arrange temporary marriages. Consequently, women in temporary marriages navigate, overcome and recover from the challenges associated with such unions independently, seeking solutions on their own.

Individuals experiencing negative thoughts often manifest these as a reflection of their depressed, stressed, anxious or obsessive-depressive state. A negative self-perception can arise from a sense of life losing its significance, exacerbated by environmental factors and challenges, leading to the perception of life as a threat to survival. Trauma and stress are known to contribute to the development of mental and behavioral disorders, impacting both physical and mental well-being (Gross et al., 2019), although the extent of these effects may vary based on an individual's mental resilience and personality traits. Individuals who encounter setbacks or adverse life events that hinder their pursuit of success and happiness may find it challenging to manage stressors effectively.

Stress can be described as a state of tension, a weight felt from all directions, characterized by

perceived pressure when confronted with demands or expectations that exceed one's coping abilities (Nisa & Rahmani, 2022). It is crucial to employ effective coping strategies to navigate through stressful situations. In times of stress, individuals may struggle to cope or implement appropriate strategies to address their challenges. Situations arising during or following temporary marriages can serve as potential stressors, triggering stress responses that may lead to psychological issues and, in severe cases, can compromise the body's resilience, potentially resulting in impulsive actions or suicidal behavior.

Stress management involves the utilization of coping strategies to assist individuals in eliminating, reducing, regulating, or managing the stress they encounter. Coping is crucial in maintaining adaptation when confronted with stress-inducing situations (Figley & McCubbin, 1983; Mahapatro & Singh, 2020). A key challenge in attaining mental tranquility is the endeavor to alter one's mindset. Positive self-talk can be employed to overcome stressful circumstances, foster self-assurance, and establish a conducive atmosphere for favorable outcomes. In certain instances, individuals in temporary marriages resort to self-intervention by enhancing their spirituality through acts of worship. Engaging in reflection and contemplation, devoid of confusion, is also undertaken to transform one's life into a valuable learning experience. Regular reflection and contemplation contribute to heightened positive daily deactivation effects (e.g., relaxation) and the pursuit of life's meaning. Daily contemplation leads to an increased sense of purpose in life the next day (Newman & Nezelek, 2019), which is essential for people to navigate their lives and those of their children in a more organized manner.

The outcomes of this research have practical implications for various parties. They could provide insights to help individuals who have experienced temporary marriages cope with

trauma and find meaning in life. It is suggested that practitioners develop more effective counseling strategies by considering the psychological dynamics of temporary marriage women victims in facing the challenges and conflicts that arise. Furthermore, practitioners could develop more comprehensive psychological assistance programs to help contracted women and their children deal with emerging challenges and conflicts. In everyday life, women who are victims of such marriages can develop social or religious activities to improve their quality of life and achieve well-being. The support network of friends and family should be utilized optimally to increase awareness and knowledge about temporary marriage, so that it does not happen to those who have never experienced either its negative or positive aspects.

A strength of this study is the mixed-method approach, which allowed the researchers to uncover new information that would not have been possible if a single approach had been taken. The limitations of the research include the limited types of sources of information and the number of participants. Recommendations for future research are to conduct in-depth research on the families' surrounding women who are victims of

temporary marriages; for example, their children and parents. It is crucial to design a comprehensive clinical intervention for all 'parties' (i.e., the people) involved. Additionally, it is essential to provide positive affirmation to help victims recover from trauma and reconstruct their lives after temporary marriages.

Conclusion

The findings of the research have revealed that two years after their temporary marriage, the participants were at a moderate level of meaning in life. The purpose of life factor was the most significant component, followed by spirituality, self-acceptance, materialism and difficulties in finding meaning in life. For women who have experienced temporary marriage, finding the meaning of life is a journey of exploration through various challenges and psychological trauma. The process of living fosters self-reflection, leading to learning and wisdom that can serve as interventions through social relationships, worship, close relationships, positive actions, experiences and self-motivation. The study findings suggest that life's trials can have positive implications if one can derive meaning and grow out of traumatic events.[]

Author Contribution Statement

Casmini Casmini: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Methodology; Resources; Validation; Writing Original Draft; Writing, Review & Editing. **Musthofa Musthofa:** Conceptualization; Data Curation; Methodology. **Saptoni Saptoni:** Conceptualization; Project Administration; Validation; Visualization; Writing Original Draft; Writing, Review & Editing. **Moh. Khoerul Anwar:** Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Methodology. **Lugazo Abubakar:** Writing Original Draft; Writing, Review & Editing.

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