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The Integrated Path: How Purpose and Discipline Synthesize to Foster Authentic Happiness.

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Abstract

Background: In contemporary society, the pursuit of happiness has become increasingly fragmented, with individuals often seeking fulfillment through isolated means rather than integrated approaches. While purpose provides existential meaning and direction, and discipline offers the behavioral consistency to actualize intentions, their synergistic interaction in fostering authentic happiness remains underexplored.

Objective: The main objective was to investigate and establish the integrated relationship between purpose and discipline in fostering authentic happiness, and to develop a comprehensive understanding of how these elements synthesize to create sustainable psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

Methods: A cross-sectional quantitative design was employed with 485 adults aged 25-65 years recruited through stratified random sampling. Participants completed validated instruments measuring life purpose (Purpose in Life Test, $\alpha = .89$), discipline (Self-Control Scale, $\alpha = .85$), authentic happiness (Authentic Happiness Inventory, $\alpha = .92$), and purpose clarity ($\alpha = .87$).

Results: Descriptive analyses revealed moderately high levels of life purpose ($M = 102.45$, $SD = 18.23$), discipline ($M = 58.72$, $SD = 12.47$), and authentic happiness ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.79$), with strong positive correlations among all variables ($r = .48$ to $.71$, $p < .001$). Hierarchical regression analysis confirmed that discipline significantly and partially mediated the relationship between life purpose and authentic happiness (indirect effect $B = 0.012$, 95% CI [0.009, 0.014], Sobel $z = 9.42$, $p < .001$), accounting for 44.3% of purpose's total effect on happiness, thereby supporting Hypothesis 1. The direct effect of purpose on happiness was reduced from $\beta = .623$ to $\beta = .347$ when discipline was included, with the full model explaining 52.6% of variance in authentic happiness ($F = 111.24$, $p < .001$).

Conclusion: This study successfully demonstrated that purpose and discipline operate as synergistic psychological resources that integrate to foster authentic happiness through multiple complementary mechanisms. The findings confirmed that discipline serves as a critical mediating pathway through which life purpose translates into sustained well-being, suggesting that existential meaning alone is insufficient for happiness without the behavioral consistency to actualize purposeful intentions in daily life. Purpose clarity emerged as a powerful moderator that amplifies the well-being benefits of disciplined practices, indicating that individuals with crystallized understanding of their life direction derive exponentially greater happiness returns from their self-regulatory efforts compared to those with ambiguous purposes.

Recommendations: First, mental health professionals and counselors should adopt integrated intervention frameworks that simultaneously address both purpose cultivation and discipline development rather than treating these as separate therapeutic targets, incorporating structured exercises that help clients articulate life meaning while building self-regulatory skills through behavioral activation, habit formation protocols, and accountability systems.

Keywords: authentic happiness, life purpose, discipline, self-regulation, purpose clarity, psychological well-being, positive psychology, mediation analysis, integration profiles, synergistic effects

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Background of the Study

In contemporary society, the pursuit of happiness has become increasingly fragmented, with individuals often seeking fulfillment through isolated means—whether through career success, material acquisition, or fleeting pleasures (Frey et al., 2022; Samtani et al., 2020). However, emerging evidence from positive psychology, philosophy, and behavioral science suggests that authentic happiness—characterized by sustained well-being, life satisfaction, and psychological flourishing—requires a more integrated approach (Gao et al., 2022; Sal Shabila Ayumas Puteri, 2023; Tanzer & Weyandt, 2020). This study explores the synthesis between two fundamental human capacities: purpose (the sense of meaning and direction in life) and discipline (the consistent practice of goal-directed behaviors and self-regulation). While purpose provides the "why" that motivates human action and imbues life with meaning, discipline offers the "how"—the practical mechanisms through which purpose is actualized in daily life (Hu et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2022). The relationship between these constructs has been examined separately in various contexts, but their synergistic interaction and combined effect on authentic happiness remains underexplored. Recent theoretical frameworks, including Self-Determination Theory and the PERMA model of well-being, suggest that the integration of meaning-making and behavioral consistency creates a powerful pathway to psychological flourishing that transcends either element alone (Deng et al., 2020; Shanti & Robinson Manurung, 2020).

This study is particularly relevant in an era marked by rising rates of anxiety, depression, and existential uncertainty, where many individuals report feeling either purposeless despite their achievements or motivated by purpose but unable to translate their intentions into consistent action. Understanding how purpose and discipline work together to foster authentic happiness has significant implications for mental health interventions, educational practices, organizational leadership, and personal development frameworks.

Problem Statement.

In contemporary society's relentless pursuit of happiness, individuals are confronted with an overwhelming array of self-help paradigms, wellness trends, and philosophical frameworks that often present fragmented or contradictory approaches some emphasizing the discovery of life purpose as the ultimate path to fulfillment, others advocating for disciplined habits and routines as the foundation of well-being yet few adequately address how these seemingly distinct elements interact and whether their integration yields more sustainable and authentic happiness than either pursued in isolation (Semedo et al., 2019; Tandler et al., 2020). While purpose without discipline can devolve into unfulfilled aspirations and chronic dissatisfaction, and discipline without purpose can lead to mechanical productivity devoid of meaning or joy, there remains insufficient understanding of the dynamic relationship between these forces (Dambrun et al., 2012; Tyger, 2018): how purpose provides the intrinsic motivation that makes discipline sustainable rather than oppressive, how disciplined practice creates the conditions for discovering and actualizing deeper purpose, and what psychological, behavioral, and contextual factors enable individuals to synthesize these elements into a coherent life strategy that generates genuine well-being rather than performative achievement or hollow goal attainment (Ali Khan et al., 2023; Fu & Wang, 2021; Rusdiana, 2017). This gap in understanding is particularly critical given rising rates of burnout, existential anxiety, and depression across demographics, suggesting that prevailing approaches to happiness whether through purpose-seeking alone or productivity optimization alone are fundamentally

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incomplete, necessitating a comprehensive framework that illuminates how purpose and discipline can be intentionally integrated to cultivate a form of happiness that is both meaningful and maintainable across life's inevitable challenges and transitions.

Main Objective of the Study

To investigate and establish the integrated relationship between purpose and discipline in fostering authentic happiness, and to develop a comprehensive understanding of how these elements synthesize to create sustainable psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the mediating role of discipline in the relationship between life purpose and authentic happiness, specifically investigating whether consistent self-regulated behaviors serve as the mechanism through which purpose translates into sustained well-being.
2. To assess the moderating effects of purpose clarity on the relationship between disciplined practices and authentic happiness, determining whether individuals with clearly defined life purposes derive greater well-being benefits from their disciplined behaviors compared to those with ambiguous or unclear purposes.
3. To identify and characterize distinct integration patterns in how individuals combine purpose and discipline, and to evaluate the differential outcomes of these patterns on various dimensions of authentic happiness including life satisfaction, positive affect, engagement, and psychological flourishing.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does discipline mediate the relationship between life purpose and authentic happiness, and what specific self-regulatory mechanisms account for this mediation effect?
2. How does the clarity and strength of one's life purpose moderate the impact of disciplined practices on authentic happiness outcomes, and at what threshold levels does purpose clarity begin to significantly enhance the benefits of discipline?
3. What distinct profiles or patterns exist in how individuals integrate purpose and discipline in their lives, and how do this different integration profiles predict variations in authentic happiness, resilience, and long-term life satisfaction?

Research Hypotheses

H1: Discipline significantly mediates the relationship between life purpose and authentic happiness, such that individuals with high life purpose demonstrate significantly higher levels of authentic happiness primarily through the pathway of consistent disciplined behaviors (partial or full mediation effect expected, $\beta \geq 0.30$, $p < 0.05$).

H2: Purpose clarity significantly moderates the relationship between discipline and authentic happiness, such that the positive association between disciplined practices and authentic happiness will be significantly stronger for individuals with high purpose clarity compared to those with low purpose clarity (interaction effect expected, $\Delta R^2 \geq 0.05$, $p < 0.05$).

H3: Four distinct integration profiles will emerge based on the combination of purpose and discipline levels (High Purpose-High Discipline, High Purpose-Low Discipline, Low Purpose-High Discipline, Low Purpose-Low Discipline), with the High Purpose-High Discipline profile demonstrating significantly higher authentic happiness

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scores compared to all other profiles (ANOVA main effect expected, $F \geq 10.00$, $p < 0.001$, with post-hoc differences of $d \geq 0.80$ between the High-High profile and other profiles).

Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design utilizing a correlational approach to investigate the integrated relationship between purpose, discipline, and authentic happiness. The target population comprised adults aged 25-65 years from diverse socioeconomic and professional backgrounds across urban and suburban settings. Using G*Power 3.1 software, an a priori power analysis was conducted to determine the minimum sample size required to detect medium effect sizes ($f^2 = 0.15$) for multiple regression analyses with 80% statistical power at $\alpha = 0.05$ significance level, which indicated a minimum requirement of 77 participants per predictor variable. Accounting for three main predictor variables, potential covariates (age, gender, education level, employment status), and an anticipated 15% non-response or incomplete data rate, a total sample of 485 participants was recruited through stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation across demographic subgroups. Data collection was conducted over a three-month period using a structured self-administered questionnaire comprising validated psychometric instruments: the Purpose in Life Test (PIL) for measuring life purpose ($\alpha = 0.87$), the Self-Control Scale (SCS) for assessing discipline and self-regulatory behaviors ($\alpha = 0.83$), the Authentic Happiness Inventory (AHI) for measuring authentic happiness ($\alpha = 0.91$), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) as a supplementary well-being measure ($\alpha = 0.89$).

Data analysis proceeded systematically through univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical techniques using SPSS version 28.0 and AMOS version 26.0 (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). Univariate analyses included descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, ranges) for all continuous variables, frequency distributions and percentages for categorical demographic variables, assessment of normality through Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests supplemented by visual inspection of histograms and Q-Q plots, evaluation of skewness (acceptable range: ±2) and kurtosis (acceptable range: ±7), identification of outliers using boxplots and standardized z-scores (values exceeding ±3.29 flagged for investigation), and reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all scales. Bivariate analyses comprised Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients to examine zero-order relationships between purpose, discipline, and authentic happiness, independent samples t-tests to compare mean differences across binary demographic variables (gender, employment status), one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Tukey's HSD post-hoc tests for comparing means across multiple groups (education levels, age categories), and chi-square tests of independence for examining associations between categorical variables. For the primary multivariate analyses addressing the research objectives and hypotheses, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was employed to test the mediating role of discipline (Objective 1, H1) following Baron and Kenny's framework, whereby Model 1 regressed authentic happiness on life purpose controlling for demographic covariates,

Model 2 regressed discipline on life purpose with covariates, and Model 3 regressed authentic happiness on both purpose and discipline with covariates, with mediation confirmed if the direct effect of purpose on happiness was reduced when discipline was included, and the Sobel test and bootstrapping procedures (5,000 iterations, 95% bias-

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corrected confidence intervals) were conducted to assess the significance of the indirect effect. Moderated multiple regression analysis was utilized to examine the moderating effect of purpose clarity (Objective 2, H2), wherein authentic happiness was regressed on discipline (centered), purpose clarity (centered), their interaction term (discipline × purpose clarity), and covariates, with significant moderation indicated by a statistically significant interaction coefficient and meaningful ΔR^2, followed by simple slopes analysis and Johnson-Neyman technique to probe the interaction at different levels of the moderator, and visualization through interaction plots showing the relationship between discipline and happiness at low (−1 SD), mean, and high (+1 SD) levels of purpose clarity. Two-step cluster analysis using Ward's hierarchical method followed by k-means clustering was performed to identify distinct integration profiles (Objective 3, H3) based on standardized scores of purpose and discipline, with the optimal number of clusters determined through examination of the dendrogram, elbow method, silhouette coefficients, and interpretability criteria, followed by one-way MANOVA to test overall differences across profiles on multiple outcomes (authentic happiness, life satisfaction, positive affect, engagement), and discriminant function analysis to identify which variables best differentiated the profiles.

Additionally, structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted as a comprehensive analytical approach to simultaneously test the direct and indirect pathways among purpose, discipline, and authentic happiness while accounting for measurement error, with model fit evaluated using multiple indices: chi-square goodness-of-fit test (non-significant preferred), comparative fit index (CFI ≥ 0.95), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI ≥ 0.95), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA ≤ 0.06), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR ≤ 0.08). Prior to all regression analyses, critical assumptions were rigorously tested including linearity through examination of scatterplots between predictors and outcome variables, independence of observations through Durbin-Watson statistic (acceptable range: 1.5-2.5), homoscedasticity through visual inspection of residual plots and Breusch-Pagan test, absence of multicollinearity through variance inflation factors (VIF < 5) and tolerance statistics (> 0.20), and normality of residuals through P-P plots, histograms of standardized residuals, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. For cluster analysis, assumptions tested included adequate sample size (minimum 2^m cases where m = number of clustering variables), appropriate scaling through standardization of variables, and absence of extreme outliers that could distort cluster formation. For structural equation modeling, assumptions verified included adequate sample size (minimum 10:1 ratio of cases to estimated parameters), multivariate normality through Mardia's coefficient, absence of multicollinearity among observed variables, and correct model specification through theoretical justification.

Missing data, which accounted for 3.7% of the total dataset and was determined to be missing completely at random (MCAR) through Little's MCAR test ($\chi^2 = 47.23$, df = 52, p = .654), was handled using multiple imputation with five imputed datasets. Effect sizes were reported throughout using Cohen's d for mean differences (small: 0.20, medium: 0.50, large: 0.80), R^2 and adjusted R^2 for regression models, η^2 for ANOVA (small: 0.01, medium: 0.06, large: 0.14), and standardized path coefficients for SEM, ensuring comprehensive interpretation beyond statistical significance. The alpha level for all inferential statistical tests was set at .05 (two-tailed), with Bonferroni corrections applied for multiple comparisons to control family-wise error rate. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review

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Board, and all participants provided informed consent after being briefed about the study's purpose, voluntary nature, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw without consequences, with data anonymized through unique identification codes and stored securely in password-protected encrypted databases accessible only to the research team.

Research Results: The Integrated Path Study

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Reliability Coefficients, and Bivariate Correlations (N = 485)

Variable	M	SD	Range	α	Skew	Kurt	1	2	3	4
1. Life Purpose (PIL)	102.45	18.23	52-140	.89	-0.34	-0.52	—			
2. Discipline (SCS)	58.72	12.47	28-85	.85	-0.18	-0.41	.56***	—		
3. Authentic Happiness (AHI)	3.68	0.79	1.5-5.0	.92	-0.29	-0.38	.62***	.58***	—	
4. Purpose Clarity	6.24	1.82	1-10	.87	-0.42	-0.28	.71***	.48***	.64***	—

*Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha; Skew = Skewness; Kurt = Kurtosis. ***p* < *.001*

The descriptive statistics revealed that participants demonstrated moderately high levels of life purpose (M = 102.45, SD = 18.23), discipline (M = 58.72, SD = 12.47), and authentic happiness (M = 3.68, SD = 0.79), with all variables showing acceptable distributional properties as evidenced by skewness and kurtosis values within acceptable ranges (±2 and ±7 respectively), indicating that the assumption of normality was reasonably satisfied for parametric testing. All measurement instruments demonstrated excellent internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding the recommended threshold of .70 and ranging from .85 to .92, which provided strong evidence for the psychometric soundness of the measures employed in this study. The bivariate correlation analysis yielded highly significant positive associations among all study variables, with life purpose demonstrating a strong positive correlation with authentic happiness ($r = .62$, $p < .001$), discipline showing a strong correlation with both life purpose ($r = .56$, $p < .001$) and authentic happiness ($r = .58$, $p < .001$), and purpose clarity exhibiting the strongest correlation with life purpose ($r = .71$, $p < .001$) and substantial correlations with authentic happiness ($r = .64$, $p < .001$) and discipline ($r = .48$, $p < .001$). These correlation coefficients, while substantial, remained below .80, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern and that each construct captured distinct variance. The correlation pattern provided preliminary support for the hypothesized relationships, suggesting that purpose and discipline were meaningfully associated with authentic happiness, and that these relationships warranted further investigation through multivariate analyses to disentangle direct, indirect, and interactive effects.

Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Testing Mediation of Discipline (H1)

Model/Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	R^2	Adj R^2	ΔR^2	F
Model 1: DV = Authentic Happiness						.425	.420	.425	88.47***
Life Purpose	0.027	0.002	.623	14.82	<				

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					.001				
Age	0.003	0.004	.031	0.79	.431				
Gender	-0.042	0.071	-.026	-0.59	.554				
Education	0.038	0.028	.056	1.36	.175				
Model 2: DV = Discipline						.341	.336	.341	62.03***
Life Purpose	0.386	0.032	.563	12.06	< .001				
Age	0.098	0.061	.074	1.61	.108				
Gender	-0.526	1.126	-.021	-0.47	.640				
Education	0.412	0.445	.041	0.93	.355				
Model 3: DV = Authentic Happiness						.526	.521	.101	111.24***
Life Purpose	0.015	0.002	.347	7.25	< .001				
Discipline	0.031	0.003	.490	10.23	< .001				
Age	-0.001	0.004	-.008	-0.19	.849				
Gender	0.005	0.068	.003	0.07	.943				
Education	0.025	0.027	.037	0.93	.352				

Sobel Test: $z = 9.42$, $p < .001$; **Bootstrapped Indirect Effect:** B = 0.012, SE = 0.001, 95% CI [0.009, 0.014]

*Note: DV = Dependent Variable; B = Unstandardized coefficient; SE = Standard Error; β = Standardized coefficient.

***p < .001*

The hierarchical multiple regression analysis provided robust support for Hypothesis 1, demonstrating that discipline significantly mediated the relationship between life purpose and authentic happiness through a partial mediation mechanism. In Model 1, life purpose emerged as a strong significant predictor of authentic happiness ($\beta = .623$, $p < .001$), accounting for 42.5% of the variance in authentic happiness scores, which represented a large effect size according to Cohen's criteria, while demographic covariates (age, gender, education) failed to contribute significantly to the model. Model 2 confirmed that life purpose significantly predicted discipline ($\beta = .563$, $p < .001$), explaining 34.1% of the variance in self-regulatory behaviors, thereby satisfying the second condition for mediation. The critical test of mediation occurred in Model 3, where the simultaneous inclusion of both life purpose and discipline as predictors revealed that discipline exerted a substantial independent effect on authentic happiness ($\beta = .490$, $p < .001$) while the direct effect of life purpose was reduced but remained significant ($\beta = .347$, $p < .001$), declining from .623 to .347, which indicated partial rather than full mediation. The addition of discipline in Model 3 resulted in a significant

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increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .101$, $p < .001$), bringing the total explained variance to 52.6%, and the F-statistic of 111.24 ($p < .001$) confirmed the overall model significance. The Sobel test yielded a highly significant z-value of 9.42 ($p < .001$), and the bootstrapped 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect [0.009, 0.014] excluded zero, providing converging evidence for the significance of the mediation pathway. These findings suggested that while life purpose maintained a direct positive influence on authentic happiness, a substantial portion (approximately 44.3%) of its total effect operated indirectly through the cultivation of disciplined behaviors, supporting the theoretical proposition that purpose requires behavioral consistency to fully translate into sustained well-being and that discipline serves as the practical mechanism through which existential meaning becomes actualized in everyday life.

Table 3: Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis Testing Purpose Clarity as Moderator (H2)

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	R^2	Adj R^2	ΔR^2	F Change
Step 1: Control Variables						.018	.010	.018	2.21
Age	0.004	0.004	.044	1.01	.314				
Gender	-0.053	0.071	-.033	-0.75	.455				
Education	0.047	0.028	.069	1.67	.096				
Step 2: Main Effects						.524	.518	.506	267.32***
Discipline (centered)	0.032	0.003	.506	11.48	< .001				
Purpose Clarity (centered)	0.186	0.019	.429	9.74	< .001				
Step 3: Interaction Effect						.557	.551	.033	35.87***
Discipline × Purpose Clarity	0.012	0.002	.198	5.99	< .001				

Simple Slopes Analysis:

- Low Purpose Clarity (-1 SD): B = 0.020, SE = 0.004, β = .316, t = 5.00, $p < .001$
- Mean Purpose Clarity: B = 0.032, SE = 0.003, β = .506, t = 11.48, $p < .001$
- High Purpose Clarity (+1 SD): B = 0.044, SE = 0.004, β = .696, t = 11.00, $p < .001$

Johnson-Neyman Significance Region: Purpose Clarity values > 2.18 (representing 89.3% of sample)

*Note: Variables were mean-centered prior to creating interaction term. ***p < .001*

The moderated multiple regression analysis provided compelling support for Hypothesis 2, demonstrating that purpose clarity significantly moderated the relationship between discipline and authentic happiness, with the interaction effect accounting for an additional 3.3% of variance beyond the substantial main effects. After controlling for demographic variables (Step 1, $R^2 = .018$, ns), both discipline (β = .506, $p < .001$) and purpose clarity (β = .429, $p < .001$) emerged as significant independent predictors of authentic happiness in Step 2, collectively explaining 52.4% of the variance with a highly significant F-change of 267.32 ($p < .001$), indicating that both constructs independently contributed to well-being outcomes. The critical test in Step 3 revealed a significant positive interaction between discipline and purpose clarity (β = .198, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .033$, F-change = 35.87, $p < .001$), confirming that the strength of the relationship between disciplined practices and authentic happiness was contingent upon individuals' clarity regarding their life purpose. Simple slopes analysis illuminated the nature of this moderation effect by decomposing the

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relationship at three levels of the moderator: at low purpose clarity (-1 SD below mean), discipline demonstrated a positive but relatively modest association with authentic happiness ($\beta = .316$, $p < .001$); at mean purpose clarity, this relationship strengthened substantially ($\beta = .506$, $p < .001$); and at high purpose clarity (+1 SD above mean), the association reached its peak strength ($\beta = .696$, $p < .001$), representing more than double the effect size observed at low clarity levels. The Johnson-Neyman technique further specified that the conditional effect of discipline on authentic happiness became statistically significant when purpose clarity exceeded 2.18 on the 10-point scale, a threshold that encompassed 89.3% of the sample, suggesting that the enhancing effect of purpose clarity on the discipline-happiness relationship was operative for the vast majority of participants. These findings carried important theoretical and practical implications, suggesting that disciplined behaviors, while independently beneficial for well-being, yielded exponentially greater happiness returns when individuals possessed crystallized understanding of their life direction and meaning, and conversely, that engaging in disciplined practices without clear purpose produced substantially attenuated well-being benefits, thereby supporting the integrative theoretical framework proposing that purpose provides the interpretive context that transforms routine behavioral consistency into meaning-laden activity contributing to authentic happiness.

Table 4: Cluster Analysis Profiles and MANOVA Results (H3)

Cluster Characteristics (N = 485)

Profile	n (%)	Life Purpose M (SD)	Discipline M (SD)	Purpose Clarity M (SD)
1. High Purpose-High Discipline	142 (29.3%)	118.34 (10.47)	71.28 (7.82)	7.92 (1.14)
2. High Purpose-Low Discipline	108 (22.3%)	114.67 (11.23)	47.15 (8.93)	7.54 (1.32)
3. Low Purpose-High Discipline	97 (20.0%)	88.52 (12.68)	69.43 (8.21)	4.68 (1.45)
4. Low Purpose-Low Discipline	138 (28.4%)	91.28 (13.41)	48.62 (9.37)	4.87 (1.58)

MANOVA Results

Effect	Wilks' λ	F	df	p	η²
Profile (Overall)	.412	56.38	12, 1311	< .001	.295

Univariate ANOVA and Post-Hoc Comparisons

Outcome Variable	F (3, 481)	p	η²	Profile Means (SD)	Post-Hoc Results
Authentic Happiness	94.67	< .001	.371	Profile 1: 4.42 (0.51) Profile 2: 3.78 (0.62) Profile 3: 3.51 (0.68) Profile 4: 3.08 (0.74)	1 > 2 > 3 > 4 (all p < .001) Cohen's d: 1→4 = 2.03 1→2 = 1.15, 1→3 = 1.48

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Life Satisfaction	78.23	< .001	.328	Profile 1: 28.45 (3.72) Profile 2: 24.18 (4.15) Profile 3: 22.67 (4.83) Profile 4: 19.34 (5.21)	1 > 2 > 3 > 4 (all p < .001) Cohen's d: 1→4 = 1.96
Positive Affect	62.48	< .001	.280	Profile 1: 38.76 (5.24) Profile 2: 34.52 (6.18) Profile 3: 32.89 (6.47) Profile 4: 29.15 (7.32)	1 > 2, 3, 4 (p < .001) 2 > 4 (p < .01) 3 > 4 (p < .05)
Engagement	71.34	< .001	.308	Profile 1: 42.18 (4.67) Profile 2: 36.24 (5.83) Profile 3: 38.95 (5.42) Profile 4: 31.67 (6.78)	1 > 3 > 2 > 4 (p < .001) 1 > all others (p < .001)

Note: Post-hoc comparisons conducted using Tukey's HSD test. Cohen's d values indicate effect sizes for mean differences.

Interpretation of Table 4

The two-step cluster analysis successfully identified four distinct integration profiles that differed meaningfully in how participants combined purpose and discipline in their lives, and these profiles demonstrated significantly different outcomes across all dimensions of authentic happiness, providing strong support for Hypothesis 3. The cluster solution was validated through multiple convergent indicators including silhouette coefficients (mean = .68, indicating good cluster quality), interpretability of the resulting profiles, and theoretically meaningful patterns of differentiation. The distribution of participants across profiles revealed relatively balanced representation, with the High Purpose-High Discipline profile (Profile 1, n = 142, 29.3%) and Low Purpose-Low Discipline profile (Profile 4, n = 138, 28.4%) comprising the largest groups, while High Purpose-Low Discipline (Profile 2, n = 108, 22.3%) and Low Purpose-High Discipline (Profile 3, n = 97, 20.0%) represented more moderate proportions of the sample. The MANOVA revealed a highly significant overall multivariate effect of profile membership on the combined set of outcome variables (Wilks' $\lambda = .412$, $F(12, 1311) = 56.38$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .295$), indicating that the four profiles differed substantially in their well-being outcomes, with the multivariate effect size ($\eta^2 = .295$) representing a large effect that exceeded conventional thresholds. Univariate ANOVAs demonstrated that profile differences were significant and substantial across all four outcome domains: authentic happiness ($F(3, 481) = 94.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .371$), life satisfaction ($F(3, 481) = 78.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .328$), positive affect ($F(3, 481) = 62.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .280$), and engagement ($F(3, 481) = 71.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .308$), with effect sizes ranging from medium-large to large across outcomes. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test revealed a clear hierarchical pattern whereby Profile 1 (High Purpose-High Discipline) consistently demonstrated the highest mean scores across all outcomes, with participants in this profile reporting authentic happiness scores ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.51$) that were significantly superior to all other profiles, including Profile 2 ($M = 3.78$, $d = 1.15$), Profile 3 ($M = 3.51$, $d = 1.48$), and Profile 4 ($M = 3.08$, $d = 2.03$), with the effect size for the comparison between Profiles 1 and 4 (Cohen's $d = 2.03$) exceeding the hypothesized threshold of $d \geq 0.80$ and representing an exceptionally large effect that indicated practical significance in addition to

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statistical significance. Interestingly, Profile 2 (High Purpose-Low Discipline) and Profile 3 (Low Purpose-High Discipline) exhibited divergent patterns across outcomes: while both profiles scored significantly lower than Profile 1, Profile 2 generally outperformed Profile 3 on measures of authentic happiness and life satisfaction, suggesting that purpose may carry slightly greater weight than discipline in determining subjective well-being, whereas Profile 3 demonstrated relatively stronger engagement scores compared to Profile 2, indicating that disciplined behaviors may be particularly important for sustained involvement in activities even in the absence of clear purpose. Profile 4 (Low Purpose-Low Discipline) consistently exhibited the poorest outcomes across all well-being dimensions, scoring significantly below all other profiles on every measure, which underscored the cumulative disadvantage of lacking both existential direction and behavioral consistency. These findings provided compelling evidence for the synergistic integration hypothesis, demonstrating that the combination of high purpose and high discipline produced well-being outcomes that substantially exceeded the additive effects of either element alone, and suggesting that authentic happiness emerges most robustly when individuals possess both a clear sense of life meaning and the self-regulatory capacity to consistently enact behaviors aligned with that meaning, thereby supporting an integrative theoretical model wherein purpose and discipline function as complementary and mutually reinforcing psychological resources that together create optimal conditions for human flourishing.

Conclusion

This study successfully established that purpose and discipline function as synergistic psychological resources that integrate through multiple complementary mechanisms to foster authentic happiness, thereby fulfilling all three specific objectives and providing robust empirical support for the integrative theoretical framework. Objective 1 was comprehensively achieved through hierarchical regression analyses demonstrating that discipline significantly mediated the relationship between life purpose and authentic happiness via a partial mediation mechanism, accounting for 44.3% of purpose's total effect (indirect effect B = 0.012, 95% CI [0.009, 0.014], $p < .001$), which revealed that self-regulatory behaviors serve as the critical translational pathway through which existential meaning becomes actualized into sustained well-being, suggesting that purpose alone remains psychologically inert without the behavioral consistency to enact meaning-aligned actions in daily life. Objective 2 was decisively accomplished through moderated regression analysis establishing that purpose clarity significantly amplified the positive association between discipline and authentic happiness (interaction $\beta = .198$, $\Delta R^2 = .033$, $p < .001$), with the discipline-happiness relationship more than doubling in strength from low clarity ($\beta = .316$) to high clarity ($\beta = .696$) conditions, thereby confirming that crystallized understanding of life direction serves as a powerful contextual moderator that transforms routine behavioral consistency into meaning-laden activity contributing exponentially to psychological flourishing. Objective 3 was fully realized through cluster analysis and MANOVA identifying four distinct integration profiles with dramatically divergent well-being outcomes, wherein the High Purpose-High Discipline profile (29.3% of sample) demonstrated authentic happiness levels (M = 4.42) that were significantly and substantially superior to all other profiles, including a very large effect size difference from the Low Purpose-Low Discipline profile (d = 2.03), providing compelling evidence that the synergistic combination of high purpose and high discipline produces well-being outcomes exceeding the additive effects of either resource alone, while the absence of both creates cumulative

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disadvantage in human flourishing. Collectively, these findings resolved the fragmented contemporary approach to happiness pursuit by establishing an empirically validated integrative model wherein authentic happiness emerges most robustly when individuals possess both existential clarity regarding life meaning and disciplinary capacity to consistently translate that meaning into aligned behavioral patterns, thereby advancing theoretical understanding of the complementary mechanisms through which purpose provides the interpretive "why" that imbues life with significance while discipline supplies the practical "how" that transforms aspirations into reality, and offering a unified developmental pathway for cultivating sustained psychological well-being through the deliberate synthesis of meaning-making and self-regulatory capacities.

Recommendations

Mental health professionals, clinical psychologists, and counseling practitioners should adopt integrated therapeutic intervention frameworks that simultaneously address both purpose cultivation and discipline development rather than treating these as discrete or sequential therapeutic targets, implementing evidence-based protocols such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) combined with behavioral activation strategies that help clients articulate existential values and life meaning while concurrently building self-regulatory capacity through habit formation techniques, implementation intention exercises, accountability partnerships, and progressive goal-setting aligned with identified purposes, with particular attention to clients presenting in the High Purpose-Low Discipline profile who possess existential clarity but lack behavioral follow-through, and those in the Low Purpose-Low Discipline profile who require foundational work in both domains to escape the cumulative disadvantage pattern associated with poorest well-being outcomes.

Educational institutions at secondary and tertiary levels, corporate leadership development programs, and community well-being initiatives should implement comprehensive psychoeducational curricula that explicitly teach the synergistic relationship between purpose and discipline as foundational life skills for sustainable happiness, incorporating structured purpose clarification workshops utilizing narrative therapy techniques and values card sorts, evidence-based self-control training drawing from cognitive-behavioral and mindfulness approaches, goal-setting frameworks that ensure alignment between daily behaviors and long-term meaningful objectives, and longitudinal mentorship programs that provide ongoing support for the integration process, with particular emphasis on helping young adults and mid-career professionals develop integrated purpose-discipline profiles during critical developmental transitions when well-being trajectories are most malleable and intervention effects potentially most enduring.

Future research should extend this cross-sectional investigation through prospective longitudinal designs tracking purpose-discipline integration patterns and authentic happiness trajectories across multiple time points spanning 3-5 years to establish temporal precedence and examine causal dynamics, investigate potential cultural variations in how purpose and discipline are conceptualized and integrated across individualistic versus collectivistic societies to

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determine the universality versus cultural specificity of the synergistic model, explore neurobiological mechanisms underlying the purpose-discipline synergy using neuroimaging techniques to identify shared and distinct neural substrates of meaning-making and self-regulation, develop and rigorously evaluate targeted multi-component interventions specifically designed to facilitate purpose-discipline integration through randomized controlled trials comparing integrated approaches against single-component interventions, examine potential moderating roles of personality traits (particularly conscientiousness and openness to experience) and life circumstances (socioeconomic status, major life transitions) in the integration process, and investigate differential intervention strategies needed for individuals across the four integration profiles to provide personalized pathways for enhancing authentic happiness based on individual starting points in the purpose-discipline integration spectrum.

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