

The Mediating Role of Hope in the Relationship Between Meaning in Life and Subjective Well-Being Among Visually Impaired Individuals in Malaysia: Controlling for Disability-Related Characteristics

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Abstract

Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to individuals' cognitive and emotional evaluations of their lives, including life satisfaction and affective experiences. Although increasing attention has been given to psychological well-being, limited studies have examined the relationship between meaning in life and SWB, as well as the mediating role of hope among persons with visual impairment particularly within the Malaysian context. Furthermore, disability-related characteristics may influence psychological adjustment and well-being outcomes, yet these factors remain underexplored in existing studies. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the mediating role of hope in the relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals in Malaysia while controlling for selected disability-related characteristics. A cross-sectional quantitative design was employed involving 144 participants recruited from the Society of Blind Malaysia (SBM) and the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB). Meaning in life was measured using the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), hope was assessed using the Adult Hope Scale (AHS), and subjective well-being was measured using a multidimensional well-being instrument adapted from established quality of life and psychological well-being measures. Data were analyzed using correlation analysis and Hayes' PROCESS Macro mediation analysis with disability-related covariates incorporated into the model. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being ($p < .05$). Hope partially mediated the relationship between meaning in life and SWB, indicating that individuals with greater perceived life meaning tended to report higher levels of hope, which subsequently contributed to enhanced well-being. In addition, among the covariates examined, onset and category of blindness significantly predicted subjective well-being, whereas working status was not significant. The findings suggest that both psychological resources and disability-related characteristics contribute to subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals. This study contributes to positive psychology and disability research by extending understanding of psychological well-being within the Malaysian visual impairment context. The findings suggest that interventions focusing on hope enhancement, meaning-centered support, and psychological resilience may help improve overall well-being and quality of life among visually impaired individuals.

Keywords: Hope, Meaningful of life, Subjective Well-Being, Visual Impairment, Mediation analysis, Disability-Related Covariates, Malaysia

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1. Introduction

Subjective well-being (SWB) has become an essential concept in social sciences in evaluating the quality of life. Existing literature suggests that subjective well-being is multidimensional and influenced by various psychological, social, cultural, and environmental factors that affect individuals' perceptions of happiness, meaning, and life satisfaction (Diener et al., 2018; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Wider et al., 2022). The importance of happiness in human life is widely acknowledged, as individuals often prioritize happiness even above health, wealth, and social status (Baruah, 2024). The pursuit of a "good life," characterized by happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction, has long been a subject of

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philosophical and psychological inquiry. Aristotle, for example, argued that true happiness is not merely the pursuit of pleasure but the realization of one's potential and meaningful engagement with life (Baruah, 2024).

In the field of psychology, SWB gained prominence through the work of Diener (1984), who introduced the tripartite model explaining how individuals evaluate their lives through both cognitive judgments and emotional experiences. According to this model, SWB consists of three main components: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect (Diener, 2000). Life satisfaction represents the cognitive evaluation of one's overall life, while positive and negative affect reflect the emotional experiences associated with daily life events. Together, these components provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals perceive their well-being. SWB is therefore recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing individuals' evaluations across several life domains such as relationships, work, health, and personal meaning (Diener & Ryan, 2009). Individuals who report high life satisfaction, frequent positive emotions, and fewer negative emotions are generally considered to have higher levels of SWB (Diener et al., 2002). Lucas et al. (1996) further emphasized that these three components should be examined independently because the presence of positive emotions does not necessarily imply the absence of negative emotions.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines well-being as a positive resource that contributes to healthy and productive living (Sahai & Mahapatra, 2020; Kim, 2012). As a result, SWB has increasingly been used as an indicator for assessing the quality of life of individuals and populations. In addition to economic indicators, governments and policymakers have begun to recognize SWB as an important measure for evaluating societal progress and national development (Baruah, 2024). Despite the growing attention to SWB, differences in cultural values, social expectations, and living conditions continue to influence how individuals perceive happiness and life satisfaction across countries. One psychological factor that has been closely associated with SWB is meaning in life. Meaning in life refers to "the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one's being and existence" (Li, Dou, & Liang, 2021). It reflects the extent to which individuals perceive their lives as purposeful, coherent, and worthwhile. Previous research suggests that meaning in life plays a critical role in promoting psychological well-being and happiness (Morgan & Farsides, 2009). Meaning in life is commonly conceptualized as comprising two dimensions: the presence of meaning (POM) and the search for meaning (SFM) (Li, Dou, & Liang, 2020). Presence of meaning refers to the extent to which individuals perceive their lives as meaningful, whereas search for meaning represents the ongoing effort to find or enhance meaning in life. Both dimensions are believed to contribute to individuals' overall psychological functioning and well-being.

Several empirical studies have demonstrated that meaning in life is positively associated with SWB. For example, Yalçın and Malkoç (2015) found that individuals with higher levels of meaning in life tend to report higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction. Similarly, Santos et al. (2012) highlighted that individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful are more likely to experience greater work enjoyment, stronger life satisfaction, and higher levels of happiness. Meaning in life also serves as an important psychological resource that helps individuals cope with life challenges and maintain a positive outlook during difficult circumstances. These findings suggest that individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful are more likely to experience greater SWB. Another psychological factor closely related to SWB is hope. Hope has been identified as a crucial motivational and cognitive resource that influences individuals' ability to pursue goals and maintain optimism in the face of adversity. According to Snyder et al. (1991), hope consists of two key components: agency thinking and pathway thinking. Agency thinking refers to the motivational aspect of hope, reflecting an individual's determination and confidence to initiate and sustain goal-directed actions. Pathway thinking, on the other hand, refers to an individual's perceived ability to generate strategies or pathways to achieve desired goals. Together, these components form a cognitive framework that enables individuals to remain motivated and resilient when facing obstacles.

Empirical evidence suggests that hope plays a significant role in enhancing SWB. Alarcon, Bowling, and Khazon (2013) reported a strong positive relationship between hope and various indicators of well-being, including life satisfaction and psychological resilience. Hope is also associated with individuals' ability to cope with stress and adversity, making it an important factor for promoting positive psychological outcomes (Tran et al., 2024). In recent years, scholars have increasingly recognized hope as a critical component of well-being, as it influences individuals' expectations for the future and their capacity to achieve meaningful goals (Graham, 2024). Unlike simple optimism, hope combines positive expectations with the belief that individuals have the capability to influence outcomes through effort and planning. The importance of SWB becomes particularly evident when examining vulnerable populations, such as individuals with visual impairments. Visual impairment refers to a significant reduction in vision that cannot be corrected through conventional means such as glasses or contact lenses. According to the World Health Organization (2014), visual impairment is categorized into four levels: normal vision, moderate visual impairment, severe visual

impairment, and blindness. Globally, approximately 39 million individuals are blind, while an additional 246 million people experience low vision (WHO, 2023).

In Malaysia, the Department of Statistics Malaysia reported that 59,072 individuals were registered as visually impaired as of December 2023, highlighting the growing importance of addressing the well-being of this population. Visual impairment often extends beyond physical limitations and may lead to psychological and social challenges. Individuals with visual impairments frequently encounter barriers in education, employment, and social participation, which can negatively affect their overall quality of life. Previous research indicates that visually impaired individuals are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and reduced life satisfaction compared to individuals without disabilities (Noran et al., 2009; Reddy & Thevi, 2017). These challenges are further compounded by limited employment opportunities and societal misconceptions about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities. In Malaysia, the cultural emphasis on social relationships and community expectations may also influence how individuals with visual impairments perceive their roles and contributions within society. Despite the increasing attention to disability and well-being, research examining the psychological well-being of visually impaired individuals in Malaysia remains limited. Most existing studies focus primarily on physical rehabilitation, accessibility, and employment issues, while relatively little attention has been given to psychological constructs such as meaning in life and hope. Furthermore, there is currently no comprehensive measure specifically designed to monitor SWB among visually impaired individuals in Malaysia. This lack of empirical evidence limits the ability of policymakers and practitioners to develop effective psychological support programs for this population.

In addition, while previous studies have explored the relationships between meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being (SWB), limited research has examined how these variables interact within the context of visual impairment. In particular, the potential mediating role of hope in explaining the relationship between meaning in life and SWB has received limited attention within the Malaysian context. Understanding this relationship is important because hope may function as a psychological mechanism that enables individuals with visual impairments to translate a sense of life meaning into greater well-being and psychological resilience.

Previous studies suggest that subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals may also be influenced by disability-related characteristics such as onset of vision loss, severity of visual impairment, and employment experiences. These factors may shape individuals' adaptation processes, psychosocial functioning, and overall well-being outcomes, and therefore warrant consideration as potential covariates in examining psychological adjustment among visually impaired populations. Based on the existing literature and theoretical foundations of positive psychology, it is hypothesized that meaning in life is positively associated with hope and subjective well-being, while hope is positively associated with subjective well-being. Furthermore, hope is expected to mediate the relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals. Given the potential influence of disability-related experiences on psychological functioning, the present study additionally accounts for selected disability characteristics to provide a more comprehensive understanding of subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationships among meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals in Malaysia, while controlling for selected disability-related characteristics including onset of blindness, category of blindness, and working status. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether hope mediates the relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being after accounting for these contextual factors. This study contributes to the growing body of literature in several ways. First, it extends positive psychology and disability research by examining the psychological mechanisms underlying subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals. Second, it provides empirical evidence from Malaysia, a context that remains underrepresented in disability and psychological well-being research. Third, by incorporating disability-related characteristics into the mediation model, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of how psychological and contextual factors jointly contribute to subjective well-being. Finally, the findings provide useful implications for policymakers, educators, rehabilitation centres, and support organizations in developing psychologically informed interventions aimed at improving the quality of life among visually impaired communities.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Subjective Well-Being and Meaning in Life among Individuals with Visual Impairments

Subjective well-being (SWB) is conceptualized as individuals' cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives, encompassing life satisfaction, the presence of positive affect, and the relative absence of negative affect (Diener et al.,

1985). Importantly, SWB is conceptually distinct from quality of life (QoL). While QoL frameworks such as the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) emphasize multidimensional life conditions including physical health, environment, and social functioning, SWB focuses more narrowly on individuals' internal psychological evaluations and emotional experiences. Clarifying this distinction is critical, particularly in disability research, where functional limitations are often conflated with psychological well-being. Empirical evidence consistently indicates that individuals with visual impairments report lower levels of SWB compared to their sighted counterparts, largely due to social isolation, dependency, environmental inaccessibility, and stigma (Wong, 2019). These challenges extend beyond physical impairment and directly affect emotional and cognitive evaluations of life. Within this context, meaning in life emerges as a crucial psychological resource. Meaning in life refers to the extent to which individuals perceive their lives as purposeful, coherent, and significant (Frankl, 1963).

Research has demonstrated that individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful report higher levels of life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Steger et al., 2008). Beyond hedonic evaluations, meaning in life represents a eudaimonic dimension of well-being that contributes to long-term psychological health, resilience, and adaptive functioning, rather than merely momentary happiness (Ryff & Singer, 1998). Among visually impaired individuals, meaning in life may play an especially important role in sustaining SWB, as vision loss often disrupts personal goals, social roles, and identity. Malaysian evidence further supports this association. Abdullah Bandar et al. (2014) found that psychological factors including spirituality, social relationships, and the ability to derive meaning in adversity were significant contributors to SWB among visually impaired individuals in Malaysia. These findings suggest that SWB in this population cannot be adequately understood through functional or material indicators alone, underscoring the need to examine deeper existential and psychological processes.

Although previous studies consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being, much of the existing evidence has been derived from general populations and Western cultural contexts (Steger et al., 2008; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Existing studies frequently conceptualize well-being from a predominantly hedonic perspective, focusing mainly on happiness and life satisfaction, while giving comparatively less attention to existential dimensions such as purpose, resilience, and meaning-making among individuals with disabilities. In visually impaired populations, psychological experiences may differ substantially due to barriers associated with social exclusion, dependency, environmental inaccessibility, and stigma (Wong, 2019). Consequently, findings derived from sighted populations may not fully explain how meaning in life contributes to subjective well-being among individuals with visual impairments.

Furthermore, previous disability-related studies have largely concentrated on physical rehabilitation, accessibility, employment opportunities, and quality of life indicators, with limited exploration of positive psychological constructs such as meaning in life and hope. While studies by Wong (2019) and Reddy and Thevi (2017) highlighted the emotional and social difficulties experienced by visually impaired individuals, these studies primarily emphasized barriers and deficits rather than strengths-based psychological resources that may enhance well-being. This suggests the need to shift from deficit-oriented approaches toward positive psychology frameworks that examine how individuals with disabilities cultivate resilience, purpose, and adaptive functioning despite adversity (Livneh & Martz, 2014).

2.2. *Hope as a Distinct Psychological Construct and Mediating Mechanism*

Hope as defined by Snyder (1995), is a cognitive motivational construct comprising two interrelated components: agency (goal-directed determination) and pathways (the perceived capacity to generate routes toward goal attainment). Conceptually, hope differs from meaning in life in both orientation and function. Whereas meaning in life reflects a broader sense of purpose and existential significance, hope is more future-oriented and action-focused, emphasizing motivation and perceived capability to achieve desired outcomes. Empirical studies have consistently linked higher levels of hope to adaptive coping, resilience, and improved mental health outcomes, particularly among individuals facing adversity (Roesch & Vaughn, 2006). Importantly, hope has been shown to function as an intermediary psychological mechanism that translates abstract life meaning into concrete well-being outcomes. Individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful are more likely to set goals, believe in their ability to pursue them, and remain motivated despite obstacles key processes that are central to hope. Emerging empirical evidence supports this mediating role of hope. Roesch and Vaughn (2006) demonstrated that hope mediates the relationship between life meaning and psychological well-being, while Schrank et al. (2011) and Wider et al. (2022) further confirmed hope's role as a mechanism linking existential resources to subjective well-being. These findings suggest that meaning provides the *reason* for striving, while hope provides the *means* through which striving influences well-being.

Although hope has consistently been associated with positive psychological outcomes, findings across studies suggest that hope may operate differently depending on contextual and cultural influences. Snyder's (1995) theory conceptualizes hope as an individual cognitive-motivational process centered on agency and pathways thinking. However, within collectivist societies such as Malaysia, hope may also be influenced by interpersonal relationships, spirituality, family support, and communal values (Teoh & Bahari, 2017). This distinction is particularly important among visually impaired individuals, whose experiences of hope may depend not only on personal motivation but also on societal acceptance, accessibility, and support systems.

Moreover, while previous studies have confirmed the mediating role of hope between psychological resources and well-being outcomes much of the literature focused on populations experiencing chronic illness, trauma, or mental health conditions rather than sensory disabilities (Roesch & Vaughn, 2006; Schrank et al., 2011). Existing mediation models therefore may not fully capture the unique psychosocial experiences of visually impaired individuals. The current study extends prior literature by examining whether hope similarly functions as a psychological mechanism linking meaning in life to subjective well-being within the context of visual impairment in Malaysia.

2.3. Toward a Conceptual Pathway: Mediating role of Hope in relationship between Meaning in Life and Subjective Well-Being

Despite increasing scholarly attention to meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being, several important gaps remain in the literature. First, most existing studies have examined these variables independently rather than investigating their integrated psychological pathway. Second, empirical studies involving visually impaired populations remain limited, particularly within non-Western and developing contexts such as Malaysia. Third, previous disability-related research in Malaysia has primarily focused on rehabilitation, accessibility, and employment issues, with relatively limited attention given to existential and motivational psychological factors that may influence well-being (Wong, 2019; Abdullah Bandar et al., 2024).

More importantly, the mediating role of hope in explaining how meaning in life contributes to subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals remains underexplored. Existing mediation studies were predominantly conducted among general populations or individuals with chronic illnesses, limiting their applicability to persons with visual impairments who face distinct psychosocial and environmental challenges (Roesch & Vaughn, 2006; Schrank et al., 2011). Therefore, this study addresses both a theoretical and contextual gap by empirically examining hope as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being among visually impaired adults in Malaysia.

Overall, the literature suggests that meaning in life and hope are important psychological resources that contribute to subjective well-being. However, the existing body of research remains fragmented, with limited studies examining the interrelationships among these constructs within visually impaired populations, particularly in Malaysia. Previous findings indicate that individuals who perceive greater meaning in life are more likely to demonstrate stronger resilience, motivation, and psychological adjustment, yet the mechanisms through which meaning enhances well-being remain insufficiently explained (Steger et al., 2008; Snyder, 1995). Hope may function as a crucial psychological pathway that transforms existential meaning into positive emotional and cognitive outcomes (Roesch & Vaughn, 2006; Wider et al., 2022). Therefore, examining the mediating role of hope provides a more comprehensive understanding of subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals while addressing important theoretical, empirical, and contextual gaps in the literature. This study consequently contributes to positive psychology and disability research by proposing and empirically testing a culturally relevant mediation framework within the Malaysian context.

Based on positive psychology and hope theory, the present study proposes that meaning in life positively influences subjective well-being both directly and indirectly through hope (Snyder, 1995; Steger et al., 2008). Hope is conceptualized as a mediating psychological mechanism that translates existential meaning into adaptive well-being outcomes among visually impaired individuals (Roesch & Vaughn, 2006). Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the present study, proposing that individuals who perceive greater meaning in life are more likely to develop higher levels of hope, which subsequently enhances subjective well-being, while accounting for selected disability-related characteristics as control variables.

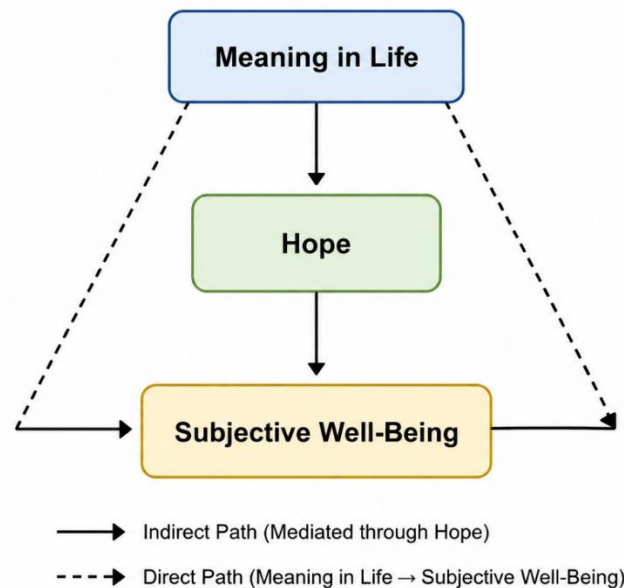


Figure 1. illustrates the conceptual framework of the present study

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the present study. The framework proposes that meaning in life positively influences subjective well-being both directly and indirectly through hope. Meaning in life functions as an existential psychological resource that provides individuals with purpose and direction, while hope serves as a motivational mechanism characterized by agency and pathways thinking (Snyder, 1995). Higher levels of hope are subsequently expected to contribute to greater subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals in Malaysia.

3. Methods

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design to examine the relationships among meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being (SWB) among adults with visual impairments in Malaysia. The cross-sectional approach allowed data to be collected at a single point in time to investigate the associations between the variables. In addition to examining correlations, the study also tested a mediation model to determine whether hope functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being. The target population for this study consisted of adults with visual impairments who were registered with two major non-governmental organizations that provide services and support to visually impaired individuals in Malaysia, namely the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) and the Society of the Blind Malaysia (SBM).

To ensure adequate geographical representation, stratified random sampling was employed based on regional strata across Malaysia. The country was divided into several regions: Northern, Central, Southern, East Coast, Sabah, and Sarawak. Each region represented a stratum in the sampling framework.

A cross-sectional quantitative research design was employed in this study to examine the relationships among meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being (SWB) among visually impaired adults in Malaysia. A cross-sectional design was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the study was to investigate the associations among psychological variables at a single point in time without manipulating the study environment. According to Creswell (2014), cross-sectional quantitative designs are widely used in psychological and social science research to examine relationships and predictive associations efficiently within a target population.

The quantitative approach enabled the researchers to objectively measure the constructs of meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being using standardized instruments and statistical analyses. This approach was particularly suitable because the study aimed to test a mediation model involving the indirect effect of hope on the relationship between meaning in life and SWB. Quantitative methods allow for systematic analysis of mediation pathways and provide empirical evidence regarding the strength and significance of relationships among variables (Hayes, 2013).

Stratified random sampling was selected to ensure that visually impaired individuals from different geographical regions in Malaysia were proportionately represented in the study. This sampling technique was considered appropriate because experiences related to subjective well-being, accessibility, and social support may vary across geographical regions due to differences in infrastructure, community support systems, and access to services. By dividing participants into regional strata prior to random selection, the study minimized sampling bias and enhanced the representativeness of the sample.

The sample size of 144 participants was considered adequate for correlational and mediation analyses. According to Hair et al. (2019), a sample exceeding 100 participants is generally acceptable for regression-based mediation analysis. Furthermore, Fritz and MacKinnon (2007) suggested that mediation studies examining moderate indirect effects typically require approximately 100 to 150 participants to achieve sufficient statistical power. Therefore, the sample size in this study was considered appropriate to detect meaningful relationships among meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being.

Participant lists were obtained from MAB and SBM with the organizations' permission. Within each stratum, participants were randomly selected in proportion to the estimated number of registered visually impaired individuals in that region. This sampling approach helped ensure balanced regional representation and minimized potential sampling bias. A total of 144 participants were successfully recruited for the study. Participants were included if they met the following criteria: (a) Malaysian residents, (b) self-identified as having visual impairment (either partial or total blindness), and (c) aged 18 years and above. Although collaboration with MAB and SBM facilitated access to participants across multiple regions in Malaysia, the use of organization-based recruitment may introduce selection bias. Individuals affiliated with support organizations may possess greater social support, service access, or community engagement compared to visually impaired individuals not connected to formal associations. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent visually impaired persons who remain socially isolated or outside established networks.

Data were collected using three validated psychological instruments measuring meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being. Meaning in life was measured using the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006). The MLQ consists of 10 items assessing two dimensions: The Presence of Meaning and the Search for Meaning. Respondents rated their agreement with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (absolutely untrue) to 7 (absolutely true). Hope was measured using the Adult Hope Scale (AHS) developed by Snyder et al. (1991). The scale contains 8 items that measure two components of hope: agency thinking, which refers to goal-directed determination, and pathway thinking, which reflects the perceived ability to generate strategies to achieve goals. Responses were recorded on an 8-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicate higher levels of hope.

Subjective well-being was assessed using a multidimensional instrument adapted from established well-being frameworks, including the World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQOL) and Diener et al.'s (1985) conceptualization of SWB. The final instrument consisted of 73 items covering eight domains, namely Independence, Social Relationships, Psychological Health, Physical Health, Environment, Religiosity, Self-Esteem, and Culture. Each item was measured using a 10-point Likert scale, allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement or experience. Several items were reverse-coded to maintain response consistency and reduce potential response bias. To ensure linguistic and cultural appropriateness, all instruments were made available in both Bahasa Malaysia and English. A forward-backward translation procedure was applied to ensure conceptual and linguistic equivalence between the two versions. Any discrepancies in translation were carefully reviewed and resolved through consensus to preserve the meaning of the original items while ensuring cultural suitability for the Malaysian context. In addition, special consideration was given to the accessibility needs of visually impaired participants.

Multiple modes of questionnaire administration were implemented to ensure participants could comfortably complete the survey. These included interviewer-assisted administration and verbal reading of the questionnaire by trained research assistants. The research assistants received prior training to ensure standardized data collection procedures and to minimize potential interviewer bias. The reliability of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients to determine internal consistency. The results indicated that all instruments demonstrated satisfactory reliability within the sample of visually impaired participants. The Cronbach's alpha value for the meaning in life scale was $\alpha = .747$, for hope $\alpha = .752$, and for subjective well-being $\alpha = .944$. These values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable to excellent internal consistency for the measures used in this study. The internal consistency of the Adult Hope Scale in the present study ($\alpha = .752$) was comparable with previous Malaysian studies reporting acceptable reliability values ranging between .70 and .84 (Teoh & Bahari, 2017), suggesting adequate psychometric performance within the present visually impaired sample. Similarly, the Meaning in Life Questionnaire demonstrated acceptable reliability consistent with previous applications across diverse populations (Steger et al.,

2006). The findings suggest that these measures retained satisfactory psychometric properties despite potential differences in cognitive load and accessibility requirements among visually impaired respondents.

To ensure cultural relevance and contextual appropriateness, the instruments used in this study underwent adaptation procedures suitable for the Malaysian context and visually impaired population. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) and Adult Hope Scale (AHS), originally developed in Western contexts, were carefully reviewed to ensure linguistic clarity, cultural suitability, and conceptual equivalence within the Malaysian setting. Particular attention was given to ensuring that the wording of items was understandable and culturally meaningful for Malaysian participants from diverse educational and ethnic backgrounds.

The subjective well-being (SWB) instrument was adapted from established well-being frameworks, including the WHOQOL and Diener et al.'s conceptualization of subjective well-being, to better reflect dimensions relevant to visually impaired individuals in Malaysia. Additional domains such as religiosity, self-esteem, and culture were included because these aspects are considered particularly salient within Malaysian society, which is characterized by strong collectivist and spiritual values. All instruments were made available in both Bahasa Malaysia and English. A forward-backward translation procedure was employed to ensure conceptual and linguistic equivalence between both versions. The translated instruments were reviewed carefully to ensure that the original meanings of the items were preserved while remaining culturally appropriate for Malaysian respondents.

Data collection was conducted collaboratively with the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) and the Society of the Blind Malaysia (SBM). Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the respective organizations to access potential participants. Trained research assistants were briefed regarding ethical procedures, communication techniques, and appropriate ways to interact with visually impaired individuals to ensure respectful and standardized administration. Several accessibility accommodations were implemented to ensure that visually impaired participants could participate comfortably and independently in the study. The questionnaires were administered using interviewer-assisted methods and verbal reading sessions conducted by trained research assistants. Participants were allowed to respond verbally, and their responses were recorded accurately by the research assistants. Sufficient time was also provided for participants to respond to each item to minimize response pressure and enhance response accuracy. These accessibility considerations were important in promoting inclusivity and reducing participation barriers among visually impaired individuals.

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29 to examine the relationships among meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being. Prior to hypothesis testing, preliminary screening procedures were conducted to assess missing data, reliability, and normality assumptions. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests indicated that the data were not normally distributed. Therefore, non-parametric statistical methods were considered more appropriate for analyzing the data. Spearman's rho correlation analysis was employed because it does not require the assumption of normality and is suitable for examining monotonic relationships between variables measured using ordinal or non-normally distributed continuous data (Field, 2018). This method enabled the study to determine the strength and direction of associations among meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being. To test the mediating role of hope, Hayes' (2013) PROCESS Macro Model 4 was utilized. The PROCESS Macro was selected because it is widely recognized as a robust approach for mediation analysis in psychological and behavioral research. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was employed to estimate indirect effects because bootstrapping does not rely on normal distribution assumptions and provides more accurate confidence intervals for mediation effects (Hayes, 2013). An indirect effect was considered statistically significant when the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval did not include zero. In addition to the primary mediation model, demographic and disability-related characteristics were incorporated as covariates to control for potential confounding influences on subjective well-being. Based on previous disability literature, onset of blindness, category of blindness, and working status were entered as control variables because these factors may influence psychological adjustment and life experiences among visually impaired individuals.

In addition to statistical significance, effect size indicators were examined to determine the practical relevance of the findings. According to Cohen (1988), correlation coefficients of .10, .30, and .50 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. The findings demonstrated that hope was positively associated with meaning in life and subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals. The strength of the relationships ranged from moderate to strong, indicating that the variables were not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. The coefficient of determination (r^2) showed that a substantial proportion of variance in subjective well-being could be explained by hope and meaning in life. For the mediation analysis, the standardized regression coefficients (β) indicated that hope contributed meaningfully to the relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being. This suggests

that higher levels of hope may enhance the positive influence of meaning in life on psychological well-being among visually impaired individuals.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Based on Table 1, a total of 144 visually impaired individuals participated in the survey. The demographic characteristics include geographical zones, age, gender, ethnicity, and religion, providing an overview of the respondents' backgrounds and demonstrating the diversity of the sample within the visually impaired population in Malaysia.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Zones		
Northern	42	29.2
Southern	19	13.2
Eastern	33	22.9
Central	23	16.0
Borneo	27	18.8
Age		
20 and below	7	4.9
21-30	56	38.9
31-40	41	28.5
41 and above	40	27.8
Gender		
Male	99	68.8
Female	45	31.3
Ethnicity		
Malay	93	64.6
Indian	12	8.3
Native of Sabah	2	1.4
Chinese	23	16.0
Native of Sarawak	14	9.7
Religion		
Islam	99	68.8
Buddhism	12	8.3
Christian	19	13.2
Hinduism	11	7.6
Others	3	2.1

With respect to geographical distribution, respondents were drawn from five different zones in Malaysia. The largest proportion of respondents came from the Northern zone, with 42 participants (29.2%), followed by the Eastern zone, which accounted for 33 respondents (22.9%). The Borneo zone, which includes Sabah and Sarawak, contributed 27 respondents (18.8%), while the Central zone recorded 23 respondents (16.0%). The Southern zone had the smallest representation, with 19 respondents (13.2%). This distribution indicates that the respondents were fairly spread across different regions of Malaysia, although the Northern region contributed the highest number of participants. The representation from multiple zones provides a broader perspective on the experiences and well-being of visually impaired individuals across different geographical areas.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents were relatively young adults. The largest age group was 21 to 30 years old, comprising 56 respondents (38.9%), followed by the 31 to 40 years old group, which included 41

respondents (28.5%). Respondents aged 41 years and above accounted for 40 individuals (27.8%), while the smallest group was those aged 20 years and below, with 7 respondents (4.9%). This distribution suggests that most respondents were in their productive and working-age period, which may influence their experiences related to career opportunities, social participation, and psychological well-being. The relatively small percentage of respondents aged 20 and below indicates that younger visually impaired individuals were less represented in this study. Regarding gender, the results show that male respondents constituted the majority of the sample, with 99 participants (68.8%), while female respondents accounted for 45 participants (31.3%). This indicates that the number of male respondents was more than double the number of female respondents in the study. The higher representation of males may reflect the accessibility of the sampling population or the distribution of visually impaired individuals within the networks or organizations involved in the study. The gender imbalance should be considered when interpreting the findings, as gender differences may influence perceptions of well-being, coping strategies, and access to support systems.

The ethnic composition of the respondents reflects the multicultural nature of Malaysian society. The majority of respondents were Malay, comprising 93 individuals (64.6%). The second largest group was Chinese, with 23 respondents (16.0%), followed by Native of Sarawak, which accounted for 14 respondents (9.7%). Indian respondents represented 12 individuals (8.3%), while Native of Sabah had the smallest representation with 2 respondents (1.4%). The predominance of Malay respondents may reflect the general demographic distribution of Malaysia's population, where Malays form the largest ethnic group. Nonetheless, the inclusion of respondents from different ethnic backgrounds provides insights into the experiences of visually impaired individuals from diverse cultural groups. In terms of religion, the distribution of respondents largely corresponds with the ethnic composition of the sample. The majority of respondents identified as Muslim, with 99 individuals (68.8%). This was followed by Christians, who accounted for 19 respondents (13.2%), and Buddhists, with 12 respondents (8.3%). Hindus represented 11 respondents (7.6%), while others made up 3 respondents (2.1%). The dominance of Islam in the sample is consistent with the majority Malay population in Malaysia, where Islam is the predominant religion. The presence of multiple religious groups highlights the religious diversity among visually impaired individuals in the country.

Thus, the demographic profile indicates that the respondents in this study were diverse in terms of geographical location, age, ethnicity, and religion, although the sample was predominantly male, Malay, and Muslim. Most participants were within the young adult and middle-aged categories, suggesting that the study largely reflects the experiences of visually impaired individuals who are potentially active in education, employment, or community participation. Understanding the demographic characteristics of the respondents is important for contextualizing the findings of this study, as factors such as age, gender, and cultural background may influence individuals' perceptions of meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being.

4.2. Correlation Analysis

Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being. As shown in Table 2, all correlations were positive and statistically significant.

Table 2. Correlation between variables

Variables	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Interpretation
Meaning in life and hope	0.482	.000	Positive, moderate, Significant
Meaning in life and SWB	0.532	.000	Positive, moderate, Significant
Hope and SWB	0.683	.000	Positive, strong, Significant

Table 2 presents the Spearman's correlation analysis examining the correlation among the three main variables in this study: meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being (SWB) among visually impaired individuals. Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of the correlation between the variables before proceeding to further analyses such as mediation testing. The correlation coefficient (*r*) indicates the degree of association between two variables, while the *p*-value indicates the statistical significance of the relationship. First, the results show a positive and statistically significant relationship between meaning in life and hope ($r = 0.482, p < .001$). This correlation coefficient indicates a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that individuals who report higher

levels of meaning in life tend to also experience higher levels of hope. In other words, when individuals perceive their lives as meaningful and purposeful, they are more likely to demonstrate stronger motivational energy and a greater ability to identify pathways toward achieving their goals. This finding aligns with theoretical perspectives suggesting that meaning in life can strengthen individuals' psychological resources, including hope, which supports their ability to cope with challenges and maintain positive expectations for the future.

Second, the analysis reveals a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being ($r = 0.532, p < .001$). This finding indicates that individuals with a stronger sense of life meaning tend to report higher levels of subjective well-being. In practical terms, visually impaired individuals who perceive their lives as purposeful and valuable are more likely to experience greater life satisfaction and positive emotional states. The moderate strength of this relationship suggests that meaning in life plays an important role in shaping individuals' perceptions of well-being, although other psychological and social factors may also contribute to overall SWB. This result supports previous research suggesting that meaning in life serves as a key psychological factor that enhances happiness, life satisfaction, and overall well-being. Third, the results show a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between hope and subjective well-being ($r = 0.683, p < .001$). Among the three correlation examined, this correlation represents the strongest association. The strong positive correlation indicates that individuals with higher levels of hope tend to experience significantly higher levels of subjective well-being. Individuals who possess stronger agency thinking (goal-directed motivation) and pathway thinking (ability to generate strategies for achieving goals) are more likely to maintain positive emotions and higher life satisfaction. This finding suggests that hope may play a particularly important role in enhancing the psychological well-being of visually impaired individuals.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

A mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS Macro for SPSS (Model 4) to test the indirect effect of meaning in life on subjective well-being through hope. Bootstrapping with 5,000 samples and 95% confidence intervals was applied.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

Path	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	Conclusion
Meaning in life → Hope	0.7586	0.1079	7.03	< .001	[0.5454, 0.9718]	Supported
Hope → Subjective well-being	0.4398	0.0513	8.58	< .001	[0.3385, 0.5412]	Supported
Meaning in life → Subjective well-being	0.1608	0.0765	2.10	.037	[0.0095, 0.3122]	Supported
Meaning in life → Hope → Subjective well-being	0.3337	0.0585	—	—	[0.2134, 0.4474]	Supported

Note: *CI* = Confidence Interval; *SE* = Standard Error. The indirect effect is tested via bootstrapping with 5,000 samples. A significant effect is determined when the *CI* does not include zero.

Table 3 presents the results of the mediation analysis examining the relationships between meaning in life, hope, and subjective well-being (SWB) among visually impaired individuals. The analysis tested both the direct and indirect effects of meaning in life on SWB, with hope acting as a mediating variable. The indirect effect was estimated using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, and significance was determined based on whether the 95% confidence interval (CI) excluded zero. First, the results indicate that meaning in life significantly predicts hope. As shown in Table 3, the regression coefficient for the relationship between meaning in life and hope (Path a) was statistically significant, $b = 0.7586, SE = 0.1079, t(142) = 7.03, p < .001$, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.5454 to 0.9718. Since the confidence interval does not include zero, the effect is considered statistically significant. This finding suggests that individuals with higher levels of meaning in life tend to report higher levels of hope. In other words, perceiving life as meaningful may enhance individuals' motivational energy and ability to generate pathways toward achieving their goals. This result provides empirical support for the hypothesis that meaning in life is positively related to hope.

Second, the analysis examined the relationship between hope and subjective well-being while controlling for meaning in life. The results demonstrate that hope significantly predicts SWB (Path b). The regression coefficient was $b = 0.4398, SE = 0.0513, t(141) = 8.58, p < .001$, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.3385, 0.5412]. Because the confidence

interval excludes zero, the effect is statistically significant. This finding indicates that higher levels of hope are associated with higher levels of SWB among visually impaired individuals. Individuals who possess stronger goal-directed thinking, motivation, and perceived pathways to achieve their goals are more likely to experience greater life satisfaction and positive emotional states. Therefore, the hypothesis proposing that hope is positively related to subjective well-being is supported.

Third, the analysis examined the direct effect of meaning in life on subjective well-being after accounting for the mediating role of hope (Path c'). The results reveal that the direct relationship remains statistically significant, $b = 0.1608$, $SE = 0.0765$, $t(141) = 2.10$, $p = .037$, with a 95% confidence interval of $[0.0095, 0.3122]$. Since the confidence interval does not include zero, the direct effect is considered statistically significant. This finding indicates that meaning in life continues to have a direct positive influence on subjective well-being even when hope is included in the model. In other words, individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful tend to experience greater well-being not only because meaning fosters hope but also because meaning itself contributes directly to positive evaluations of life.

Finally, the mediation analysis tested the indirect effect of meaning in life on subjective well-being through hope (Path $a \times b$). The results show that the indirect effect is statistically significant, $b = 0.3337$, $Boot SE = 0.0585$, with a 95% bootstrapped confidence interval ranging from 0.2134 to 0.4474. Because the confidence interval does not include zero, the indirect effect is considered significant. This result indicates that hope significantly mediates the relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being. In practical terms, individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful are more likely to develop higher levels of hope, which in turn enhances their overall well-being. Simultaneously, the findings support a partial mediation model. While hope acts as an important psychological mechanism through which meaning in life enhances subjective well-being, meaning in life also exerts a direct influence on well-being beyond its effect through hope.

This suggests that both constructs play complementary roles in promoting positive psychological functioning among visually impaired individuals. Meaning in life provides individuals with a sense of purpose and direction, while hope strengthens their motivation and confidence in achieving meaningful goals. Together, these psychological resources contribute to improved subjective well-being.

To improve model robustness, onset of blindness, category of blindness, and working status were included as covariates in the mediation model. Among the covariates, onset and category of blindness significantly predicted subjective well-being, whereas working status did not demonstrate a significant effect. These findings suggest that disability-related characteristics contribute to subjective well-being beyond psychological variables alone. Individuals with differing onset experiences and severity levels of visual impairment may experience varying adaptation processes and psychosocial challenges. However, employment status did not significantly contribute to subjective well-being within the current sample.

4.4. Discussion

The present study demonstrates that meaning in life is positively associated with subjective well-being (SWB) among visually impaired adults in Malaysia, both directly and indirectly through hope. Consistent with previous research (Steger et al., 2008), individuals who perceive their lives as meaningful tend to report higher levels of well-being. Importantly, the partial mediation effect observed in this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how meaning in life operates. While meaning in life directly enhances SWB, its influence is also transmitted through hope, suggesting that meaning not only contributes to well-being as an existential anchor but also energizes goal-directed motivation and adaptive coping. The partial, rather than full, mediation indicates that hope is a significant but not exclusive psychological mechanism linking meaning in life to SWB. This finding suggests the presence of additional psychological and social factors that may also contribute to well-being among visually impaired individuals. Variables such as resilience, perceived social support, acceptance of disability, and spirituality are likely to play complementary roles.

The present findings should also be interpreted within Malaysia's socio-cultural context. Malaysia is characterized by collectivist values, strong family interdependence, religious orientation, and community-centered social structures. Within such contexts, the experience of meaning in life may extend beyond individual achievement toward relational and spiritual dimensions. Consistent with Steger et al. (2008), the distinction between the presence of meaning and the search for meaning may operate differently across cultural settings. Among visually impaired individuals in Malaysia, the presence of meaning may emerge through family support, spirituality, and social belonging, whereas the search for meaning may involve ongoing efforts to negotiate disability identity and societal expectations. Cultural perceptions

surrounding disability, including stigma or dependency expectations, may therefore shape how visually impaired individuals construct meaning and sustain hope.

Then, Martz and Livneh (2007) identified meaning in life as a resilience-enhancing factor among individuals with disabilities, while Teoh and Bahari (2017) highlighted the contribution of acceptance and spirituality to well-being in Malaysian contexts. These findings collectively imply that SWB among visually impaired individuals is shaped by a constellation of internal resources rather than a single psychological pathway. The mediating role of hope observed in this study aligns with Snyder's (1995) hope theory, which conceptualizes hope as comprising agency and pathways thinking. Meaning in life may provide individuals with a reason to persist, whereas hope translates that meaning into actionable motivation and perceived capability to pursue goals despite adversity. This interpretation is consistent with prior findings demonstrating hope's mediating function in diverse populations, including individuals with chronic illness and disability (Roesch & Vaughn, 2006; Schrank et al., 2011). Extending this evidence to visually impaired adults in Malaysia contributes culturally grounded support for global psychological models.

The Malaysian socio-cultural context further underscores the importance of these findings. Despite policy advancements such as the Persons with Disabilities Act (2008) and the efforts of organizations like the Society of Blind Malaysia (SBM) and the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB), support services remain largely focused on physical rehabilitation, vocational training, and financial assistance. Psychological well-being, particularly constructs such as hope and life meaning, receives comparatively limited attention. The present findings suggest that material and structural support alone may be insufficient to enhance SWB if existential and motivational needs remain unmet. From a practical perspective, the results highlight the need for more psychologically informed interventions. NGOs such as SBM and MAB could integrate hope-based counseling programmes, goal-setting workshops, and meaning-centered interventions into existing services. Counselors and rehabilitation professionals may benefit from training in approaches that strengthen agency and pathways thinking, helping visually impaired individuals reframe life goals and sustain motivation.

At the policy level, incorporating psychological resilience and well-being indicators into national disability frameworks would support a more holistic conception of quality of life, moving beyond physical accessibility toward emotional and cognitive well-being. These findings reinforce the need for disability support systems in Malaysia to move beyond material and functional assistance by integrating psychologically informed interventions that cultivate meaning, hope, and adaptive coping (Livneh & Martz, 2014). This study underscores the importance of addressing purposelessness, hopelessness, and negative self-perceptions among visually impaired adults. By demonstrating that hope partially mediates the relationship between meaning in life and SWB, the findings offer a theoretically grounded and culturally relevant framework for improving mental health outcomes in this population. Future research should extend this model by examining additional mediators and moderators, including social support and spirituality, and by employing longitudinal designs to clarify causal pathways.

The significant effects of onset and category of blindness suggest that subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals may also depend on disability-related experiences. Individuals who acquired visual impairment later in life may experience different adaptation trajectories than those with congenital visual impairment. Likewise, severity of visual impairment may influence opportunities for social participation and autonomy. These findings reinforce the importance of considering contextual disability characteristics alongside psychological mechanisms.

Beyond physical and social barriers, access to assistive technologies may represent an important socio-technical factor influencing psychological well-being among visually impaired individuals. Technologies such as screen readers, Braille displays, smartphone accessibility applications, AI-assisted navigation tools, and digital communication platforms increasingly shape how individuals participate in education, employment, and social interactions. Wider et al. (2022) suggested that environmental and social resources may influence psychological adjustment through psychological mechanisms such as hope and life satisfaction. Access to assistive technologies may strengthen individuals' sense of autonomy, self-efficacy, and social connectedness, potentially facilitating greater meaning in life and hope. Within the Malaysian context, disparities in technological accessibility and digital inclusion may therefore contribute indirectly to subjective well-being among visually impaired persons. Future studies should further examine assistive technology as a contextual factor influencing psychological adaptation and well-being.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the mediating role of hope in the relationship between meaning in life and subjective well-being (SWB) among visually impaired individuals in Malaysia. The findings revealed that meaning in life was positively

associated with both hope and subjective well-being, indicating that individuals who perceive greater purpose and meaning in their lives tend to experience higher levels of psychological well-being. The mediation analysis further demonstrated that hope partially mediated the relationship between meaning in life and SWB, suggesting that hope functions as an important psychological mechanism that strengthens the positive influence of meaning in life on well-being. The statistical findings showed significant relationships among the study variables, with moderate effect sizes indicating practical as well as statistical significance. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature in positive psychology and disability studies by extending the applicability of hope and meaning-centered theories to the context of visually impaired individuals in Malaysia. The study highlights that psychological resources such as hope, resilience, and meaning in life are essential components in enhancing emotional adjustment and life satisfaction among persons with visual impairments. These findings also support the importance of adopting a more holistic understanding of well-being that includes psychological and existential dimensions beyond physical or functional limitations.

Furthermore, the inclusion of disability-related characteristics such as onset of blindness and category of blindness provided additional insights into subjective well-being among visually impaired individuals. These findings suggest that psychological well-being should not be understood solely through internal psychological mechanisms but also through contextual disability experiences that shape adaptation processes. Integrating both psychological and contextual perspectives contributes toward a more comprehensive understanding of well-being among visually impaired populations.

From a practical perspective, the study suggests that organizations, policymakers, and support agencies should incorporate psychologically informed interventions into rehabilitation and support programmes for visually impaired individuals. Interventions focusing on hope enhancement, counseling, goal-setting, and strengths-based development may help improve subjective well-being and quality of life. Despite these contributions, the study was limited by its cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data, which restricted causal interpretation. Future studies are recommended to employ longitudinal and intervention-based approaches to further examine the long-term effects of hope and meaning in life on subjective well-being among individuals with visual impairments across different cultural and demographic contexts

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