

Emerging Adulthood – an Easy Time of Being? Meaning in Life and Satisfaction with Life in the Time of Emerging Adulthood

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Personality seems to be a stable predictor of satisfaction with life and meaning in life. The effects of emerging adulthood are currently under-explored. The aim of the present study is to explore whether the characteristics of emerging adulthood explain additional variance in satisfaction with life and meaning in life that is not explained by the Big Five factors. The sample involved 244 Slovak university students (13.1% men), who completed the Satisfaction with Life Scale, Meaning in Life Questionnaire, Big Five Inventory-2 and the Questionnaire of Emerging Adulthood characteristics. The results of linear hierarchical regression analyses, controlling for age and gender, showed that emerging adulthood characteristics added 6.4% of the explained variance in satisfaction with life, 28.1% of the explained variance in presence of meaning and 17.1% of the explained variance in search for meaning. The current study shows that the emerging adulthood characteristics are important for satisfaction with life and meaning in life.

Key words: emerging adulthood, Big Five personality traits, meaning in life, satisfaction with life

Introduction

Young university students go through several significant changes. The sociocultural changes in the last decades have created conditions for the establishment of a new specific developmental stage – emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2001, 2004), occurring predominantly in young people continuing to study at the university (Côte, 2014). These sociocultural

changes have delayed and complicated taking on adult social roles, such as a full-time job, partner, marriage, parenthood, and, on the other hand, have led to remaining financially and residentially dependent on parents for longer time, as full independence is not achieved in other life areas (Arnett, 2001; Piotrowski et al., 2018). This delay is not only characteristic for the United States and Western countries, but also for the rest of Europe, the Czech Republic (Macek et al., 2007) and

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Slovakia (Šprocha, 2018; Kohútová & Dědová, 2019) among others. To our knowledge, the characteristics of emerging adulthood have not yet been investigated in Slovakia. Emerging adulthood in Slovakia is manifested by postponed marriages and parenthood (Džambazovič, 2018; Statistical Office of the SR, 2021) and by the lack of adulthood feeling that is present in the majority of Slovak students (Roupa, 2016).

Arnett (2004) characterized emerging adulthood by instability, identity exploration, a great number of possibilities, self-focused orientation and feeling of being between adolescence and adulthood. These characteristics were confirmed in various other countries (e.g., Macek et al., 2007, Oleskowitz & Misztela, 2015; Crocetti et al., 2015), even though they partially differ from one another (Pace et al., 2016). The differences were found even across gender. Girls tend to report significantly higher level in these characteristics (Sirsch et al., 2009), mainly in experimentation and self-focus (Negru et al., 2012; Reifman et al., 2007). While experimentation and possibilities appear as a great and optimistic time for young people (Arnett, 2000), the prolonged time of experimentation together with many possibilities and uncertainty about the right way to live (Schwartz et al., 2016) might cause emotional problems (Lane et al., 2017) and affect the level of life satisfaction (Karaš et al., 2014). In addition, the prolonged identity moratorium characterized by experimentation goes along with the development of meaning in life (Hill et al., 2016).

Meaning in life, as one of the indicators of the eudaimonic concept of well-being (Ryff & Singer, 1998; Samman, 2007), and satisfaction with life, as an indicator of hedonistic well-being concept (Diener et al., 1999), are essential for healthy life and optimal human functioning. Meaning in life, defined as the main life motivation, is related to personal goals and

beliefs reflecting individuals' life attitudes (Park, 2010). Individuals feel the presence of meaning in life when they have found their place in the world and the goal of their lives. In addition, they may continue to search for meaning even when meaning is present in their lives (Steger et al., 2008). Meaning in life is not the final goal, but rather a lifelong process of searching and finding. Even though the presence and search for the meaning may be parallel, Steger et al. (2008) found a negative correlation between them, and this relationship differs among people with greater openness and approach orientation.

Human meaning in life plays an important role in subjective well-being (SWB) (García-Alandete, 2015). The satisfaction with life as a part of SWB reflects cognitive evaluation of life as a whole (Ryan & Deci, 2001). It is a relatively stable construct. A change can occur for some time after a significant life event, with a tendency to return to the original level (Quevedo & Abella, 2011). This stability suggests that its level is predicted by personality. In case of the Big five personality traits, satisfaction with life is linked with extraversion, negative emotionality, and conscientiousness (Tanksale, 2015; Morris et al., 2015). Tanksale (2015) found that the Big Five traits predicted 17% of the variance in satisfaction with life. This was confirmed by Kohút, Kohútová, Žitný et al. (2020), who found that the Big Five personality traits measured after 6 months predicted 20% of the variance in satisfaction with life.

Similarly to satisfaction with life, it is probable that people have their predispositions for certain levels of meaningfulness. Schnell and Becker (2006) found that personality factors explained 16% of variance in meaningfulness; however, the source of meaning is important for this relationship. Meaning in life is linked with extraversion, neuroticism (Francis & Hills, 2008), and conscientiousness (Halama, 2005).

Certain facets of openness to experience and agreeableness were in a relationship with search for meaning and certain facets of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism correlated with the presence of meaning (Steger et al., 2006). These relationships suggest a possible prediction by personality not just for satisfaction with life but also for meaning in life.

Even though personality appears to be important for both satisfaction in life and meaning in life, research suggests that the characteristics of emerging adulthood time might also be linked to them. Negru (2012) found that satisfaction with life was positively predicted by exploration, possibilities, self-focus as well as interaction with others and negatively by instability. Similarly, according to Smojver-Ažić et al. (2017), the dimensions of emerging adulthood together predict the level of satisfaction with life. Perception of life as a time of possibilities, self-focus, and less as a time of instability and identity exploration predicts a higher level of satisfaction with life. So far, we did not find any research that directly focused on the relation between emerging adulthood time and meaning in life. However, a study concerning meaning in life throughout life found that the level of presence of meaning in life was at the lowest and search for meaning was at the highest level at the beginning of adulthood (Steger et al., 2009). In a qualitative study concerning emerging adulthood's conceptions of meaning, Glanzer et al. (2015) found that one-third of respondents did not know their life purpose. As stated above, emerging adulthood is the time for individuals to explore and consider who they are and what they want in their lives. The prolonged identity exploration (Wood et al., 2018) is manifested by exploring new things, opportunities, relationships, future career, and values. Identity exploration and searching for meaning in life are similar constructs,

but they are not even (Dezutter et al., 2014). Identity relates to daily decisions and searching for "who I am", while the meaning in life focuses on long-lasting goals and life direction (Sumner et al., 2014). However, their development is mutually supported (Hill et al., 2016). Time of identity exploration in emerging adulthood creates an ideal time to search for and find meaning in life.

The above-mentioned relations of emerging adulthood characteristics to satisfaction with life and meaning in life suggest that, in addition to personality traits, the dimensions of emerging adulthood may be important for meaning in life and satisfaction with life. A prolonged time of identity exploration and experimentation with different options might be the time of opportunities, but it might also cause uncertainty influencing life satisfaction and meaning in life. Our study brings insight into which psychological characteristics are crucial for meaning in life and life satisfaction in emerging adulthood. The main aims of the present study are 1) to confirm that meaning in life and satisfaction with life can be explained by the Big Five personality traits and 2) to explore, whether the dimensions of emerging adulthood explain additional variance in the Slovak university student sample. It was hypothesized that Big Five personality traits would explain variance in Satisfaction with life and the Presence of meaning. It was expected that dimensions of emerging adulthood would explain the added variance over BFI-2 in satisfaction with life and presence of meaning.

Methods

Sample

A total of 244 Slovak university students participated in the study, 86.9% women and 13.1% men, with the mean age of 21.36

years ($SD = 2.54$). Of the participants, 75.4% attended bachelor's studies, 21.7% attended master's studies, and 2.9% studied for a doctoral degree. Almost half of the participants (45.5%) were single, 7% was in a short-term relationship, 40.6% in a long-term relationship; 3.3% were engaged and 3.7% were married.

Measures

Presence of and search for meaning were measured by the *Meaning in Life Questionnaire*, (MLQ, Steger et al., 2006) consisting of a 10-item scale with 5 items for each dimension. The presence of meaning measures the level of life fulfilment. Search for meaning in life aims to determine the level of motivation and effort invested in searching for or deepening of life meaning. The measure is rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – Absolutely untrue; 7 – Absolutely true). A higher score means a higher level of presence and search for meaning. The Slovak translation was obtained from the authors. The translation is available on http://www.michaelfsteger.com/?page_id=13. The authors are not listed.

Global cognitive evaluation of life was measured by *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS, Diener et al., 1985), which consists of 5 items rated on the 7-point Likert scale (1 – Strongly disagree; 7 – Strongly agree). The Slovak version was obtained by 2 translations and one back-translation. A higher score means higher life satisfaction.

Dimensions of emerging adulthood defined by Arnett (2001) were measured by a questionnaire created by Macek et al. (2007). The questionnaire is inspired by the original *Inventory of the Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood* (Reifman et al., 2007). It was translated from Czech by 2 independent translations and then translated back to Czech. The questionnaire consists of 29 items, which are rated on

a 4-point Likert scale (1 – Strongly disagree; 4 – Strongly agree). It comprises 6 dimensions – Stability (6 items), Self-focused orientation (7 items), Diffuse orientation (6 items), Clarity of values (5 items), Identity exploration (3 items), Concerns for others (2 items).

Slovak version of the *Big Five Inventory-2* (BFI-2) (Soto & John 2017) adapted and validated in Slovakia by Halama et al. (2020) and Kohút et al. (2020) was used to measure the Big Five traits. It consists of 60 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – Strongly disagree; 5 – Strongly agree), focusing on 5 dimensions – Emotional stability, Extraversion, Open-mindedness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness, 12 items for each dimension.

The demographic data were added to the questionnaires, focusing on age, sex, partnership status, and the university degree being pursued.

Procedures and Analyses

To collect the data, Slovak university students from 18 to 29 years old, were approached to participate in the research. The questionnaires were distributed online through online social networks of students from different Slovak universities. By using a snowball sampling technique, the participants from a broad range of study fields were recruited. The participants had to fulfil the requirements of being Slovak, currently studying at a university and be 18 to 29 years old. All participants signed an informal consent before filling out the questionnaires. Ethical approval was not required. The study was carried out in accordance with the APA Ethical Guidelines.

Before data collection we did not calculate the minimum sample size for our analysis. Data were processed and analyses were carried out using Jamovi (2020). Cronbach's alpha values were calculated for satisfaction with life, presence of meaning, search for

meaning, all factors of BFI-2, and all factors of the dimensions of emerging adulthood to assess the reliability of the scales in the current data set (Table 1). Simple bivariate analyses (Pearson r) were calculated to assess the strength and significance of relationships between predictors and outcome variables.

The hierarchical linear regression was used to evaluate the hypotheses of Big Five personality traits and emerging adulthood dimensions predicting the meaning in life and satisfaction with life. The regression analyses were done separately for presence of meaning in life, search for meaning in life and life satisfaction. All regression analyses were controlled for age, gender, educational level and relationship status (in/ without relationship) (block 1). In the second block, all domains of

the BFI-2 (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, negative emotionality and open-mindedness) were added to the model. In the third block, all dimensions of emerging adulthood (stability, self-focused orientation, diffuse orientation, clarity of values, identity exploration, concerns for others) were added. The final models were checked and they passed the assumptions of linear regression, e.g. non-significant Durbin-Watson statistics, variance inflation factor values lower than 4 (Pan & Jackson, 2008) and tolerance values higher than 0.25 (Huber & Stephens, 1993). Based on the results of the final models, using G*power (Faul et al., 2009), we calculated posthoc power analysis, which showed that the achieved power exceeded the 0.99 level.

Table 1 Mean, SD, Cronbach's α of examined variables

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's α
Satisfaction with life	243	22.40	6.10	0.83
Presence of meaning	244	24.40	7.11	0.91
Search for meaning	242	26.00	5.28	0.73
Emerging adulthood				
Stability	244	15.70	3.69	0.83
Self-focused orientation	243	13.50	3.86	0.80
Diffuse orientation	244	10.20	2.54	0.71
Clarity of values	242	15.00	3.09	0.84
Identity exploration	241	9.14	2.10	0.78
Concerns for others	243	6.10	1.19	0.48
Big Five				
Extraversion	243	3.28	0.69	0.83
Agreeableness	243	3.90	0.53	0.79
Conscientiousness	243	3.61	0.68	0.87
Negative emotionality	243	3.13	0.86	0.91
Open-mindedness	243	3.82	0.71	0.72

Note. The table shows descriptive information about outcome variables, variables of emerging adulthood and variables of Big Five inventory. *N* – number of participants vary among variables because of insufficient completion of the questionnaires.

Results

Table 1 shows the mean, *SD* and Cronbach's α for all predictors and outcome variables used in this study.

First, the study focused on the correlations between predictors – factors of BFI-2 and factors of dimensions of emerging adulthood with outcome variables – satisfaction with life, presence of meaning and search for meaning. Satisfaction with life correlated significantly with all variables of emerging adulthood characteristics but concerns for others and by all domains of Big Five but open-mindedness. The strongest positive correlations were found with stability and clarity of values, and the strongest negative correlation with negative emotionality. Similarly, the presence of meaning correlated with all variables of emerging adulthood but concerns for others, and by all domains of Big Five. The strongest

positive relationships were found with clarity of values and stability. Negative relationships were found with identity exploration and negative emotionality. Meaning in life significantly correlated positively with identity exploration and negative emotionality and negatively with stability. The results are shown in Table 2. The correlation matrix of all examined variables is presented in Appendix (Table A).

The results of hierarchical linear regression analyses with satisfaction with life as outcome variable are shown in Table 3. The control variables explained significant 7.1% of the variance in satisfaction with life, with romantic relationship as significant predictor. The BFI-2 factors explained added 34% of variance. The negative emotionality and open-mindedness were significant. The emerging adulthood dimensions factors added 5.68 % of explained variance in satisfaction with life. In the final model, negative emotionality and open-mindedness (BFI-2) and stability and clarity of val-

Table 2 *Correlations between predictors and outcomes variables*

	SWLS	MLQ-P	MLQ-S
Emerging adulthood			
Stability	0.562	0.507	-0.186
Self-focused orientation	-0.220	-0.290	0.036
Diffuse orientation	-0.289	-0.346	0.020
Clarity of values	0.475	0.710	-0.035
Identity exploration	-0.268	-0.414	0.413
Concerns for others	0.054	0.081	0.106
Big Five			
Extraversion	0.335	0.374	-0.054
Agreeableness	0.390	0.370	-0.034
Conscientiousness	0.379	0.361	0.001
Negative emotionality	-0.555	-0.453	<i>0.146</i>
Open-mindedness	<i>0.198</i>	0.227	0.119

Note. SWLS – Satisfaction with life; MLQ-P – Presence of meaning; MLQ-S – Search for meaning. The correlations significant at $p < 0.05$ are italicized, and $p < 0.01$ are bolded.

ues were significant predictors. The final model explained 46.9% ($R^2 = 0.469$; $F_{(13;224)} = 12.22$; $p < 0.01$) of variance in satisfaction with life.

The results of hierarchical linear regression analyses with presence of meaning as outcome variable are shown in Table 4. The control variables explained significant 8.45% of the variance in presence of meaning, with relationship status as significant predictor. The BFI-2 factors explained significant 26.2% of the added variance in presence of mean-

ing, with negative emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness and open-mindedness being significant predictors. The emerging adulthood dimensions added 26.7% of explained variance. The final model explains 61.3% ($R^2 = 0.613$; $F_{(16;222)} = 21.99$, $p < 0.01$) of variance in presence of meaning, with stability, identity exploration and clarity of values as significant predictors.

Table 5 presents the results of hierarchical linear regression analyses with

Table 3 Results of hierarchical regression analysis predicting Satisfaction with life

Predictors	Outcome - Satisfaction with life					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	95% CI [LL; UL]	β	95% CI [LL; UL]	β	95% CI [LL; UL]
Block 1 - Control variables						
Age	-0.022	[-0.20; 0.16]	-0.058	[-0.20; 0.09]	-0.072	[-0.21; 0.07]
Gender	-0.072	[-0.43; 0.29]	-0.117	[-0.41; 0.18]	-0.172	[-0.46; 0.12]
Educational level (2 nd vs. 1 st)	0.235	[-0.17; 0.64]	0.168	[-0.16; 0.49]	0.150	[-0.17; 0.47]
(3 rd vs. 1 st)	0.221	[-0.64; 1.09]	0.002	[-0.70; 0.70]	-0.029	[-0.71; 0.65]
Relationship status	0.471	[0.22; 0.73]	0.230	[0.02; 0.44]	0.190	[-0.04; 0.42]
Block 2 - Big Five						
Extraversion			0.037	[-0.09; 0.16]	-0.010	[-0.13; 0.11]
Agreeableness			<i>0.137</i>	[0.02; 0.25]	0.073	[-0.05; 0.20]
Conscientiousness			<i>0.126</i>	[0.01; 0.24]	0.067	[-0.07; 0.20]
Negative emotionality			-0.424	[-0.55; -0.30]	-0.242	[-0.43; -0.06]
Open-mindedness			0.144	[0.03; 0.26]	<i>0.123</i>	[0.01; 0.23]
Block 3 - Emerging adulthood						
Stability					0.226	[0.05; 0.40]
Self-focused orientation					<0.001	[-0.12; 0.12]
Diffuse orientation					-0.011	[-0.14; 0.12]
Clarity of values					0.214	[0.09; 0.34]
Identity exploration					0.004	[-0.11; 0.12]
Concerns for others					0.018	[-0.09; 0.13]
	$R^2 = 0.071$		$\Delta R^2 = 0.342$		$\Delta R^2 = 0.057$	
	$F_{(5;232)} = 3.54$		$\Delta F_{(5;230)} = 26.41$		$\Delta F_{(6;224)} = 3.94$	

Note. $N = 241$. The values in Model 1 represents results from the first block. The values after adding BFI-2 domains are presented in Model 2. Final results are presented in Model 3. The names of significant predictors in the final model are bolded. CI = Confidence interval; LL = Lower limits; UL = Upper limit; ΔR^2 = change of R^2 ; ΔF = change of F. The values significant at $p < 0.05$ are italicized, and $p < 0.01$ are bolded.

Table 4 Results of hierarchical regression analysis predicting Presence of meaning

Predictors	Outcome - Presence of meaning					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	95% CI [LL; UL]	β	95% CI [LL; UL]	β	95% CI [LL; UL]
Block 1 - Control factors						
Age	-0.032	[-0.20; 0.15]	-0.064	[-0.22; 0.09]	-0.081	[-0.20; 0.04]
Gender	0.038	[-0.32; 0.39]	0.046	[-0.27; 0.36]	0.016	[-0.23; 0.26]
Educational level (2 nd vs. 1 st)	0.358	[-0.04; 0.75]	0.294	[-0.05; 0.63]	0.247	[-0.02; 0.52]
(3 rd vs. 1 st)	0.693	[-0.17; 1.55]	0.418	[-0.32; 1.16]	0.277	[-0.30; 0.86]
Relationship status	0.436	[0.18; 0.69]	<i>0.245</i>	[0.02; 0.47]	0.175	[-0.02; 0.37]
Block 2 - Big Five						
Extraversion			<i>0.136</i>	[0.01; 0.26]	-0.002	[-0.11; 0.10]
Agreeableness			0.165	[0.04; 0.29]	0.035	[-0.07; 0.14]
Conscientiousness			0.105	[-0.02; 0.23]	-0.011	[-0.12; 0.10]
Negative emotionality			-0.264	[-0.39; -0.13]	-0.045	[-0.20; 0.11]
Open-mindedness			<i>0.126</i>	[0.01; 0.24]	0.091	[-0.01; 0.19]
Block 3 - Emerging adulthood						
Stability					<i>0.179</i>	[0.03; 0.32]
Self-focused orientation					-0.037	[-0.14; 0.07]
Diffuse orientation					0.003	[0.11; 0.12]
Clarity of values					0.529	[0.42; 0.64]
Identity exploration					-0.134	[-0.23; -0.04]
Concerns for others					0.012	[-0.08; 0.11]
	R² = 0.085		$\Delta R^2 = 0.262$		$\Delta R^2 = 0.267$	
	F_(5;233) = 4.30		$\Delta F_{(5;228)} = 18.2$		$\Delta F_{(6;222)} = 25.5$	

Note. $N = 241$. The values in Model 1 represents results from the first block. The values after adding BFI-2 domains are presented in Model 2. Final results are presented in Model 3. The names of significant predictors in the final model are bolded. CI = Confidence interval; LL = Lower limits; UL = Upper limit; ΔR^2 = change of R^2 ; ΔF = change of F. The values significant at $p < 0.05$ are italicized, and $p < 0.01$ are bolded.

search for meaning as outcome variable. The control variables – age, gender, relationship status and educational level – as well as the BFI-2 factors were non-significant. The emerging adulthood dimensions explained 17.1% of the added variance in search for meaning. Only identity exploration was a significant predictor. The final model explains 22.8% ($R^2 = 0.228$; $F_{(16;220)} = 4.07$; $p < 0.01$) of variance in search for meaning.

Discussion

The present study aimed to confirm the explaining power of Big Five personality traits for satisfaction with life and meaning in life and to find whether the characteristics of the emerging adulthood era explain the added variance.

In the first step, expected significant relationships of satisfaction with life (Tanksale,

Table 5 Results of hierarchical regression analysis predicting Search for meaning

Predictors	Outcome - Search for meaning					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	95% CI [LL; UL]	β	95% CI [LL; UL]	β	95% CI [LL; UL]
Block 1 - Control factors						
Age	-0.137	[-0.32; 0.05]	-0.142	[-0.33; 0.04]	-0.164	[-0.33; 0.01]
Gender	0.269	[-0.10; 0.64]	0.268	[-0.11; 0.65]	0.339	[-0.02; 0.69]
Educational level (2 nd vs. 1 st)	0.297	[-0.12; 0.71]	0.344	[-0.07; 0.76]	0.356	[-0.03; 0.74]
(3 rd vs. 1 st)	0.240	[0.65; 1.13]	0.194	[-0.69; 1.08]	0.222	[-0.60; 1.04]
Relationship status	-0.042	[-0.30; 0.22]	-0.005	[-0.27; 0.26]	-0.014	[-0.29; 0.26]
Block 2 - Big Five						
Extraversion			-0.033	[-0.19; 0.12]	-0.014	[-0.16; 0.13]
Agreeableness			-0.002	[-0.15; 0.15]	0.012	[-0.14; 0.16]
Conscientiousness			0.049	[-0.10; 0.20]	0.078	[-0.09; 0.17]
Negative emotionality			<i>0.161</i>	[<0.01; 0.32]	-0.095	[-0.32; 0.13]
Open-mindedness			0.116	[-0.03; 0.26]	0.041	[-0.09; 0.17]
Block 3 - Emerging adulthood						
Stability					-0.181	[-0.39; 0.03]
Self-focused orientation					-0.081	[-0.23; 0.07]
Diffuse orientation					0.080	[-0.08; 0.24]
Clarity of values					0.129	[-0.03; 0.28]
Identity exploration					0.445	[0.31; 0.58]
Concerns for others					0.027	[-0.11; 0.16]
	$R^2 = 0.018$		$\Delta R^2 = 0.039$		$\Delta R^2 = \mathbf{0.171}$	
	$F_{(5,231)} = 0.84$		$\Delta F_{(5,226)} = 1.88$		$\Delta F_{(6,220)} = \mathbf{8.15}$	

Note. $N = 241$. The values in Model 1 represents results from the first block. The values after adding BFI-2 domains are presented in Model 2. Final results are presented in Model 3. The names of significant predictors in the final model are bolded. CI = Confidence interval; LL = Lower limits; UL = Upper limit; ΔR^2 = change of R^2 ; ΔF = change of F. The values significant at $p < 0.05$ are italicized, and $p < 0.01$ are bolded.

2015; Morris et al., 2015) and the presence of meaning (Francis & Hills, 2008; Halama, 2005; Steger et al., 2006) were confirmed. Moreover, the study found relationships of satisfaction with life with agreeableness and open-mindedness, as well as a relationship of the presence of meaning with open-mindedness. The relationship of search for meaning with open-mindedness (Steger et al., 2006) was not confirmed; only a relationship between search for meaning and negative emotionality

was found. It might have been caused by the fact that the previous studies were carried out on the general population which might have already had meaning in life and the individuals searched for additional meaning in other life areas (Steger et al., 2006). Further search for meaning might be more common for people with higher open-mindedness. On the other hand, emerging adults are in a prolonged identity moratorium (Wood et al., 2018), commonly linked with search for meaning (Hill et

al., 2016). They might not search for additional meaning, but rather for “the essence of meaning”. The absence of meaning and subsequent search for one might then be linked to higher negative emotionality.

All factors of the dimensions of emerging adulthood were related to satisfaction with life and presence of meaning. The strongest relationships were found with stability and clarity of values. These findings are in line with the previous research (Negru, 2012; Smojver-Ažić et al., 2017). As far as search for meaning is concerned, relationships were found with identity exploration, which is in line with Hill et al. (2016), and there was a negative relationship with stability and clarity of values, which is not surprising, as the search for life directions can bring some uncertainty.

One of the aims of the present study was met by confirming the prediction of satisfaction with life by Big Five personality traits and the emerging adulthood dimensions. Satisfaction with life was significantly predicted by the relationship status, however, it became insignificant in the final model. In line with the previous research (Kohút, Kohútová, Žitný et al., 2020), it was confirmed that Big Five personality traits predicted satisfaction with life. In the study, Big Five personality traits together explained 38% of the variance in satisfaction in life. In this model, negative emotionality and open-mindedness were the only significant predictors. As negative emotionality predisposes a person to anxiety, this might lead to lower levels of life satisfaction (Schimmack et al., 2004). On the contrary, having a wide range of cognitive or affective experiences (Soto & John, 2017) might increase the level of satisfaction with life. The dimensions of emerging adulthood added 6.4% of added variance over Big Five personality traits. Apart from negative emotionality and open-mindedness, which remain significant, stability and clarity of values become significant in the fi-

nal model. Although Big Five personality traits seem to be a strong predictor of satisfaction with life, the characteristics of emerging adulthood also play an important role. More stability and more clarified values can contribute to higher satisfaction in life. On the contrary, the time of emerging adulthood is characterized by less stability and less clarified values (Arnett, 2001) in comparison to other age groups (e.g., Macek et al., 2007; Reifman et al., 2007). Search for identity and important life values is prolonged by almost 10 years. As a consequence, the negative effects on satisfaction with life might last for a longer time. This result might differ for men, who are underrepresented in our sample. As they reach lower levels of psychological characteristics of emerging adulthood (Sirsch et al., 2009), the impact on satisfaction with life might differ. However, further research is needed.

To confirm the predictions of the presence of meaning, the model was controlled for demographic variables. The relationship status significantly predicted presence of meaning, however, it became insignificant in the final model. The Big Five personality traits explained 30.6% of the variance in presence of meaning. As for satisfaction with life, personality gives a base for the presence of meaning in life. All factors of Big Five personality traits but conscientiousness were significant for meaning in life. The dimensions of emerging adulthood explained added 28.1% of the variance in presence of meaning, and, after adding emerging adulthood dimensions to the model, only openness remains significant with a small effect size. In the final model, clarity of values and stability were significant in a positive way and identity exploration was significant in a negative way. As noted above, the instability, low clarity of values and identity exploration are common for university students (Arnett, 2001, 2018). The clarity of values was the most important predictor of the presence

of meaning, which is in line with the theoretical assumption, since the clarification of values helps to find direction of life and meaning (Hill et al., 2016). Findings of the present study suggest that the presence of meaning, which is also important for a satisfying life (García-Alandete, 2015), could be limited in emerging adulthood time. Our results might slightly differ for men, who report lower levels of characteristics of emerging adulthood compared to women (Sirsch et al., 2009), especially in identity experimentation (Negru, 2012). Thus, future research is needed.

Contrary to satisfaction with life and the presence of meaning, search for meaning was not significantly predicted by Big Five personality traits. A similar pattern of non-stable and weak correlations, especially with negative emotionality or open-mindedness and with the search for meaning, was found in previous studies (Halama, Martos, & Adamovová, 2010; Newman, Nezlek, & Thrash, 2018; Halama et al., 2020; Kohút, Halama, Soto et al., 2020). The reason for this might be that search for meaning is conceptualized as reconciling discrepancies between global meaning as a trait and situational meaning. In the search for meaning, the stable trait of continually trying to search for meaning might be combined with daily state of trying to find the meaning in life events (Newman, Nezlek, & Thrash, 2017). The dimensions of emerging adulthood explained 17% of the added variance. The only significant predictor was the identity exploration, which was expected, since the search for meaning and search for identity are interconnected (Hill et al., 2016). Identity exploration is one of the developmental tasks in the time of growing up (Arnett, 2019). The search for meaning takes place when the person has low meaning, as may be the case during adolescence and emerging adulthood, as well as when the meaning in life is present (Steger, 2006). However, the results suggest,

that the search for meaning can be notable in emerging adulthood, since the search for oneself also predicts the search for life goals and meaning in life.

Emerging adulthood is a long period of searching and instability but also of great freedom and possibilities (Arnett, 2000) that are unlikely to be ever present again. On the other hand, these possibilities and gained freedom together with a lack of rules and norms (Côte, 2014) bring instability and uncertainty, raising questions which life direction is the best, what is important for individuals, and what they should do in their lives. Postponing these important tasks almost until the age of 30 could have negative consequences for the presence of meaning and satisfaction with life for a longer time. This may result in an increased need for support and help from a university.

Limitations and Further Directions

The present study brings a new perspective on the importance of understanding meaning in life and satisfaction with life in the context of emerging adulthood. The generalization of our results is limited by the small sample and the higher prevalence of women. Also, low internal consistency of Concerns for others domain might be the reason for the lack of correlations with this variable. In the future, a cross-cultural comparison of the impact of emerging adulthood on satisfaction with life and meaning in life might bring additional understanding. In addition, possible differences in the effects of emerging adulthood dimensions among emerging adults with and without a partner or with and without work experience would give a deeper insight.

Conclusions

The findings of the present study confirm the importance of Big Five personality traits and

characteristics of emerging adulthood for satisfaction in life and the presence of meaning. Moreover, the findings suggest that characteristics of emerging adulthood, in particular instability, low clarity of values, and identity exploration can be important for satisfaction with life and meaning in life.

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Appendix

Table A Correlation Matrix of examined variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Stability	—												
2 Self-focused orientation	-0.21	—											
3 Diffuse orientation	-0.20	0.26	—										
4 Clarity of values	0.39	-0.24	-0.44	—									
5 Identity exploration	-0.37	0.24	0.16	-0.34	—								
6 Concerns for others	-0.05	-0.27	-0.12	0.16	0.08	—							
7 Extraversion	0.32	-0.07	-0.28	0.43	-0.23	0.06	—						
8 Agreeableness	0.37	-0.32	-0.41	0.36	-0.20	0.24	0.18	—					
9 Conscientiousness	0.35	-0.21	-0.61	0.42	-0.17	0.03	0.35	0.40	—				
10 Negative Emotionality	-0.80	0.12	0.17	-0.34	0.38	0.14	-0.43	-0.36	-0.35	—			
11 Open-mindedness	0.02	0.02	-0.19	0.27	0.09	0.06	0.31	0.17	0.18	-0.01	—		
12 SWLS	0.56	-0.22	-0.29	0.48	-0.27	0.05	0.34	0.39	0.38	-0.56	0.20	—	
13 MLQ-P	0.51	-0.29	-0.35	0.71	-0.41	0.11	0.37	0.37	0.36	-0.45	0.23	0.64	—
14 MLQ-S	-0.19	0.04	0.02	-0.04	0.41	0.08	-0.05	-0.03	0.00	0.15	0.12	0.00	-0.07

Note: SWLS - Satisfaction with life; MLQ-P - Presence of meaning in life; MLQ-S - Search for meaning in life; The correlations significant at $p < 0.05$ are italicized, and $p < 0.01$ are bolded.