

## **The Meaning in Life and Courage of Malaysian Frontliners During COVID-19**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted everyone's routines, including frontline workers, causing psychological distress and lowering their quality of life. As a result, this research was conducted to determine the meaning of life and the courage of Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners. Using purposive and snowball sampling, twenty-one frontliners from Kuala Lumpur and Selangor were recruited for this interpretative phenomenology study. The findings indicate that Malaysian frontliners derive meaning from the human connection in their professional and personal lives, which instills a feeling of dedication as they contribute to social welfare, particularly during this critical period. In addition, they engage in spiritual activities and maintain a positive attitude to achieve life satisfaction, which is regarded as a component of their life's meaning. Furthermore, frontline workers are courageous in fighting the pandemic because it is their obligation, and they have a strong family and coworkers' support system. While frontliners must maintain their psychological well-being, they are subjected to work hazards daily, contributing to their impression of courage. The findings could provide an outreach program organized by the government through webinars.

In that manner, it would allocate a sense of reassurance to the frontliners. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the perception of meaning in life and the courage of the Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners to rekindle their work spirit despite experiencing an overwhelming workload objectively.

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## INTRODUCTION

Occupation has a significant impact on a person's life since it is a lifelong adventure that instills a sense of responsibility in individuals as they go about their daily lives. Sustaining the psychological well-being of COVID-19 frontliners is possible provided they have adequate family support, which is critical for flattening occupational stress (Gavin et al., 2020). Due to social distancing and isolation, working individuals, particularly COVID-19 frontliners who normally meet and contact their family, were unable to see and interact with their loved ones, resulting in distinctive socialization and a progressive loss of meaning in life (Williams et al., 2020).

Besides, the tremendous burden of frontliners does not do justice because the number of positive COVID-19 cases and mortality rate continue to rise with each passing day (Gavin et al., 2020). It was particularly evident in Malaysia, where 18 frontliners assisted at both Hospital Serdang (620 beds) and Hospital Universiti Putra Malaysia (HUPM; 400 beds) during the first Movement Control Order (MCO; Khor et al., 2020). These hospitals serve the Klang Valley's southern regions and the state of Negeri Sembilan, which has a population of 1.7 million people. It does not help that they have a tremendous job of swabbing probable COVID-19 persons while also caring for patients in the intensive care unit (ICU), making it difficult to put on their protective equipment (PPE). Most ICU admissions in Malaysia occur within the first five days of hospitalization, even though patients are

more likely to be admitted for more than 13 days with invasive ventilation (Sim et al., 2020). Having layers of PPE protects the frontliner, yet it contributes to the fear of contamination due to improper disposal. It, in turn, causes them to have a pessimistic attitude toward the outbreak, which reduces their courageousness. Work and personal life are often seen as fundamentally contradictory areas that must be kept apart for a stress-free living (Zhooriyati & Despois, 2022). As a result of the excessive stress, they are subjected to burnout; their physical strength is compromised, and so is their mental health. Concurrently, frontliners' psychological well-being in meaningful life diminishes as the desire to flatten the curve remains unfulfilled despite endless sacrifice.

The meaning of life for Malaysian frontline workers is unexpectedly merely shattered because they are susceptible to being infected by the virus because of fulfilling their job responsibilities (Khor et al., 2020; Sim et al., 2020). When the person to whom they transmitted the virus battles for their life, it is likely that they will lose their sense of purpose in life. As a result of the virus's proliferation and the fact that they were wearing PPEs, they began to lose the courage to enter the hospital to perform their duties (Serbulea, 2020).

Meaning in life for COVID-19 frontliners is significant during this global pandemic (Grossman, 2020). However, insomnia is a favored structure for COVID-19 frontliners due to the depression and anxiety that have eventually influenced

their work performance to fight against the virus that impacts their meaningful life (Pappa et al., 2020). Significantly, when the frontliners are bombarded with mental torment, they tend to make simple mistakes that have adverse consequences as they deal with a human subject.

It is also necessary to have the courage to fight against the virus, as it aids in developing a meaningful life for frontline workers, who should carry out their duties during the pandemic (Häyry, 2020). The citizens, to their surprise, have a mind of their own, as evidenced by the fact that they are observed loitering outside without following the standard operating procedures (SOPs) established by the authorities. Without a doubt, the COVID-19 frontliners are enraged by the fact that their efforts are not recognized, which harms their motivation to combat the virus' spread. Because the citizens who do not follow the SOPs have a diminished sense of courageousness, which has resulted in their courage being degraded.

As they fight against the virus without stopping to consider their own life, the frontliners are likely to perform an act of exceptional courageousness (Serbulea, 2020). Social support can help frontline workers, like nurses, be more courageous in the face of adversity, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, which has challenged their courage, compassion, and resiliency. However, it is mandatory to self-isolate after work, which means that family time is excluded. In contrast, peer support could not be refreshed because frontline workers

are forced to labor for nearly 36 hours straight. This phenomenon is strongly highlighted, and the Malaysian government has announced that it has been abolished immediately following the establishment of the MCO (Zhang et al., 2020).

However, even though online platforms are now accessible to substitute face-to-face communication and revitalize a long-distance relationships, they are not as effective in providing the proper social support required by frontliners. It tends to crush their courageousness because there is a chance that the other party will interpret a message incoherently, which could deviate from its intended goal.

Meaningful life for practitioners, such as healthcare workers and other professional bodies, is strongly correlated with the public, who has direct engagement with them both before and during the global pandemic, as well as during this critical period. For frontline workers, the epidemic of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003 had a similar impact on their sense of meaning in life as the current COVID-19 outbreak has taken a toll on them (Sumner & Kinsella, 2021). The 2009 H1N1 swine flu pandemic has also steered the meaning in life of the frontliners worldwide (Taylor & Asmundson, 2020). In that sense, practitioners work tirelessly for the betterment of the world to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The public is protected due to their efforts during a global pandemic that would degrade their psychological well-being because of the excessive workload, similar to what has been observed during prior outbreaks.

As a result, this qualitative study explores the meaning of life from the perspective of Malaysian frontliners, as well as their courage in the face of a potentially lethal outbreak. By participating in this study, the frontliners may reflect on what it means to live a meaningful life, particularly when they put patients to sleep without knowing whether they would wake up the next second. Furthermore, this qualitative study provides a platform for individuals to discuss their experiences in the fight against the outbreak, allowing them to express their sorrow and endurance in a safe and confidential environment. In this way, by inviting frontline workers to share their experiences, this research has heightened their courage, as they have conquered numerous obstacles and will continue to do so in the future. Finally, without a doubt, this study encourages approaches to improve the psychological well-being of frontline workers by providing them with an opportunity to express their concerns and emotions.

### **Research Question and Research Objective**

This research aims to discover the meaning in life of Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners throughout the pandemic. Thus, the Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners' meaning in life during the pandemic was addressed. Additionally, it is critical to investigate the courageousness among Malaysian frontliners to comprehend their perceptions during the pandemic.

## **METHODS**

### **Study Design**

The qualitative research method was used in this study since it was designed to investigate social phenomena like the COVID-19. This method uncovers the intangible component that distinguishes the frontliners from the rest of society (Cheung et al., 2020). The voices of the frontline workers were heard through this method, and their working experiences throughout the epidemic were revealed using open-ended interview questions.

The interpretative phenomenology research design was adopted in this study as it is favorable for COVID-19 studies (e.g., Fan et al., 2020; Khodabakhshi-koolae, 2020). This study used a structured in-depth interview to ascertain the perspective of COVID-19 frontliners on the ongoing pandemic that has spread over the world. In conjunction with the face-to-face in-depth interview, the online platform was utilized due to the restricted social interaction caused by the pandemic.

### **Participants and Locations**

The researchers used the purposive and snowball sampling techniques to recruit 12 male and nine female participants ranging in age from 22 to 54 years old from Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Participants were selected based on the inclusion criteria, which included being COVID-19 frontliners, being actively engaged in their jobs throughout the pandemic, and providing direct and indirect care and

supervision to members of the public. The study focuses on COVID-19 healthcare workers concerning physical health (i.e., doctors, nurses, physicians, pharmacists, and medical laboratory scientists) and mental health (i.e., psychiatrists and counselors). However, potential participants in high-risk states that require 14 days of self-quarantine will be excluded.

The selected population was the subject of this study because they had contributed their time and effort in high-risk work environments such as hospitals and clinics in the middle of a global pandemic for the benefit of Malaysians. Participants who agreed to participate were interviewed when researchers approached them from door to door randomly.

Selangor and Kuala Lumpur were chosen for this study because Selangor is one of the states in Malaysia with the greatest number of positive COVID-19 cases from January to April 2020 (Elengoe, 2020). In addition, Kuala Lumpur is the capital of Malaysia, and because it belongs to the medical tourism industry sector, it was decided to use Kuala Lumpur as the recruitment range for this study (Afthanorhan et al., 2017).

### **Procedure and Instruments**

Researchers must consider the relevance and quality of the tool used in a study. In order to assure the consistency of a research study or measuring test in statistical and psychometric terms, it is essential to ensure the reliability of the instrument being used (Koo & Li, 2016).

The interview questions in this study were adapted and restructured from the quantitative form of the Wilderness Courage Scale (WCS; Prochniak, 2017) and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006). On that note, altered interview questions correspond equally with the original items since it is amended directly from close-ended to open-ended questions. In addition, the initial meaning of the questions is maintained by limiting the change of word sentences. Hence, the questions would begin with interrogative words (e.g., “what,” “when,” “where,” “which,” “who,” and “how”).

The interview questions were understandable, and the content validity and clarity were reserved. The interview questions were assessed by a field expert appointed to the position. After receiving constructive input from the reviewer, the questions were later revised and improved. As a result, the interview questions for this study were adapted from quantitative questionnaires proven to be reliable.

After the questions had been reviewed and revised, they were submitted to the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) for approval before being awarded affirmation. The purpose of the submission is to ensure that the questions go through a series of evaluations before they are ready to be used in the actual research. Before the data collection process begins, the topic expert has reviewed and approved the interview questions (Connelly, 2008).

## **Ethics**

All studies reported in this article adhered to APA ethical standards for the treatment of human subjects. Apart from that, permission from the IEC has been received. It took place prior to the beginning of the data collection process. When the frontliners agreed to participate in this study, they were given an information sheet and asked to sign an informed consent form. During the debriefing session, the participants were given the option to withdraw their participation at any point. The IEC clearance from UCSI University (Reference code: IEC-2020-FoSSLA-051) could be obtained with written consent from the IEC. All participants signed an informed consent form before taking part in the activity. It is done to secure their identities and guarantee that the sample selection procedure is transparent. It was entirely voluntary for them to engage in this study. They were under no pressure from the researchers, who informed them that they may withdraw their involvement at any moment and that their data would be treated anonymously.

## **Data Analysis**

A thematic analysis was employed to discover the perception of meaning in life and courage of the Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners in the healthcare industry concerning physical health and mental health. The thematic analysis, which includes the six steps, is applied after the data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It starts with data familiarization, in which data is transcribed from the field notes

and tape recordings. Data coding is the following step where all the participants' words are grouped systematically. Potential themes were classified right after the data coding revolving around the meaning in life and courage among COVID-19 frontliners in Malaysia. The qualitative research expert was appointed to review the integrity of construction concerning the developed themes. The themes were then defined and given a name. It follows the last step, writing up the report by utilizing the finalized data analysis.

## **RESULTS**

Following an in-depth exploration of the Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners' perspectives on their meaning in life and courage, a delegation of 12 themes was derived. The main two sections of this research are discussed in greater detail below, concerning the meaning in life and courage of the COVID-19 frontliners.

Data from 21 Malaysian COVID-19 frontline workers involved in physical and mental health care are presented in Table 1 as collective themes. With human connection, more frontliners can eventually fathom their meaning in life during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they have one another's back during the outbreak. Their achievement gives significance to their lives, especially when they commit themselves to the betterment of society. To achieve their life purpose, the majority of the frontliners cultivate personal devotion via spiritualism (Martela & Steger, 2016). In addition, they tend to collectively reinforce

their empathetic conduct to promote social transformation, which benefits social welfare (Heylighen & Dong, 2019; Persson & Savulescu, 2017). For that reason, it gives them a sense of purpose, which contributes to life satisfaction and aids them in seeking meaning in life.

The COVID-19 frontliners' responsibility has the potential to ignite their courage. One source of motivation for them regularly is the patient's compassion or their amusement habit. The frontliners hope

to improve their psychological well-being and reduce anxiety over the deadly virus because they have a trustworthy support system (Gavin et al., 2020). However, the presence of high-risk patients, combined with a lack of appropriate equipment as a daily job hazard in the workplace, diminishes their courage (Rijamampianina, 2018). Fortunately, Malaysian frontliners are yet to build the courage from the gullible pressure to face the outbreak by perpetuating their psychological well-being.

Table 1  
Summary of themes

Psychological construct	Themes
Meaning in life of the Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners	Initiate human connection Pledge of commitment Indulge in spiritualism Take social welfare into account Progress towards life satisfaction
Courage of the Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners	Carry out given responsibility Rewards as motivation Trustworthy support system Daily job hazard Perpetuate psychological well-being

**Meaning in Life**

**Initiate Human Connection.** The interpersonal engagement amongst Malaysian frontliners during the COVID-19 outbreak provided them with a sense of meaning in their lives. Inclusion in one's family that results from understanding compassion is the emotional support from friends or family members.

P06: A lot of my friends are in the dental field, so they are supportive because things still have to go on as long as everybody is taking high precautions; we've been supportive of each other... Also, when doing the treatment, we have high vacuum suction where it'll suck whatever is being generated because aerosol will stay in for another few hours.

Having one another's backs through insightful communication could significantly impact those on the front lines. In addition, because of the pandemic, people are more aware of what gives them meaning and purpose in their lives, whether meaningful conversation or compensatory compensation.

P20: That's why I tell with my experiences in life, *kita jumpa orang*, I got one friend every morning I'll call chit chat, happy. *Lepastu ada orang kedua, waktu pergi kerja lah* meaningful life, you know. You see, we make other people's life so meaningful.

[*Translation*: That's why I tell with my experiences in life. I got one friend every morning I'll call chit chat and I will be very happy. After him, I'll call another friend. It goes on and on until I reach my workplace. Meaningful life, you know. You see, we make other people's life so meaningful.]

**Pledge of Commitment.** As frontline workers, their responsibility is to contribute to society to benefit future generations positively. However, due to the social pressure placed on the upcoming generations, the frontliners with parental duties concerning their glooming children are brought to attention.

P15: Now the responsibility is there, must educate children hahaha, *kena bayar hutang*, after *hutang selesai* then

I can relax that's our responsibility. So, my family, my responsibility is my meaning in life *lah*. Yeah, family *lah*... Apart from medical, meaningful in my life is I want uhh, for my family to be happy and children to come up I mean in their life *lah*. Come up in their life *lah*, graduate and come up.

[*Translation*: Now the responsibility is there, must educate children hahaha, have to pay off my debts. When it's clear, then I can relax that's our responsibility. So, my family, my responsibility is my meaning in life *lah*. Yeah, family *lah*... Apart from medical, meaningful in my life is I want uhh, for my family to be happy and children to come up I mean in their life *lah*. Come up in their life *lah*, graduate and come up.]

The progression of life has left them feeling a strong sense of responsibility towards the people they hold close to their hearts. The concept of lifelong learning, as a result, offers the frontline workers a framework to help them find meaning in their lives during the pandemic.

P11: To me in pharmacists, it is the work that I do I enjoy *lah* because I chose this career even though there is much difficulty now is okay *lah* because you learn from it. So, all these things are just minor setbacks only *loh* as long as you overcome them. I would not say I find my meaning in life through my job, meaning of life for me is more like you

accept what is happening around you. I feel obligated to serve my patients, especially the regular ones. They are like my loved ones.

**Indulge in Spiritualism.** Religiosity literary is vital in seeking meaning in life for COVID-19 frontliners during a global pandemic, with the mortality rate fluctuating. When a decision of theirs ends with a fruitful outcome, it urges them to believe in God to fulfill their life purpose to contribute to society for the sake of the community.

P21: Different among psychological frontliner because we just do our best in the crisis and sometimes, I feel not competent enough. I accept my limitations and that is a bit tough because my colleague is a crisis call responder and told me why not I join them and expand myself and see if I can manage. In a sense, it's like contributing to society as well what.

With spiritual devotion, therefore, meaning in life for COVID-19 frontliners during the pandemic can be inferred.

P18: I used my religion to find my meaning in life. Sometimes I think without religion, I do not understand why so much suffering... I will be very firm when clients say that religion and belief lead them to suicide. Although counseling must not be biased but this is a crisis call and I'm definitely anti-

suicide, so I have no qualms about trying to steer the client.

**Take Social Welfare into Account.** Due to the social welfare consideration, the Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners have appropriated it to seek meaning in life. To give back to the community, the current research participants acknowledged that they aspire to educate and enlighten the illiterate to accomplish a collective reinforcement.

P09: Uhh as a frontliner ah. Hmm, we have to, of course, set an example for the patients also *lah*... they also will look up to you also to see what you are doing also so you have to make sure you do a good example *loh*, wear your mask, do social distancing uhh and then if patients have any questions you have to answer them truthfully *lah* don't try to scare them or anything *lah* just tell them this is actually what's happening, this is what you should do *lah* so a lot of patients get the wrong perception *lah*. But it's important *lah* you set a good example for them, do what you can for them also *lah* and teach them to do the right thing also.

Additionally, because of their generous heart and passion for saving lives, they carry the pressure to be a role model to their patients, which serves as their life purpose.

P05: We have to set an example for the patients also *lah*... they will look up to you to see what you are doing also so

you have to make sure you do a good example *loh*, wear your mask, do social distancing and then if patients have any questions you have to answer them truthfully *lah* don't try to scare them or anything, just tell them this is actually what's happening.

**Progress Towards Life Satisfaction.** When frontline workers look after themselves and make the most of their leisure time, it provides them a greater feeling of life satisfaction. In addition, the need for recognition for every individual, especially COVID-19 frontliners, is frequently associated with the pursuit of meaning in life.

P17: We are one human race; we must care for each other; my role in society is to ensure that we strive to become better people... social and individual transformation is important, so you need to focus on yourself and your community so these two things are important and it goes hand in hand because if I don't transform individually, then I cannot transform the society, so both are important.

The moment frontliners walk into the healthcare field, their life purpose revolves around contemplating the better for their patients or even themselves.

P03: I just make sure I'm healthy. Can function every day. If I'm not working, I make sure I get good rest because

the shift is quite long and tiring inside the tent, although the allowance is like peanut, and it's not worth it. That's probably the government trying to show appreciation. But most importantly, I just want to serve people and do whatever it takes to be a good doctor.

### Courage

**Carry Out Given Responsibility.** At this instant, due to the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases and mortality rates, the frontliners are accountable for performing and being mindful in their job.

P13: Personally, I do feel like my motivation toward work affected my self-esteem affected my job because I started to question myself, am I doing a good job? Was I really a good comfort to my clients? This kind of thing started to pop out and I started to chat with my other clients, how they are doing, or I start to frequently check with those who worked with me.

They prioritized adhering to the precautions while having precise time management to fight against the virus with the extrinsic liaison's advice. The unexpected responsibility will eventually enhance their courageousness, as the COVID-19 pandemic is undistinguished after effect.

P08: But we give them [patients] reassurance, nothing to worry, we already disinfect the clinic [because

there was a positive patient] the doctors who were involved... yeah they call and find out, so we told them. The doctor who was involved is already quarantined; nurses are also quarantined.

**Rewards as Motivation.** The acts of kindness in the generous offering can inflate courage among the COVID-19 frontliners. Participants deliberate over the amusement habit as their reward, praising the harmony after a strenuous day at work. Possessing a custom habit has its pros and cons that are perhaps alterable. Performing physical activities reduces the stress of the frontliners. Even the consumption of tobacco and alcohol acts as compensation at the end of the day.

P14: I go hiking, trekking yeah. Sport is the main source that can release my stress, and socially also I am always out with my friends... I grew up with some of my neighbors, so we are very close.

P19: Drink and smoke when I go out with friends occasionally.

**Trustworthy Support System.** The COVID-19 frontliners seem to receive sufficient emotional and social support to safeguard their well-being.

P07: Pray *lah*... God is great. I am breathing now, I don't know the next minute I breathe or not... For me ah... is a blessing you know, because

*saya* lucky... my family *sembahyang*, *walaupun* some people touch and go. Uhh... so I think blessing *lah*, parent blessing, God blessing. So, when you pray, God will answer to you, so *saya rasa bagus lah*, see whether through COVID, oh *lagi orang kuat lagi banyak sembahyang*.

[*Translation: Pray lah... God is great. I am breathing now, I don't know the next minute I breathe or not... For me ah... is a blessing you know, I am lucky because my family prays, unlike others who do pray for just for the sake of it. Uhh... so I think blessing lah, parent blessing, God blessing. So, when you pray, God will answer to you, so I think it's good lah. Since the pandemic, there are more and more people who are praying more than they did before.*]

The relaxation that frontliners feel when they are not at work is guaranteed to be preserved. Some participants were required to be separated from their spouses in a different states. After all, they were advised to avoid interacting with others because they performed the COVID-19 swabs.

P01: Initially, during the MCO, I did not go back to my wife and kid for two months because she is in Melaka and I'm stuck in KL. I video call her every day that is all I can do. We are quite worried about each other because we do not know when we will see each other again.

**Daily Job Hazard.** The COVID-19 frontliners, who anticipate adversities during the pandemic, are inclined to be more courageous in the face of scarcities in medical equipment during the pandemic.

P02: My psychological well-being declining for sure, we worried what whether you were infected... whether... I was also infected with patients *lah haa* that is my fear. Yeah, that time once... they knew that one positive case was there, all patients started calling.

Under this unfortunate occurrence, the frontliners tend to get anxious about being infected by the virus to the point where it causes family tensivity.

P10: My elderly parents. They always want to go out without a mask and not listen to you. Their well-being is my concern... Therefore, [I] limit my parents to go out if they don't listen then scold them. But they are quite obedient lately after seeing the news.

**Perpetuate Psychological Well-Being.** Courage for COVID-19 frontliners can emanate from being accountable for themselves. With self-reflection and self-regulation, Malaysian frontliners are competent enough to procure easy-going characteristics that enhance their psychological well-being throughout the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

P12: During COVID-19, it gave me some time to reflect and recover, especially the first few weeks... It was a good break and gave me some time to reflect. Life is not under my control.

The frontliners are susceptible to pressure from external circumstances, and for that alone, it has made them potentially vulnerable to danger.

P16: I am not stressed *lah*. I do not enjoy its work but just do your thing *lah*. I'm only stressed when there are too many patients, and I can't manage. The pressure is real when you have too many patients with very little manpower.

## DISCUSSIONS

This study aims to ascertain the meaning of life and courage of Malaysian COVID-19 frontliners. The human connection through the family or loved ones of the COVID-19 frontliners provides them meaning in life (Williams et al., 2020). The COVID-19 frontliners' life aim is to promote family inclusion and responsibility. By gaining an insight into compassion from a career life perspective, there will be good outcomes that they will tend to look out for one another. As frontliners, they have numerous doors of opportunity to advance in various facets of their lives (Martela & Steger, 2016). One of the tasks that frontliners with multiple partnerships play is that of a parent responsible for the upbringing of future generations. They also have a career responsibility to emphasize their

contribution to society as healthcare workers.

Meaning in life is related to employee contentment, as it is a lifelong quest (Lee et al., 2017; Vohs et al., 2019). For many people, including COVID-19 frontliners, spiritualism is an enduring adventure that provides pathways to meaning in life, even though they may encounter unpleasant situations daily, such as horrific deaths. Malaysian frontliners have a personal devotion to spiritual faith or sacred belief via religiosity literary. In contrast, there is no significant connection between spiritualism and meaning in life (Keefer, 2019; Krok, 2017). Individuals will eventually discover their life purpose as long as they live a life that adds to their sense of worth and worthiness.

Under these conditions, the generous heart of Malaysian frontliners adds to their sense of meaning in life, as it is a type of social welfare. There is a collective reinforcement among the frontliners concerning social inclusivity and social transformation to attain a career life purpose. The findings exhibited that Malaysian frontliners tend to feel contended when utilizing their leisure time by performing their hobbies. Through self-motivation and self-reflection, frontliners think of carrying out something they are passionate about and looking after themselves to contemplate a better future. However, there is a need for acknowledgment among the COVID-19 frontliners since it gives them a sense of existence. Therefore, an individual with meaning in life will associate the personality

variables with their sense of direction (Costin & Vignoles, 2020; Womick et al., 2020).

On the condition of courage, it is conclusive that as long as COVID-19 frontliners are accountable for their responsibilities, courage will accompany them. According to these studies (i.e., Day, 2020; Häyry, 2020), every COVID-19 frontliner is mindful when performing their job because they have the strength to fight against the virus, as they are in close contact with both external and internal personnel. The extrinsic liaison is also highly productive. This unexceptional aftereffect of the pandemic is prompting frontline workers to consistently improve their hospital services, which is one of the obligations that the COVID-19 frontline workers must carry out as a result of the pandemic. Unfortunately, the considerable number of patients results in a scarcity of hospital equipment, negatively impacting their ability to execute their jobs.

When it comes to rewards, it provides motivation and courage to COVID-19 frontline workers, especially during a pandemic. In recognition of their substantial contributions to society, they are more likely to receive complimentary words from their patients. In addition, being compassionate in helping others has fostered empathic courage, as illustrated by empathy-helping (Persson & Savulescu, 2017; Sassenrath et al., 2016). As a result, their moral courage ultimately grows, allowing them to contribute their full potential.

One unexpected discovery was that the Malaysian frontliners were compensated through recreational practice. The COVID-19 frontliners receive rewards such as kindness from others or delightful attitude in exchange for their efforts. It allows them to maintain a harmonious appraisal system. Vulnerable individuals will contend with life satisfaction (Gin et al., 2021), but it is only applicable if they can maintain a healthy work-life balance. The COVID-19 frontliners proclaimed that future preservation would provide them with a guardian to ensure their well-being in both their personal and professional lives. It is complex to explain this result, but it might be related to COVID-19 frontliners. A possible interpretation for this might be that an individual will perform the courageous action because it facilitates the endurance of moral courage (Comer & Sekerka, 2018; Martinez et al., 2016).

The COVID-19 frontliners benefit from leisure activities such as playing musical instruments or reading. The outbreak has compelled the frontliners to begin cultivating their religious beliefs, which has caused them to be courageous because of the pressures they have encountered, which has resulted in their realization of their spirituality (Kassymova et al., 2019). They insinuated that the impact of stressors from the human resource could generate a sense of fearlessness, particularly during a time of crisis or difficulty.

Undoubtedly, scarcity in the workplace causes frontliners to experience adversity. Unfortunate events, such as

confronting dishonest patients or even an unempathetic high authority, will limit their courageousness. Furthermore, frontliners will eventually confront family tensity due to their stress. This study provided data that corroborates the conclusions of many earlier studies (e.g., Bockorny & Youssef-Morgan, 2019; Rijamampianina, 2018) on courageousness. It appears conceivable that this outcome is a result of the difficult circumstance. It influences the courageous decision-making capacity of COVID-19 frontliners, preventing them from obtaining the desired goal despite their self-confidence in fighting the virus.

Individuals with the empathic attribute are less susceptible to being misled by external influences inclined to eradicate their courageousness (Heylighen & Dong, 2019). On the other hand, being easygoing is critical for a COVID-19 frontliner. It is because they are held accountable for maintaining their psychological well-being. As a result, emotional expressiveness must be preserved. The findings contradict an earlier study (e.g., Cheng & Huang, 2016) on Chinese individuals' courageousness. Working under pressure in Asian countries, particularly among the Chinese, enhances success. Therefore, they would be fearless and commit to a worthy cause while the COVID-19 frontliners fight the virus.

### **Limitations**

Despite its contributions, this research has several limitations that suggest fascinating perspectives for future research. As for the research limitation, the deficiency lies in

the sampling techniques used in this study (i.e., purposive and snowballing sampling techniques). This combination of sampling techniques reduced the effectiveness of the recruitment process. Recruited participants were required to recommend potential participants that fit this research requirement, yet they faced difficulties executing it.

## CONCLUSION

Before and after encountering the COVID-19 pandemic, the public frequently interacts with the frontliners, or the healthcare workers, which impacts their meaning in life. Chiefly, the development of targeted interventions serves as an aspiration to authorities. In addition, the government can be vocal about the COVID-19 outbreak awareness by conducting webinars for the public to cultivate proper social distancing. However, unless they adopt current research implications, there are possibilities that the citizens will not adhere to the SOPs. For instance, the MCO declaration has caused a limitation in traveling that disputed the tolerance among citizens for being domesticated.

Frontliners who exhibit beneficent behavior are gullible to pressure, particularly at work, making them vulnerable to danger. A key policy priority should be developing long-term care plans for COVID-19 frontliners, as their well-being will deteriorate if the public does not adopt appropriate social distancing. Due to the diminutive action from the illiterate public, the frontliners' courage tends to wane during a pandemic. As a result, it is necessary to

turn a blind eye to their meaning in life in light of the current research's practical implications.

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