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FLOURISHING IN MID-CAREER PROFESSIONALS

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FLOURISHING IN
MID-CAREER PROFESSIONALS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Sohyun Lee

July, 2020

Paula Thompson, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to everyone who helped me on this journey.

I also dedicate this work to anyone who desires to flourish.

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There are many who have supported me on this journey. I first thank God for his faithfulness and grace in this process. I will always thank the Lord for carrying me through this journey.

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Lastly, I would like to thank all of Pepperdine EDOL professors who exemplified true leadership and played a significant role in my journey. I also wish to express many thanks to my colleagues at Pepperdine University.

VITA

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ABSTRACT

Prior research shows that mid-career professionals experience more negative emotions such as regret, confusion, disappointment, frustration and anger than positive feelings. Yet, many mid-career professionals are flourishing in their careers and not experiencing such negativity. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of five professionals who self-identify as flourishing in mid-career. This study also addressed the literature gap concerning mid-career professionals who are flourishing. Prior studies did not utilize the up-to-date model of flourishing and specifically, Seligman's well-being theory and its PERMA-H (positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, achievement, and positive physical health) model, to understand the elements that professionals perceive to have contributed to their flourishing and what role those elements have played in their flourishing.

The researcher conducted virtual, unstructured interviews using open-ended questions. A purposive sampling strategy was used for this study, with data collected from a total of five interviews of participants from different professional fields and industries. All participants self-identified as being mid-career professionals with ten-to-fifteen years of experience in the workforce who considered themselves to be flourishing.

Through thematic analysis, five themes were found to describe how mid-career professionals experience the six elements of the PERMA-H model and what role those elements play in their flourishing. The five themes are: (a) interconnectedness of the PERMA-H elements; (b) carving out time; (c) continuous growth and life-long learning; (d) achievement if accompanied by other elements; and (e) character strengths and virtues. The conclusions are: (a) the lived experiences of flourishing mid-career professionals suggest interconnectedness between all the PERMA-H elements, (b) flourishing mid-career professionals carve out time for

meaningful things and relationships, (c) flourishing mid-career professionals demonstrate continuous growth and life-long learning, (d) while flourishing mid-career professionals value achievement, achievement needs to be accompanied by other PERMA-H elements, and (e) beyond the PERMA-H elements, flourishing mid-career professionals demonstrate character strengths and virtues. Conclusions related to flourishing during the mid-career years are presented. The study ends with recommendations for mid-career professionals on how to flourish and implications for organizational leaders on cultivating flourishing in the workplace.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Aristotle thought that everything we do is to achieve happiness, or the so-called “good life” (Aristotle, 1892). However, over the years, the word happiness has been overused to the point that it does not hold the same meaning as it used to. The prevalence of research has shown a growing epidemic of psychological or mental illness in the workplace, including anxiety, depression, and other stress-related sickness (Jones-Rincon, & Howard, 2019; Taubman, Velyvis, & Parikh, 2019; van Steijn, Scheepstra, Yasar, Olf, de Vries, & van Pampus, 2019). Steadily rising reports of absenteeism and presenteeism, lower employee motivation and engagement, workplace burn-out, high turnover rates, and an unhealthy workforce are presented (Ferreira, Ferreira, Cooper, & Oliveira, 2019; Gross, Thaler, & Whinter, 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Perrone, Player, & Youngs, 2019; Willard- Grace, Knox, Huang, Hammer, Kivlahan, Grumbach, 2019). Only a handful of research has been conducted on how organizations can help to create the nurturing conditions for the pursuit of happiness or even further individual pursuit of well-being and flourishing (Coo & Salanova, 2018; Diener & Oishi, 2005; Fowler & Christakis, 2008; Huang & Humphreys, 2012; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Nelson, 2009; Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989; Seligman, 2002, 2011; Walsh, Boehm, & Lyubomirsky, 2018; Waterman, Schwartz, & Conti, 2008).

The birth of positive psychology was led by forward-thinking psychologists who wanted to go beyond fixing the broken pieces of people and focus more on discovering what contributes to human flourishing (Cameron, Dutton, Quinn, 2003; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Duckworth, 2016). Seligman’s (2011) well-being theory—called flourishing—proposed that the

first step in positive psychology is to dissolve the doctrine of “happiness” into more achievable elements in daily life through the PERMA-H model. The PERMA-H model is composed of interrelated elements that contribute to overall well-being and ultimately flourishing: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, achievement, and physical health (see Figure 1). Flourishing is an optimal result from the ongoing experiences of well-being.



Figure 1. Seligman’s PERMA-H Model. From The Permah Wellbeing Survey: 2018. Copyright 2018 by Michelle McQuaid Pty Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

This study focused on mid-career professionals who consider themselves to be ‘flourishing’, and who will continue happily in their careers. For any mid-career professional, to flourish beyond job satisfaction they need to experience one or more aspects of Seligman’s flourishing in the PERMA-H model (Seligman, 2011).

This chapter presents a thorough introduction for the examination of flourishing in mid-career professionals using Seligman’s PERMA-H model (2011). To begin, a section on the Background of the Research precedes the section detailing the Statement of the Problem in order to present the context of this study. Following the problem is the Statement of the Purpose, which outlines the research design. Research Questions guiding a phenomenological qualitative

method are outlined in the next section. The Significance of the Study details the implications and relevance of this study within the context of mid-career professionals' flourishing. The Key Terms section defines the terms used throughout the dissertation. The chapter ends with a discussion of assumptions, limitations, and delimitation of the study.

Background of the Research

One of the most well-known founders of modern psychology, Sigmund Freud, argued that the most humans can hope for in life is the absence of pain and the presence of pleasure (Freud, 1930, as cited in Strachey, 1961). For generations, the field of psychology has focused most energy on ideas of how to effectively diagnose, repair, and prevent individual suffering from mental illnesses, such as depression, addiction, anxiety, trauma, and schizophrenia, in the hopes of helping people achieve health, happiness, and well-being in the long term (Seligman, 2011).

Two main theoretical perspectives focus on addressing the question of what makes people feel good and happy: the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002). The hedonic approach to well-being expresses the notion that increased pleasure and decreased pain leads to momentary happiness (Diener, 2000; Lundqvist, 2011). The eudaimonic approach strongly relates to the state of long-lasting happiness. Humanistic philosophers like Aristotle and Plato promoted *eudaimonia*, which concerns one's quality of life in a fully engaged and consistently satisfying way (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Keyes & Annas, 2009).

The eudaimonic approach includes autonomy, meaning and purpose, self-acceptance, personal growth, social contribution, sense of belonging, competence, and personal expressiveness (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Lundqvist, 2011; & Ryan & Deci, 2001). In contrast to the hedonic view, the eudaimonic view suggests that the important issue concerning emotions is not

feeling positive per se (Parrot, 1993), but rather is the extent to which a person is prospering in their life through experiencing good health, overcoming challenges, engaging with activities and relationships that are enriching, and achieving something great for oneself and for the greater purpose of others (Seligman, 2011).

In his 2011 work, Martin Seligman differentiates well-being theory from his first authentic happiness theory as described in 2002. Authentic happiness theory measures and increases life satisfaction, whereas well-being theory measures PERMA-H elements and its goal is to increase the opportunity of flourishing by using PERMA-H elements (Seligman 2011, 2002).

Life or job satisfaction is not the same as flourishing. Flourishing is defined as living life well in every aspect of one's life, being fulfilled in one's career—not merely a job, pursuing and possessing virtues, and giving back to society in a way that fosters community health (Seligman, 2011). Each of the six core elements of PERMA-H model is a measurable element that contributes to well-being. Well-being comes from one or multiple elements of PERMA-H elements.

The PERMA-H model suggests six core elements as the fundamental building blocks of human wellness. *Positive emotions* are momentary pleasures from things or activities in one's past, present, or the future (Seligman, 2002). Positive emotions come from practicing positive character traits. Seligman (2002) explains the function and consequences of momentary positive emotions and how to create long lasting happiness through various techniques. Fredrickson (2013) expands on this to ten key positive emotions; joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love. At work, positive emotions produce positive relationships, increase employee engagement, and enhance employee's learning settings

(Fredrickson, 2003; Hazelton, 2014; Ouweneel, Le Blanc, Schaufeli, 2012; Seligman, 2011, 2002; Taylor & Statler, 2014).

Engagement is happiness in the present during activities and feeling a high level of gratification in the midst of powerful connection. It is not pleasurable feelings, but powerful connection that makes one feel empowered through achievement through the activities. 'Flow' is a subset of engagement, which involves high intensity of focus, concentration, and absorption (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Engagement in the workplace is finding links between emotions, physical and psychological energies to perform, produce, and stay proactive (Kahn, 1990). Employee engagement reduces job stress from pressures and demands and allows people to achieve goals at work more easily (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). Engaged workers have better work performance, profit, social skills, and productivity due to their trust in the organization and people with whom they work (Fredrickson, 2003; Goswami, Prakash Nair, Beehr, & Grossenbacher, 2016; Seligman, 2011; Warr, 2002).

Positive relationship is humans creating and maintaining more positive and meaningful connections with others since positivity cannot be experienced alone (Seligman, 2011). Positive relationship is an exchange of positive emotions to create intimate bonds (Seligman, 2011). Positive relationships at work enhance employees' effectiveness including task completion, career advancement, supportive friendship, mentorship, and self-growth (Colbert, Bono, & Purvanova, 2016). Positive relationships in the workplace affect and are affected by outside work relationships such as marriage, family, friendship, neighbors and other social network interactions (Tang, Hung, & Wang, 2017; Fowler & Christakis, 2008). High-quality work relationships come through great communication and interpersonal connection, which helps

employees to be flexible, strong and resilient against setbacks and burn out (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

Meaning in life is found when one dedicates oneself to something bigger and more valuable than ourselves (Seligman, 2011; Steger, 2012). Klinger (1997) says to make a life worth a living is to pursue a purposeful goal. Seligman (2011) adds that meaning comes from connection and contributions to others in the community. According to Steger (2018), people often find meaning when they engage in good deeds for others. Also, people who find meaning in life are involved in low risk activities to maintain good physical health (Steger, 2018). Meaning of work consists of self-value, motivation and beliefs, individual interactions and relationships such as those with coworkers, leaders, communities and family (Ross, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). Meaning at work is cultivated from building culture, exercising vision and transformation, edifying charismatic leadership for common goals, values, and beliefs, and encouraging team building (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003).

Achievement is the momentary belief and ability to do the things that one cares to achieve, such as a goal or task completion (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). People pursue achievement for human flourishing, although it does not bring any other PERMA-H elements (Seligman, 2011). Achievement does not solely rely on intelligence, but on grit, effort, and talent (Duckworth, 2016). Achievement produces performance through competition, mastery of individual works that leads to an employee's good emotional health, higher engagement, and better cooperation (Baranik, Lau, Stanley, Barron, & Lance, 2013).

Physical health impacts human wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Physical health is affected by pessimism or optimism when one faces challenges, setbacks, loss, failures or misfortunes (Seligman, 2011). Reis and Gable (2003) says that affection and intimacy help physical health.

The brain affects the immune system through hormones and negative emotions such as stress, depression, or grief will deplete the system (Seligman, 2006). Chronic stress and burnout weakens the body (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Proactive prevention to reduce high-risk health problems is to increase physical activity at work by reducing sitting time, incorporating sit-stand workstations, and providing better food options (Arrogi, Schotte, Bogaerts, Boen, & Seghers, 2019; Jelsma et al., 2019; Jirathananuwat & Pongpirul, 2017; Levy & Thorndike, 2019; To, Chen, Magnussen, & To, 2013; Wong, Gilson, van Uffelen, & Brown, 2012).

Flourishing in Mid-Career Professionals. The ever-increasing pace of change affecting social, political, economic and organizational realms means that our knowledge, understanding, and skills require constant augmentation and reframing (Quinn & Wennes, 2008). To date, there has been limited in-depth research on the strategies that foster success among mid-career professionals (Clarke, 2012; Maddox-Daines, 2016). Mid-career professionals are categorized as individuals who have ten to fifteen years of work experience (Caprino, 2016). Mid-career professionals are in between the entry-level and executives and often experience burnout, regrets, and disappointments (Caprino, 2016). However, individuals who are flourishing in mid-career experience one or more aspects of PERMA-H elements in the workplace (Seligman, 2011).

Findings from prior studies indicate that mid-career professionals can feel positive emotions including optimism (Schwandt, 2015), resilience (Waddimba, Scribani, Hasbrouck, Krupa, Jenkins, & May, 2016), confidence (Rae, 2005), and self-belief (Rae, 2005) as they experience growth in self and social identity transformation at work. Mid-career professionals' engagement at work increases by problem-based learning (Fenwick, 2002), obtaining new knowledge and skill sets, incorporating them into work, and adopting new identity and roles (Brown, Brimrose, Barnes, & Hughes, 2012; Jorissen, 2003; Maree, 2017). Mid-career

professionals who are flourishing have significant positive relationships including those with mentors, coaches, and peers, who influence their re-evaluation of past, present, and future career plans (Jorissen, 2003; Workman, 2005).

Mid-career professionals find meaning through self-discovery (Fenwick, 2002), re-commitment (West, 2012), and autonomy (Rae 2004) through contextual learning from previous work experiences, their established value in the organization, and adaptability for newly learned skill sets as leaders or as entrepreneurs. Achievement in mid-career professionals requires a high level of critical thinking, motivation, drive, and ability to adapt to new challenges to become a competitive candidate for job markets (Brown et al., 2012).

Statement of Problem

Most mid-career professionals experience an overwhelming amount of negative emotion such as confusion about their career direction, disappointments, demoralization, regrets, frustration, doubts, resentment, anger (Caprino, 2016; Maree, 2013; Schwandt, 2015). The natural career progression from an entry-level to a mid-career stage might reduce positivity and vitality at work and often ultimately results in many mid-career professionals not experiencing flourishing in the workplace. However, mid-professionals who are flourishing do exist in the workplace and they are experiencing well-being (Maddox-Daines, 2016; Rae, 2005; Waddimba et al., 2016; West, 2012; Workman, 2005).

However, there was not previously enough literature on how the elements of the PERMA-H model contribute to flourishing among mid-career professionals. Most of the literature on mid-career professionals focuses on negative experiences (e.g. job stress, burnout, low job satisfaction) rather than positive experiences (Caprino, 2016; Gazelle, Liebschutz, & Riess, 2015; Schwandt, 2015; Smith & Smalley, 2018; Spickard, Gabbe, & Christensen, 2002).

Another problem is that the prior studies did not utilize the up-to-date model of flourishing. Specifically, there have been no studies using Seligman's PERMA-H model to understand flourishing in mid-career professionals. The small amount of literature on flourishing is focused mainly in the general area of human flourishing.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of five professionals who self-identify as flourishing in mid-career. This study sought to understand which elements of Seligman's PERMA-H model (positive emotion, engagement, positive relationship, meaning, achievement, and positive physical health) subjects perceive to have contributed to their flourishing and what role those elements have played in their flourishing. A phenomenological method is effective in exploring meaning and perspectives of participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This study used the phenomenological approach such that when the researcher collects data from people who have experienced the phenomenon, the study concentrates more on participants' described experiences and less on the researcher's interpretations (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

The following research questions and sub-questions will be explored throughout this study.

RQ1. How do mid-career professionals describe their lived experience of flourishing based on the six elements of Seligman's PERMA-H model?

- a. How do mid-career professionals experience positive emotions and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?

- b. How do mid-career professionals experience engagement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
- c. How do mid-career professionals experience positive relationships and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
- d. How do mid-career professionals experience meaning and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
- e. How do mid-career professionals experience achievement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
- f. How do mid-career professionals experience positive physical health and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?

Significance of The Topic

Mid-career professionals are critical to organizations and society for several reasons, particularly because of the importance of their roles between the entry-level workers and executives. Mid-career is a time to re-evaluate past, present and future plans and it creates opportunities for growth in self and social identity transformation (Rae, 2005). The significance of the topic is to add to the understanding of why these individuals are flourishing and how they remain in the state of flourishing in their professions, using the PERMA-H model.

Findings from this study will expand the knowledge of PERMA-H elements to develop potential flourishing strategies and programs that may enhance more mid-career professionals to flourish. The findings will potentially help learning and development managers who are designing, developing and implementing mid-career professionals programs. Practitioners or organizations who will be coaching, mentoring, and managing mid-career professionals also will benefit from this study. Moreover, this study will bring awareness and understanding to

organizations about employees' needs in all phases (entry-level, mid-career, and executives) of employees' career trajectory. This study will add to the ongoing literature on flourishing in the workplace.

Key Definitions

Achievement. Achievement is attaining a goal with effort, grit, and talent (Seligman, 2011; Duckworth 2016). Achievement does not necessarily bring positive emotion, meaning, or positive relationship, but people still often pursue accomplishment for human flourishing (Seligman, 2011).

Engagement. Seligman (2002) defines engagement as a state when one feels the long lasting "gratifications" during activities through a powerful connection with skills that match one's strengths and virtues (p. 102).

Flourishing. Seligman (2011) defines "Flourishing" as an experience of optimal human functioning that goes beyond happiness to well-being. Well-being theory, also known as the PERMA-H model includes positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, achievement and physical health.

Flow. Optimal experience in the mental state of operation called the zone, which a person is fully immersed in a feeling of deep enjoyment, creativity, and a total involvement with life. It amounts to absolute absorption in an activity that one does and loses a sense of space and time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Fully-functioning person. Carl Rogers (1961) described the fully functioning person as 'the good life.' He said, the good life is a process of movement (not a state of being) in a direction (not a destination), which the total human organism selects. It is a process of constant transformation in transition rather than a stagnant position. 'The good life' is not freely given to

anyone or any state, but a pursuit of one who desires which follows with self-improvement. The characteristic qualities experienced by a person becoming more fully functioning involves an increasing openness to experience, increasingly existential living by living each moment to the fullest, increasing trust in one's organism, and an increasing experience and acceptance of one's feelings. It is an optimal development in one's psychological adjustment and maturity.

Grit. It is a personality trait, which portrays the power of passion and perseverance to achieve one's long-term goal. It promotes the overcoming of obstacles, challenges, and setbacks by perseverance of effort and consistency of interests over time (Duckworth, 2016).

Meaning. Seligman (2011) defines meaning in life as when one devotes oneself to something beyond oneself, which will benefit humanity in the bigger picture. Seligman (2002) claims that the life with noble purpose and transcendent meaning is beyond the "good life"; a life beyond seeking for pleasures. Meaning consists of having a purpose, a direction, connection to something bigger, a value, which leads to wellness (Steger, 2012).

Mid-Career professionals. It is individuals with more than ten to fifteen years of professional experience (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2018).

Positive Physical Health. Positive physical health includes lifestyle to reduce stress, which causes inflammation (Steptoe, Wardle, & Mamot, 2005; McEwen, 2008), increase physical activity (Levy & Thorndike, 2019) and healthy eating habits (Bandoni, Bombem, Marchioni, & Jaime, 2010; Brouwer & Mosack, 2015; Quintiliani, Poulsen, & Sorensen, 2010) to prevent any chronic physical damage.

Positive Emotions. Positive emotions are "raw feels," also called momentary pleasures from things or activities (Seligman, 2002, p. 102). The positive emotions about the past are feelings such as satisfaction, pride, peace, and contentment; the present positive emotions can be

joy, zest, excitement, comfort, and euphoria; and the future positive emotions include optimism, hope, faith, and trust (Seligman, 2002).

Positive Relationship. Positive relationship is defined as humans building and maintaining deeper, more positive, and more meaningful emotional connections with others (Seligman, 2011).

Key Assumptions

The researcher acknowledges certain key assumptions that guided decision-making related to this study. The first assumption was that the participants provided valid and honest perceptions of their experiences because the probability of study responses resulting in negative consequences was low. The second assumption was that the participants who volunteered for this study considered themselves to be flourishing in their career and would be able to respond and share experience related to why they are flourishing. The third assumption was that since all participants self-identified as flourishing, the researcher assumed that the interviews with participants would skew towards positive experiences and away from negative ones. Finally, the researcher had an optimistic anticipation that when negative experiences or challenges were discussed, they were presented by participants as examples of flourishing rather than to despair.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, potential participants volunteered based on their subjective perception of themselves as flourishing in their career. This study was limited to the lived experiences of five participants who self-identified as flourishing mid-career individuals in the United States. Therefore, it did not examine the full range of possible experiences, life events, negative experiences, or factors that might encourage or discourage mid-career professionals to flourish in their careers.

In this study, the use of purposeful sampling created a limitation based on the small number of participants from a large, abstract population who self selected themselves as flourishing. Due to both the purposeful sampling and the phenomenological research design, this study was limited in terms of the transferability of findings to the larger population (Creswell, 2013).

Another limitation was the online data collection approach which required technical skills, internet literacy, and accessibility of the internet for both parties participating in the interview. Online data collection has an advantage of reaching marginalized groups. However, a limitation of this method is that it creates ethical issues on participants' privacy protection, ownership and authenticity of the data (James & Busher, 2007; Nicholas et al., 2010).

Delimitations of the Study

This study was only focused on mid-career professionals and not executives or entry-level professionals. The definition of mid-career professionals for the purpose of this study was defined as ten to fifteen years of the same career path for the individuals. The mid-career professionals volunteered to participate from all professional backgrounds because flourishing does not happen in particular professions. There were a wide variety of professionals who found a strong sense of purpose, relationships, meaning, engagement, positive emotion, and achievement in their work field daily using multiple layers of strengths and virtues.

Summary

Introduced in chapter 1 is a discussion of flourishing. The concept of flourishing asks both what it means to cultivate the self and what it means to do so in the context of contributing to the world, as defined and described by Seligman (2011). As mid-career professionals experience potential problems of setbacks, disappointments, regrets, and burn-out, the study is

designed to understand individuals who are flourishing in mid-career and examine which elements of PERMA-H model influence and maintain their well-being in their career.

Presented in chapter 2, is a literature review surrounding historical background and theoretical foundation of flourishing, or well-being theory. The concept of flourishing is discussed in depth, suggesting that it might allow for a more comprehensive conceptualization of how individuals can increase the phenomena.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Flourishing derives from Aristotle's idea of *eudaimonia*, or well-being and happiness. This concept of flourishing relates to quality of life beyond pleasure seeking, instead focusing on cultivating one's life that takes into account both one's personal interests and community needs and well-being (Seligman, 2011). This chapter investigates the literature on flourishing in general, and the literature on success among mid-career professionals in particular, in preparation for this study's main question of how flourishing in mid-career is achieved. Mid-career does not mean midlife, since the starting point of career for individuals can vary from post high school to post college, or even later in the 30s or 40s. However, it definitely is a transition phase from entry-level professional towards late-career professional, executive, or even entrepreneurship. This midpoint of a career involves assessment and interpretation, often leading to regrets, opportunities, and transformation. Kokemuller (2018) describes how the mid-career professional has gained expertise in one or more areas and therefore has more opportunities for leadership positions and increased responsibilities.

A framework and rationale for a study of flourishing in mid-career professionals are presented in four parts. The first section is on historical background on humanistic psychology, from which the well-being theory of flourishing arose. Two of the most important humanistic psychologists are Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers and their theories on human needs and well-being paved the way for positive psychology. Second, positive psychologists' contributions on the issues of happiness, subjective well-being, and self-determination theory and the relationship to well-being theory are presented. Third, the theoretical framework on Martin Seligman's well-being theory, flourishing, is explained. Flourishing as explained in the PERMA-H model in detail, including all aspects that support the model and their relations to the

workplace are discussed. The last section focuses on flourishing in mid-career professionals, concluding with the discussion and summary of well-being theory.

Historical Background

Humanistic psychology. Humanistic Psychology aims to foster self-awareness and healthier reactions to situations (Coleman, 2010). The Human Psychology perspective is summarized in five principles by James Bugental (1964) and Tom Greening (2006): (a) humans are not reducible to their component parts; (b) they exist in a uniquely human context; (c) they are consciously aware of themselves and others; (d) choice and responsibility are integral to humanity; and (e) humans are intentional in their actions, setting goals for the future, and seeking meaning, value, and creativity in their lives.

Humanistic psychology is a psychological study of the whole person through their behaviors. Humans are not solely the product of their environment, but influenced by their self-perceptions and personal meanings attached to their experiences. Maslow (1943) developed a hierarchy of needs and human motivation and Rogers develops significant aspect of person centered therapy surrounding three concepts: self-concept (1951), congruence (1961), and the fully functioning person (1961) which will be presented in the next section.

Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is five ordered levels of needs; physiological needs such as food and shelter, safety, social connections, (self) esteem based on success, and self-actualization or realizing one's potential (Maslow, 1943, 1954). Maslow's idea is that each level of this hierarchy must be satisfied before people can pursue the next level on the list. Thus, to become maximally successful, individuals must first meet their physical needs and biological requirements: things such as breathing, drinking, eating, sleeping, and sex. When these needs go unfulfilled, we are only able to focus on those needs. Once the basic needs are

satisfied, safety needs are next most pressing (Maslow, 1954). In addition to physical safety, this tier also includes psychological, social, economic, and vocational security (Maslow, 1954). After safety, the next tier is social needs; a sense of belonging and love. Being socially engaged has been found in numerous studies to correlate with happiness and resilience, while low levels of social connection increase the likelihood of depression and loneliness (Maslow, 1954).

The need for esteem is more about respect than love. This refers to respect *of* others, and being respected *by* others (Maslow, 1954). People have the natural desire to be good at what we do and to be recognized for our unique talents or special traits. This recognition fuels the confidence to be creative and grow as a person (Maslow, 1954). Two distinct types of esteem needs are cognitive and aesthetic. The cognitive needs are for knowledge, curiosity, exploration, understanding, and meaning; aesthetic needs relate to appreciating beauty and balance, and practicing self-care (Maslow, 1970).

Self-concept. Carl Ransom Rogers is a humanistic psychologist; he is known for “client-centered” therapy, or the “person-centered” approach (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989). Rogers introduced the idea of *self-concept* within the subjective theory of personality. Rogers (1951) describes it as “the organized, consistent set of perceptions and beliefs about oneself” (p. 518). In humanistic psychology, the term “self” refers to our inner personality or who we are as a person. Self-worth, self-image, and the ideal self are three aspects of a person’s self-concept. Who we believe ourselves to be is the self-image; who we aspire to be is the ideal self. The closer we judge our behavior to be (self-image) to our vision of our ideal self—the more congruent these two parts of self-concept are—the more self-worth or valuable we will feel.

Congruence. As just described, congruence between self-image and ideal self, or a lack of it, directly impact self-worth or self-esteem—what we think of ourselves. According to

Rogers, being congruent means a person is not a façade, or a role, or a pretense. Rogers (1961) believes that self-worth is rooted in early childhood and based on the relationship with one's parents. Rogers writes that self-worth and positive regard from others are crucial components of psychological health, supporting self-actualization and the achievement of goals and ambitions. People who experience congruence which leads to positive feelings toward themselves, are able to fully embrace life as they succeed or fail (Rogers, 1959).

On the other hand, low self-worth leads people to be defensive and guarded with others, avoiding challenges in life, and fearing the difficult parts of life. Low self-worth is imperative because if one did not experience feelings of self-worth at an early stage of development, they do not know how to have self-respect, self-love, and self-care. Because of this, Rogers believes that therapists must foster positive regard for clients, in order for them to feel valued by others. (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989).

The fully functioning person. Carl Rogers describes the fully functioning person as having 'the good life' (Rogers, 1961, p. 184). He explains that the good life is a process, rather than a state of being, and involves movement in a direction, rather than reaching a destination. It is a process of constant transformation in transition rather than a stagnant position. Therefore, the meaning of 'the good life' can alter as one matures and grows. 'The good life' is not freely given to anyone nor is it a state of mind, but it is a pursuit of one's desires, which is followed with self-improvement. According to Rogers (1961), becoming a more fully functioning person involves an increasing openness to experience, growing existential living by living each moment to the fullest, an increase of trust in one's organism, and accepting emotions. It is an optimal development in one's psychological adjustment and maturity.

The process of growing into a fully functioning person and becoming more open to

experience is the at odds with defensiveness which is “the organism’s response to experiences that are perceived or anticipated as threatening” (Rogers, 1961, p. 187). This defensiveness creates incongruence (Rogers, 1961). This process of increasing the good life—is the continuing discovery for oneself within the organism or in the environment. The goal of this process is for people to move away from defensiveness to the openness to experience. One would be more open to listening to one’s feelings of fear, discouragement, and pain, but hopefully also to courage, tenderness, and awe (Rogers, 1961).

Secondly, this experience creates the fluidity where oneself “becomes a participant in and an observer of the ongoing process of the experience rather than being in control of it” (Rogers, 1961, p. 189). This technique helps one to experience the moment rather than trying to control the moment. The third characteristic is about enlarging trust in one’s organism. An individual who is fully open to the experiences will have more data on the situation, one’s behaviors, social expectations, and one’s complex and conflicting needs; therefore will be more realistic, objective, and more effective in problem-solving (Rogers, 1961). Increasing trust would help one to accept others and increase the degree of positive self-regard. These three processes help one to function more fully in his feelings and reactions because more clear self-awareness of oneself contributes to flowing freely in and through one’s experience (Rogers, 1961). The fully functioning person will be less vulnerable to threat. The behavior of a fully functioning person is more controlled, socialized, mature, creative, adaptable to new situations and problems, and free to be fully expressive of one’s own purpose and values (Rogers, 1959).

Positive psychology. Positive psychology grew from humanistic psychology (Robbins, 2015). The significant differences in the philosophical background of humanistic psychology and positive psychology have lead to heated debates and divisions between the two areas. In spite of

this, the basic ideas of humanistic psychology have led to important discoveries in the field of positive psychology in theory, research, and therapy (Friedman, 2008; Robbins, 2008; Wong, 2011a, 2011b). Positive psychology theories and practices relates to human happiness, actualization and fulfillment (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1999; Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology has the goal of not only repairing broken people but also bringing about change in the focus of psychology toward increasing people's capacities for good (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychologists had a different vision. They did not just want to fix the weakness and damage, but nurture and explore what human being could be in their best condition. They wanted to find the scientific path to the best human condition, which led psychology studies to focus more on preventive studies rather than treating only the aftermath (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Thus, they discovered multiple components related to humans' innate qualities that can protect from mental illness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). These are things such as "faith, work ethic, hope, honesty, perseverance, and the state of flow, etc." (p. 7). They wanted to nurture these virtues in young people to promote positive psychology as more preventative than restorative.

The words, "the good life" are often used in both humanistic and positive psychology, and it has been defined as achieving the greatest value in life for wellness and a fulfilling life with authentic happiness, enjoyment, engagement with others, and full of meaning (Aristotle, 1999; Rogers, 1961; Seligman, 2002).

"Happiness" historically is not closely tied to such hedonics-- feeling cheerful or merry is a far cry from what Thomas Jefferson declared that we have the right to pursue-- and it is an even further cry from my intentions for a positive psychology (Seligman, 2011, p. 11)

Seligman (2011) talks about how Aristotle's definition of happiness, in which people do whatever makes them happy or feel good, has been overused and lost its meaning over time. Therefore, he redefines the "good life" as when one is fostering self-growth of authentic happiness and overjoyed gratification by exercising one's strengths daily in one's life (Seligman, 2002). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) charge psychology with figuring out what kinds of families, work environments, and policies lead to people having a life worth living. As a result, Seligman (2011) suggests that understanding happiness requires a theory and he presents the well-being theory, the PERMA-H model as his new theory.

Positive psychology emphasizes a strengths-based philosophy (Harris, Thorensenn, & Lopez, 2007). Park, Peterson, and Seligman's (2004) research shows that leaders who encourage their people to engage their strengths more frequently resulted in the unleashing of greater potential and enhancement of their sense of well-being. Positive psychology comes from positive experiences, positive individual characteristics and personalities, and positive environments which promises to improve quality of life, increase well-being and prevents any issues that result from meaningless (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Finding and redefining the strengths cause workers to thrive in contrast to languish.

Positive psychologists demonstrate different definitions and insights on wellness such as character strengths, optimism, satisfaction, happiness, well-being and other elements to elevate your purpose of existence. Positive psychologists' different perspectives of well-being can be summarized as hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001), subjective well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Diener, 2000; Diener & Oishi, 2005), and happiness, which are presented in the following section.

Hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Well-being is a complex concept having to do with human potential and optimal experience (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Well-being perspectives divide into two approaches: hedonic and eudaimonic. First, the hedonic approach focuses on “the good life” (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Second, the eudaimonic viewpoint moves beyond happiness and focuses on meaning and self-realization (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Well-being has theoretical and practical implications for government, teaching, therapy, parenting, and spirituality. The hedonic viewpoint is based on activities that bring pleasures, the “good feeling” (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999). Although the hedonic view has been expressed in many different forms, it can be simplified as seeking pleasures and avoiding pain or any negative affect (Ryan & Deci, 2008).

It has the potential to help people pursue the goal of the “better life,” or the “good life” (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Happier citizens are more frugal, meaning they are better at saving money and consuming less (Mogiler, Whilans, & Norton, 2018). They have more compassion and empathy towards fellow citizens experiencing difficulties (Nelson, 2009), donate of their time and resources to causes such as blood donation or disaster relief (Aknin, Dunn, Whillans, Grant, & Norton, 2013; Priller & Schupp, 2011). People who are happy take seriously their well-being and participate in practices like using seatbelts while at the same time they are in fewer car accidents (Goudie, Mukherjee, Neve, Oswald, & Wu, 2014) and get more exercise than unhappy people (Huang & Humphreys, 2012).

The Eudaimonic approach reaches beyond more than just “happy feeling” but includes actualization of human potentials and the fully-functioning person that Rogers mentioned (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The word *eudaimonism* expresses the belief that well-being entails the process of fulfilling or realizing one’s true being (Waterman, 1993; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Aristotle’s definition is an ethical concept referring to the best type of life, which with humans are innately

endowed. He said, happiness is discovered through doing what is worthwhile and living out virtues. Fowers (2008) defines *eudaimonia* as “full-fledged thriving that includes affective, cognitive, behavioral, social, and political excellence” (p. 631).

Eudaimonia is a form of activity that includes pleasure, but also adds to that pursuit of a complete life that includes multiple dimensions and other aspects beside just pleasures.

Aristotle’s belief is the greatest quest of human life (Fowers, 2008). Some pleasurable activities produce outcomes that are detrimental and undermine wellness, therefore the subjective view does not always lead to well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Furthermore, the experience of eudaimonic living includes hedonic happiness, but not all forms of hedonic pleasure are derived from eudaimonic living (Waterman, Schwartz, and Conti, 2006).

According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), there are two different personal traits that contribute to positive psychology: subjective well-being and happiness; these will be discussed one by one in the following paragraphs.

Subjective well-being. Subjective well-being describes how one thinks and feels about one’s life, therefore most of the researches relies heavily on self-reported and self-rating methodology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Diener, 2000; Diener & Oishi, 2005). A core study focuses on “how a person’s values and goals mediate between external events and the quality of experience” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 9). Positive psychologists’ burning question is whether people determine their happiness based on what happens to people, or based on how they understand the happening (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Subjective well-being is composed of the following elements: life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Happiness. Seligman (2002) defines the authentic happiness, saying, “it is supposed to be a theory of what humans choose, but it has a huge hole in it: it omits success and mastery”. Seligman clarifies that authentic happiness is not always about what makes us feel good, but what gives more meaning to life for any reason (Seligman, 2011). Also, happiness is not a competition or comparison, but comes about by promoting self-improvement (Seligman, 2002). Seligman’s theory of authentic happiness has three elements: positive emotion, engagement, and meaning (Seligman, 2002). It is more measurable than many theories of positive psychology.

Seligman (2002) talks about creating a lasting happiness, which entails satisfaction about the past and past emotions. Some of these past positive emotions include satisfaction, contentment, fulfillment, pride, and serenity rather than unresolved bitterness and vengeful anger. If one is dwelling in the past, it may get ahold of one’s happiness in the present and future. Although bad childhood events do not mandate adulthood trouble, childhood events do determine aspects of adult personality” (Seligman, 2002). The “inner child” from the trauma not only leads to bad decisions, character flaws, or creating chaos, but produces “victimization” in one’s mindset (Seligman, 2002, p. 67).

Seligman (2011) explains why he changed his *Authentic Happiness* theory to *Well-being* theory. It is important to note that authentic happiness theory is based in positive psychology ideas about happiness and contains only three components (positive emotion, engagement, and meaning) out of the six components of well-being theory; the PERMA-H (positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, achievement, and physical health) model. Seligman (2011) differentiates that authentic happiness theory is simply a metric for life satisfaction with the goal of increasing it. Furthermore, life satisfaction essentially measures cheerful mood: a happiology.

On the other hand, well-being theory measures all PERMA-H elements and its goal is to increase flourishing beyond simply accepting life as satisfactory.

Flourishing: Well-Being Theory (PERMA-H Model)

Seligman (2011) defines “Flourishing” as an experience of optimal human functioning that goes beyond happiness to well-being. A state of well-being is when one is not only surviving without mental illness, but when one lives to the fullest potential of vitality in one’s communities. Well-being theory, also known as the PERMA-H model proposes six elements by which individuals can pursue wellness. The six components of PERMA-H are: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, achievement, and physical health. Combined, these six components are known as the PERMA-H theory on human flourishing.

Seligman’s new well-being theory was built upon his original authentic happiness theory (2002) that consists of three of the six components of PERMA-H (positive emotion, engagement, and meaning) with three new components added in 2011 (relationships, accomplishments, and physical health). Seligman (2011) suggests that in order to increase flourishing, increase each of the components of PERMA-H. These domains of flourishing each meet three requirements: (a) contributes to well-being; (b) many people pursue it for its own sake, and not solely to affect other elements of PERMA-H; and (c) each element is defined and measured individually and does not depend on the other elements (Seligman, 2011).

In *Flourish*, Seligman (2011) explains his reasons for expanding his original theory, authentic happiness, to PERMA-H. Seligman (2011) explains that the new theory brings a more holistic approach to human flourishing as opposed to authentic happiness theory, which measures solely human happiness level. Happiness is not sustainable; it is not sufficient to foster environments for human flourishing. Three inadequacies of authentic happiness theory

compelled him to upgrade to well-being theory: (a) the primary understanding of the word “happiness” is only associated with up-beat and cheerful pleasure; (b) life satisfaction carried too much weight in the theory although people can, in fact, be not highly satisfied with their life but still thriving; and (c) people strive for more in life than the three original concepts of positive emotions, engagement, and meaning.

Seligman and Csikzentmihalyi (2000) explain how life is worth living when we know that practicing self-discipline, autonomy, optimism, and hope will result in better physical health, wisdom, creativity, and overall flourishing (p. 5). Furthermore, when an individual experiences more than one of the given elements together, flourishing is intensified in comparison to an individual who experiences just one element. However, Seligman suggests an individual does not have to experience all elements to experience flourishing since they are independent from each other (Seligman, 2011).

The discussion of PERMA-H will turn now to defining each of the six components of the theory one-by-one, and presenting recent literature to support the importance of the theory. Furthermore, the expressions of each of the six components in the workplace will be discussed.

Positive emotions. Positive emotions are “raw feels,” also called momentary pleasures from things or activities (Seligman, 2002, p. 102). One can feel positive emotions about their past, present, or the future (Seligman, 2002). The positive emotions about the past are feelings such as satisfaction, pride, peace, and contentment. The present positive emotions can be joy, zest, excitement, comfort, and euphoria. The positive emotions in the future include optimism, hope, faith, and trust. Seligman (2002) categorizes positive emotions’ intensity level as high (i.e. rapture, ecstasy, elation), moderate (i.e. glee, fun, sparkle), and low (i.e. comfort, harmony, relation). The emotions of past, present and future are different and not linked together.

First, Seligman argues the positive emotions come from exercising positive character-traits (Seligman, 2002). Based on Seligman and his colleagues' (2002) research, the patients who focus on their strengths rather than correcting their weaknesses reap more benefits in their daily lives. The patients who utilize their strengths and virtues created new pathways to experience positive emotions (Seligman, 2011). For example, negative emotions such as anger, bitterness, anxiety, or depression can be diffused by some character strengths and virtues such as love, kindness, gratitude, and humor; or are transformed into positive emotions by forgiveness, hope, optimism, and courage. Seligman (2002) says in order to feel genuine positive emotions, one must utilize strengths and virtues in one's daily routines to enhance happiness and gratification. Moreover, one will have a fuller and more thriving life by spending more time on building one's signature strengths than focusing on the weaknesses.

Seligman and other researchers expanded on the happiness and well-being research and interventions based on positive psychology theory. These 'Values in Action' (VIA) are a catalog of core virtues and character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). VIA is made up of character strengths (24) derived from virtues (6) that have been proven to contribute to happiness and well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The six virtue areas are: (a) wisdom and knowledge; (b) courage; (c) humanity; (d) justice; (e) temperance; and (f) transcendence (see Appendix E). Seligman (2002) says that in order to feel genuine positive emotions, one must practice strengths and virtues. He also adds that instead of overly concentrating on one's weaknesses, one will have a fuller and more thriving life by spending more time on building one's signature strengths.

Second, Seligman (2002) explains the function and consequences of positive emotions. He describes the evolution of positive feeling and the cause of negative emotions. He states that

emotions are composed of several aspects, including feeling, sensing, thinking, and action. If any aspect triggers aversion, this results in negative emotions: fear, sadness, and anger. Fear comes from dangerous thoughts or feelings, sadness comes from feelings of loss, and anger comes when you feel violated by others. In particular, sadness and depression lead to extended problems such as disengagement, suicide, and other serious mental illness. In contrast, the consequences of positive emotions create different thinking pathways from negative feelings such as creativity, productivity, kindness, patience, and tolerance. Seligman argues some people are completely content and happy although one does not express much in the way of positive emotions (Seligman, 2002). Thus, the expression of positive feeling is not the same thing as experiencing positive emotions; one can express very little positive affect but still experience positive emotions, and vice-a-versa.

Third, Seligman (2002) presents how to sustain long-term happiness beyond enjoying momentary happiness. He states that increasing the frequency of momentary positive emotions only leads to addictive behavior and does not lead to long-lasting happiness. Rather, his formula for maintaining happiness entails all three variables (set range, circumstances of one's life, and voluntary controls) in one's life to working together. First, set range is the scope of one's personal level of positive and negative emotions. The first half of the set range of one's happiness comes from biological parents who impact an individual during the developmental stage. The other half of an individual's happiness set range comes from how one deals with misfortunes and fortunes in life events (Seligman, 2002). As one experiences more accomplishments and fortunes, one's expectations rise and the level of life satisfaction becomes a moving target. The personal set range of happiness makes it difficult to achieve and maintain life satisfaction purely by having positive emotions or achievements.

The second aspect is circumstances (Seligman, 2002). Changing the circumstances of one's life for the better may be impractical (financial barriers) or costly, but when possible, improving one's circumstances has a large positive impact on happiness levels. Circumstances involve money, marriage, social life, age, health, religion, race, education, and gender. The last aspect in creating sustainable happiness is one's voluntary controls. Voluntary controls are how one feels about the past (Seligman, 2002). The voluntary controls are any elements under your control to bring more happiness in one's life. It is about letting go of the past that influences your present and future. Also, it challenges one to voluntarily change or rewire emotions about the past memories and make conscious choices to change one's emotions. One is to increase the gratitude to boost positive emotions, and two is to forgive bad events to reduce bitterness and shame. These willful acts will recreate your past memories.

Finally, Seligman (2002) elaborates on the importance of voluntary controls in the happiness equation, which includes the satisfaction level with the past, hope for the future, and how happy one feels about one's present life. Since the Freudian view believed that thought drives emotion, Seligman explores under what conditions does thinking drive feelings and vice versa. Seligman explains that events of childhood, and experiences of trauma and how much one can heal as a victim of them, determine adult personality. Although his research does not determine that adult troubles stem from bad childhood events, he encourages fostering positive character qualities such as gratitude and forgiveness in order to not dwell in the past, but find happiness in the present and increase optimism and faith in the future.

Seligman suggests a few techniques for fostering positive emotions in the present by increasing pleasure and making life more enjoyable. He recommends sharing with others, congratulating oneself and others, expressing blessings, and immersing oneself and living in the

moment. He also suggests that mindfulness practices, reflecting on our actions, and showing more gratitude will improve positive emotions (Seligman, 2002). He presents exercises to enhance hope in the future by changing pessimistic attitudes and thoughts into more optimistic ones. Optimism is learnable and it is one of the ways to reduce anxiety about the future. Positive emotions, or optimism, improve one's outlook, and more frequent experience of them ultimately leads to the satisfying pursuit of positive emotions. (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, & Mikels, & Conway, 2009; Seligman, 2002, 2011).

Though many of our choices are based on what makes us feel good, our choices are not always based solely on our feelings. Fredrickson's (1998) "broaden and build theory of positive emotions" expands on positive emotions' function, which reaches beyond pleasures to profound purpose. Fredrickson claims that positive emotions have a grand purpose to "broaden" our physical, social and intellectual properties and "build up" lasting personal assets to draw upon to cope with negative emotions (Fredrickson, 2000a, p. 134). The benefits of positive emotions build positive personal resources including creativity, knowledge, resilience, higher social tolerance, and physical health, all of which lead towards optimal human flourishing and engender continuous personal growth for longevity (Fredrickson, 2003; Hazelton, 2014).

Fredrickson's (2013) research describes ten positive emotions such as joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love, which have positive effects in people. Fredrickson's (2013) empirical research shows both positive and negative emotions impact thinking patterns. Peterson and Seligman (1984) documented that a long period of functioning with negative emotions such as depressed mood, narrow-minded perspective, and pessimistic thinking that has not been offset by positive emotions contributes to downward spirals and movement toward depression. Other studies have found positive emotions to have the

capacity for mitigating or even undoing emotions which negatively impact nervous systems—including increased heart rate, cardiovascular activation, higher blood pressure, and more (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000). The positive emotions also help people to better cope with adversity and provoke “upward spirals” toward optimal functioning and improve emotional well-being by improving their outlook (Fredrickson, 2002, 2003, 2013; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

Positive emotions in the workplace. Positive emotions in the workplace have been shown to bring many benefits including improved employee engagement, fostering a continuous creative and learning culture, building positive relationships, better health, higher job satisfaction, and resilience (Fredrickson, 2000b; Hazelton, 2014; Quoidbach, Mikolajczak, & Gross, 2015). Positive emotions engender a safe workspace to openly discuss values, meaning, accomplishment, and vision leading to individual and organizational transformation (Wall, Russell, & Moore, 2017). Positive emotions can promote better performance, productivity, relationships with coworkers, and a sense of accomplishment (Fredrickson, 2003). Mills, Fleck, and Kozikowski (2013) discovered positive emotions also improve work performance by bringing happiness, hope, joy, excitement, and contentment. Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel (2008) also found that daily experiences of positive emotions through loving-kindness meditation built hope and social support. Emotions are contagious and influential amongst people engaged in activity together, meaning that employees feed off each other’s affirmative emotions, thereby increasing employee engagement (Hazelton, 2014; Wall, Russell, & Moore, 2017).

Positive emotions, positive relationships, and employee engagement. Positive emotions at a workplace influence better work relationship building and increase employee engagement.

Seligman (2002) claims people are naturally drawn to people who exude positive moods and they end up receiving more love and friendship, which opens them up to more new opportunities. Positive emotions in the workplace influence the success of organizational development, such as better employee self-perceptions, sense of empathy, and a better self-awareness, which ultimately leads to a better understanding of others (Fredrickson, 2003). Many workplaces are encouraging educational programs that promote employees' emotional management abilities (e.g. emotional intelligence, soft skills workshops) as a way to enhance positive emotional skills (Slaski & Cartwright, 2003). Positive human emotion is heavily social and relationship oriented because humans find ways to survive in society by having relationships with others (Seligman, 2011). As a result, the implementation of positive emotion initiatives promotes the future resiliency and well-being of employees (Fredrickson, 2003).

Good leadership exemplifies for employees how to have positive interpersonal skills in the workplace. Positive and negative interactions with colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates influence emotions in the workplace. Leaders who use positive humor produce positive emotions at work and better work engagement (Goswami et al., 2016). Positive humor diffuses tension, builds trust, nurtures creativity, and constructs a fun environment (Holmes, 2007; Wiltham, 2007). Goswami and colleagues (2016) state that leaders' positive humor (e.g. beneficial, harmless) is not the same as negative humor (e.g. self-defeating, aggressive, and sarcastic). Although positive humor might not change the employee's behavior, it still encourages employee engagement, motivates task completion, and favors leadership that leads to the most optimal work environment. Positivity in the workplace promotes transformational teamwork collaboration and work performance, especially when supported by leaders (Goswami et al.,

2016; Greenberg & Maymin, 2013). The role-modeling of positive emotional management by leadership is impactful for employees (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002).

Employers who use negative emotions to motivate employees lead them toward workaholism rather than work engagement (Clark, Michel, Stevens, Howell, & Scruggs, 2014). Clark and colleagues elaborate on workaholism (work addiction); it is associated with negative work emotions such as guilt, anxiety, anger, and disappointment. However, work engagement involves positive work emotions such as joy, attentiveness, and self-assurance (Clark et al., 2013; Hazelton, 2014).

The research of Ouweeneel et al. (2012) uses Fredrickson's *broaden-and-build theory* to examine the relationship between positive emotions, personal and job resources, and work engagement. Ouwenell et al. (2012) defines work engagement as when one is strongly engaged into one's work and experiencing the sense of pride and passion of accomplishment. Thus, the work environment plays a crucial part in providing valuable personal resources for work engagement.

Positive emotions enhance employee's learning. Positive emotions promote learning in workplaces because when people are engaged, learning is more effective (Hazelton, 2014; Taylor & Statler, 2014). Positive emotions generate collaboration, mutual helpfulness, and knowledge creation (Aarrestad, Brøndbo, & Carlsen, 2015). Positive moods allow people to think more broadly, counteract bad feelings, improve coping mechanisms, and build resilience and endurance for the present state and future emotional states to thrive (Fredrickson, 2003). Thus, positive emotions are the cause of well-being, not only the effect of well-being (Hazelton, 2014).

Positive emotions create a respectful space for learning and knowledge (Gander, Proyer, & Ruch, 2016). Steigenberger (2015) explains positive emotions help employees to draw

meaning from their learning. Negative emotions can interfere with employees' learning progress. Organizations have incorporated fun workplace activities to stimulate employees' positive emotions and engagement at workplace learning (Hazelton, 2014). Work-based learning heavily lies on problem-solving skills in relationships, dilemmas, and challenges (Wall, 2014, 2016).

In summary, Seligman (2002) examined the relationship between positive emotions and positive character traits, specifically the function and consequences of positive emotions and techniques to sustain positive emotions. Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions teaches that positive emotions can broaden-and-build personal strengths to better deal with negative emotions. Positive emotions in the workplace nurture positive relationships and a high level of employee engagement. Positive emotions motivate employees to learn and grow at the workplace.

The aim of the next section is to examine the second element of engagement of PERMA-H and the resulting positive outcomes. The related literature on engagement, flow, and employee engagement is discussed.

Engagement. Seligman (2002) defines engagement as a state when one feels the long lasting "gratifications" during activities through a powerful connection with skills that match one's strengths and virtues (p. 102). Engagement refers to happiness in the present during a time when one immerses themselves fully with activities and loses touch with reality (Seligman, 2002). The gratification of engaged activities enriches the level of satisfaction with achieving a goal and the process to get to the goal.

Seligman (2002) differentiates engagement as "gratifications" and positive emotions as "pleasures" (p. 103). They are both forms of happiness in the present, neither in the past nor future. The difference lies in the fact that having positive emotions is experiencing pleasures

whereas engagement is experiencing contentment through enjoyable activities (i.e. rock climbing, reading, hiking, playing a piano). Seligman (2002) also indicates that positive emotions can be discovered, enhanced, and cultivated, however engagement cannot. In addition, engagement requires a good amount of concentration and full immersion in enjoyment.

Flow. Flow is a subset of engagement that involves a high level of focus, concentration, and absorption in a task or activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). There is no shortcut to flow but it is achieved by using personal strengths and talents to make a task or activity enjoyable, controllable, attainable, and effortless (Seligman, 2002, 2011). Flow is a condition of complete absorption with the activity or situation by having a fully involved and focused state of mind (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi emphasizes that flow—also called “the zone”—which is a peak psychological state of operation—is experienced when a person is doing an activity that is both appropriately challenging and matched to one’s skill level, resulting in intense focus and engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This matching of the skill and challenge level of a task creates a prime environment for learning and maximizing flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This state of heightened engagement is perceived as a positive and energy-filled drive that stems from the work and the role (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

Flow creates both an opportunity for learning with intense focus and creating immersion with the object or activity at hand. Flow has the potential to achieve in-depth learning and particularly high levels of personal and work satisfaction. Flow can be stressful and does not always bring positive emotions in the process. However, the sense of control with a clear goal and agenda in mind, the joy to thrive, and the loss of sense of time and space make you forget about the sense of emotions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The experience level of flow can be a very innately relaxing experience when the skill level of the learner is high and the challenge

level is low, whereas, learners may feel anxious when their skill level is low, and the task difficulty is high (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Seligman (2002) points out that experiencing flow is building psychological assets for the future. The relationship between engagement and flow leaves a high chance for engagement to predict flow and vice versa (Moneta, 2010).

In the next section, the relevant literature on employee engagement at the workplace is reviewed. Literature on engagement covers a variety of topics such as engagement with self, engagement with others, and engagement with work. For the purpose of this study, we will be limited to the discussion of work engagement.

Engagement in the workplace. Kahn's (1990) article analyzes employee engagement and disengagement at work, finding links between emotional, physical, and psychological (e.g. safety, meaning, accessibility) resources, and the availability of cognitive energy to perform, produce, and stay proactive at work. Kahn (1990) describes employee engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work" (p. 700). Personal engagement occurs when one is fully present in the moment and being open-minded, attentive, and mindful of their surroundings (Kahn, 1992).

Employee engagement has been one of the major challenges in management and organizational structures due to increasing demands on employees by companies while fewer work resources are available (e.g. time, support, manpower), leading to employees' burnout (Ferres, Firms, & Travaglione, 2000; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Furthermore, low employee engagement, or disengagement at work will lead to a high turnover rate (Pawar & Chakravarthy, 2014). Pawar & Chakravarthy's (2014) study investigates some of the reasons for turnover, finding that reasons range from financial, to career development, to ambiguity and uncertainty in

the job, and to difficult relationships with supervisors that impede employee engagement (Pawar & Chakravarthy, 2014).

Halbesleben, Harvey, and Bolino (2009) explain that some cases of employee disengagement at the workplace have little to do with happiness or job satisfaction at work. Some of these employees are experiencing satisfaction or enjoyment in their work, but they have to disperse their energy to other demands of life such as family life. Therefore, at times, highly engaged workers might not achieve work-life balance and are unable to juggle different roles in their lives. We will explore the positive impacts of employee engagement in the workplace in the next section.

Work engagement is defined as positive and fulfilling job behavior that incorporates three aspects; vigor (mental resilience), dedication (strong involvement with others), and absorption (absolute concentration) in the workplace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Furthermore, it helps employees to stay innovative, proactive, have better coping skills, and share more knowledge with coworkers (Eldor, 2017). Eldor (2017) also claims work engagement is enhanced by work politics, because they can be a positive challenge and opportunity for employees to attain personal strength to deal with job complications. As a result, personal resilience helps employees to reduce anxiety and stress less with job demands (Hakanene, Perhoniemi, & Toppinen-Tanner, 2008).

Work engagement reduces job-related stresses, demands, and pressures associated with responsibilities, but aids focus in achieving goals with creativity, productivity, aspiration, and confidence (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). Work engagement also helps one to be more introspective and self-engaged, which leads to the growth of self-esteem,

self-efficacy, active coping skills, and hope (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Storm & Rothmann, 2003). Moreover, Coo and Salanova's (2018) study reveals that mindfulness practice at work creates more self-awareness and results in a higher level of work engagement. Goswami et al. (2016) delineate how engagement is a key driver that influences employees' meaningful experience at work in order to have high levels of focus, commitment, job satisfaction, and lower turnover.

Researchers have found that workers who are highly engaged have better work performance, profit, productivity, and fiscal benefits (Fredrickson, 2003; Goswami et al., 2016; Seligman, 2011; Warr, 2002). When work engagement is positive, fulfilling, and emotionally satisfying, it even has the ability to prevent or reverse job burnout (Bakker & Leiter, 2010) and reduce employee turnover, thereby retaining talented employees who are committed to the organization's success (Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). Engaged employees improve higher range skills and are more open to learning at work to improve their performance. Therefore, they raise the standard of performance, exercise autonomy, are enthusiastic, energetic, loyal, and experience enjoyment in their workplace (Anitha, 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Eldor, 2017; Truss, Soane, Edwards, Wisdom, Croll, & Burnett, 2006).

Engaged workers provide a better social support for their coworkers by having a positive attitude and through giving positive feedback (e.g. appreciation, rewards, success) to enhance other employees' intrinsic motivation for challenges (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Billet, 2001; Simpson, 2009). Engaged employees even cope better with organizational developmental change, especially on two factors: how employees perceive the change, and the leadership during change (Caulfield & Senger, 2017). Effective leaders can effectively convince and influence

others to lean towards positive thinking about personal and organizational beneficial results of the change (Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Sinek, 2009).

Employee engagement is influenced by organizational trust (Gillespie & Mann, 2004), psychological empowerment by bosses (Ugwu, Onyishi, & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2014), and employees' alignment with overall organizational values and goals for organizational success (Cauldron, 1996). Organizational trust is built when employees and their superiors have a high level of trust that strengthens the team (Gillespie & Mann, 2004). Organizational trust improves internal communication (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014), organizational citizenship, and problem-solving in a team dynamic (Gillespie & Mann, 2004). Employees experience psychological empowerment when clear guidance and direct communication are given for employees' success. Direct internal communication between the leaders and employees creates a transparent culture in the organization (Mishra et al., 2014). When psychological empowerment is established, they feel their value and contribution to the organizational success (Robbins & Judge, 2012). Millar (2012) adds that employees will not commit to a company and stay loyal just on incentives, trainings, and benefits. However, a mutual accountability of equal relationship between leaders and employees fosters employees' commitment and engagement.

Plester and Hutchinson (2016) suggest that creating workplace fun engenders work engagement. Three types of workplace fun (task, organic, and organized) are presented in the study and findings showed that task fun will lead to flow, and that organic fun is enjoyable, however although organized fun could be entertaining, it could also create distraction and be counter-productive for employees at work. Hazelton (2014) claims incorporating "organized fun" around the tasks they must complete (e.g. sales goals) promotes employees' positive

emotions at work resulting in employee engagement. Thus, she elaborates workplace fun leads to success in organizational synergy and empowerment.

Thus, work engagement is experiencing flourishing at the workplace using your skills, talents, and network while collaborating with others. Work engagement is a powerful link to well-being and other PERMA-H elements such as positive emotions, better physical health, positive relationships, and achievement which ultimately enhance employees' performances (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

In the next section, the literature on relationships, the third element of PERMA-H is evaluated. It will explore Seligman's definition and the importance of the concept of relationship and how it affects well-being. Moreover, we examine the positive organizational relationships and their benefits in the workplace.

Positive relationships. Positive relationships are defined as humans building and maintaining deeper, more positive, and more meaningful emotional connections with others (Seligman, 2011). Seligman explains that no one can experience any form of positivity alone but only through interaction with others. Positive relationships compose of one of the greatest human strengths, which is to give and receive love and kindness (i.e. character and virtue) with others (Isaacowitz, Vaillant, & Seligman, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Seligman (2011) emphasizes that all positive relationships are accompanied by one of the PERMA-H elements, especially positive emotions, since they are mostly induced by social relationships (p. 22).

Seligman (2011) explains that humans are emotional creatures and continue to search for relationships that will feed what he calls the "hive emotions" (e.g. love, compassion, kindness, teamwork, self-sacrifice) (p. 23). Humans' natural need to create social bonds by sharing, understanding, and the need for others to understand their emotions and thoughts, can be

satisfied only by relationships, especially positive ones. Relationships can either nurture or destroy one's life. Although there is a danger of being vulnerable in relationships, no one can flourish in solitude because loneliness disables human potential (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Therefore, relationships are the most significant contributor to life-satisfaction and well-being (Reis & Gable, 2003).

Relationship research began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Levinger and Snoek (1972) started with romantic relationship studies on the effects of attraction and mutuality in partners. Huston and Burgess (1979) introduced Social Exchange Theories, which claims that in the beginning stages of relationships, mutual exchange builds trust and confidence, thereby allowing both partners to commit deeply to a relationship where they will sacrifice for one another. During the 1980s and 1990s research focused on love, commitment, maintenance of relationships, social support, personal well-being, and thriving relationships (Caughlin & Huston, 2010). Myers (2000) adds that the supportive network of close relationships (e.g. friendships and satisfied marriage) contributes to people's happiness and well-being.

The Handbook of Positive Psychology describes a few interpersonal aspects of personal flourishing: stability and closeness of relationships (Harvey, Pauwels, & Zickmund, 2005), altruism (Batson, Ahmad, Lishner, & Tsang, 2005), love (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2005), forgiveness (McCullough & vanOyen Witvliet, 2005), and social attachment and support (Taylor, Dickerson, & Klein, 2005). Diener and Oishi (2005) state that one of the important elements of well-being is close relationships, because positive relationships strongly relate to engagement and work aspiration (Geldenhuys, Laba, & Venter, 2014).

Reis, Collins, and Berscheid (2000) describe how crucial psychological elements and developments are formed in interpersonal relations. Interpersonal relationships have been

described as the social relations that foster emotion regulation, stress coping skills, self-awareness, identity formation, uncertainty reduction, collective task performance, and the fulfillment of personal satisfaction (Colbert et al., 2016; Reis & Gable, 2003). Positive psychology of relationships suggests that intimacy, affection, and shared activities bring interpersonal bonding, security, and safety as well as the inclination to avoid conflict or danger in relationships (Reis & Gable, 2003). Intimacy is closely connected to relatedness and expressing affection through verbal and nonverbal ways. It shows and fulfills each other's needs for validation, being cared for, and being understood (Reis & Gable, 2003).

Positive relationships with others contribute to people's wellness and psychological functioning (Steger, 2018). Emotional state is infectious from person to person for both positive and negative emotions amongst people in connection with each other (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). Particularly, happiness is spread in "direct" or "indirect" relationships. Happy people tend to be more creative, productive, and healthier (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). Social relationships build life's foundations and happiness (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Happiness comes from within and through our pursuit of our own happiness, but it also relies on others that we care for as well (Fowler and Christakis, 2008).

Taga (2006) divides social supports into five subsections: (a) social ties refers to the number of people in one's social web; (b) social networks is the number and quality of one's social ties; (c) received support from the connection; (d) perceived support represents the subjective impact of the relationship; (e) mutual helpfulness and satisfaction with all four types of support. What constitutes a satisfying relationship varies from individual to individual. Negative relationships cause the most intense forms of human distress and destruction, such as death of loved ones or troubled relationships (e.g., divorce or any type of abuse) that can often

lead to depression, loneliness, marginalization, and self-destructive choices. On the other hand, social connections also have the capacity to recover human well-being (Reis & Gable, 2003). Social relations are a crucial transformational piece in human development and behavior pattern formation of psychological processes (Reis & Gable, 2003).

Positive relationships in the workplace. Colbert et al. (2016) illustrate that positive work relationships foster employee flourishing including task completion, career advancement, emotional encouragement, that builds friendship, mentorship, and self-growth. Positive relationship in the workplace means that the workplace has a good social support system that encourages relational bonds (Colbert et al., 2016). Workers who have a beneficial social support have a better maintained well-being and cope with negative events (e.g. setbacks, failures, mistakes) at work (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). It helps others to share good things when these events happen. Brough, Muller, and Westman (2018) add that sharing positive events from work (e.g. promotions, work activities, positive feedback) improves coworkers' positive emotions just as well as work stress and psychological strains or emotions are transferrable to work settings and even the home environment.

Positive relationships at work are influenced by other relationships outside work. The interpersonal strengths transfer from work to home and home to work and this affects employees' relationship building skills. Tang et al. (2017) argue that employees who have a satisfying marriage (i.e. home life) have more psychological capacity, which results in more creativity at work. Fowler and Christakis's (2008) research reflects that the physical proximity between an individual and their social connections, influences each other's happiness level whether the relationship is friends, resident spouses, siblings, or neighbors. There is no effect between coworkers, non-resident spouses, distant friends and distant siblings.

Baker, Cross, and Wooten (2003) claims that employees who have positive organizational relationships perform at a higher level at work. Baker and his colleagues describe ways of energizing relationships including empowerment, networking, and shared power. The research has shown that employees who have better relationships with their team of workers, bosses, peers, and subordinates tend to be more effective, have a high level of commitment, and outstanding citizenship (Tepper, Duffy, Hoobler, & Ensley, 2004).

Positive work relationships create relational energy (Owens, Baker, Sumpter, & Cameron, 2016) and vitality that is contagious in the organization (Cameron et al., 2003). The relationship energy through interpersonal relationships at work produces better job performance and employee engagement (Owens et al., 2016). Vitality is a type of variable and renewable resource related to the specific reasons why and how people thrive (Baker et al. 2003; Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Feldman & Khademian, 2003). Understanding individual and organizational behavior is crucial to focusing on connections in the workplace environment and the quality of those connections. It shows the purpose of why and how people connect at work and most importantly how to grow the workplace relationship to be a high-quality relationship (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

The definition of high-quality work relationship varies depending on the researchers. For example, some scholars highlight the strength of relationship (Mills & Clark, 1982), strength of the attachment (Kahn, 1998), or emotional intimacy and frequency of encounter (Granovetter, 1973). High-quality organizational relationships include impeccable communication and quality interpersonal connection; it helps employees to be flexible, strong, and resilient (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). High-quality communication consists of frequency, timeliness, accuracy, and orientation toward problem-solving (Gittell, 2003). High-quality connections at work require

mutual awareness and interaction. High-quality connections entail strengths in “higher emotional carrying capacity” (i.e. expression of positive and negative emotion), “tensility” in the connection (i.e. a capacity to endure the strain of the ups and downs of the relationship), and “the degree of connectivity” (i.e. degree to which a relationship is open to new ideas and growth for the future) (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003, p. 266).

A high-quality work relationship entails sharing goals and knowledge and having mutual respect for each group in the relationship (Gittell, 2003). First, shared goals bring workers together to come to conclusions on new information. Secondly, shared knowledge makes all workers aware of each other’s tasks, which strengthens ties based on the background of new knowledge (i.e. organizational change) to create clear awareness of who knows the information, who will be impacted by it, and where the priority lies. Lastly, mutual respect creates a solid influence on each worker’s competence and coordination of all talents into a team environment.

To extend PERMA-H theory, the fourth element, meaning, will be investigated. The next section will explore Seligman’s definition first, the importance of meaning in life, meaning in work, and meaning at work.

Meaning. Frankl (1959) states, “man’s main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life” (p. 115). Klinger (1997) adds that human’s natural drive to pursue a purposeful goal makes a life worth a living. Baumeister (1991) further states that the definition of meaning in life happens when needs such as purpose, self-worth, value, and efficacy are met in one’s life. Seligman (2011) defines meaning in life as when one devotes oneself to something beyond oneself, which will benefit humanity in a bigger picture. Seligman (2002) claims that the life with noble purpose and transcendent meaning is beyond the “good life”; a life beyond seeking for pleasures. Meaning consists of having a purpose, a direction,

connection to something bigger, a value, which leads to wellness (Steger, 2012). Frankl (1963) promotes the idea that everyone should seek personal meaning and its experiences in meaning, because he firmly believed that everyone's existence should find meaning in their lives.

Seligman (2011) identifies meaning as a sense of belonging and serving beyond the individual level, rather contributing to the greater good of the community. A connection to others gives meaning and purpose to life (Seligman, 2011). Peterson et al. (2005) add that life satisfaction is closely related to individuals' knowing their meaning of work, purpose, closer to a calling, or a higher purpose to benefit others. Meaning is an essential element to overall flourishing that works independently, but also can positively link with other components of PERMA-H (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Seligman, 2011).

Wong (2011b) argues that innately we like to seek and make meaning in our assumptions, beliefs, and values. Steger (2018) suggests this view on the overall definition of meaning as individuals view their meanings in lives is subjective, therefore, individuals who regard their lives to have meaning and/or purpose in their existence. Hence, an individual's perception of parts in life translates to different types of meaning depending on situation (Steger, 2018). Moreover, Steger (2018) argues meaning derives from emotions regarding individual's experiences and mental framework for how we understand ourselves, others, and how all our understandings link collectively, bringing a sense of meaning in a grand goal.

Steger (2018) touches on how meaning produces well-being. First, individuals with meaning have better relationships and engage in purposeful activities such as volunteer work, goal-oriented work, and good works for others rather than self. Practicing good deeds in helping others not only improves morale, self-esteem, and positive affect, but improves neurological pathways and mortality (Nicholas et al., 1999). Volunteering creates more benefits to the

volunteer than for people who receive the service (Piliavin, 2003). Second, individuals with meaning have better health and do not engage in harmful activities such as smoking and substance abuse which also helps to boost immunity and reduce stress-related disorders.

Meaning in life is highly relevant to three facets of self-determination theory (e.g. autonomy, competence and relatedness), positive emotions bring both significance and meaning in life (Martela, Ryan, and Steger, 2018). Steger and Samman (2012)'s study also examines meaning in life: presence of meaning, search for meaning, and three psychological needs of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and how meaning relates to life satisfaction. The results showed that mostly satisfied individuals were practicing good deeds, spirituality, and safety in their lives (Steger & Samman, 2012). This shows that meaning in life, basic psychological needs, and satisfaction items are separate from each other (Steger & Samman, 2012). Autonomy and satisfaction with free choice and control was the strongest correlation to meaning in life. Eudaimonic variables are more closely related with each other than hedonic variables.

Meaning of work. Seligman (2002) defines the meaningful life as using one's strengths and to "forward knowledge, power, and goodness" (p. 260). Ross et al. (2010) describe the theoretical framework of meaningful work, which depends on how and where meaningful work is created and sustained. The key drivers to meaningful work divide into four points: agency (drive to separate, expand, assert, master, and create), communion (drive to attach, connect, and unite), self, or toward others. These four points create four pathways: individuation (self-agency), contribution (other-agency), self-connection (self-communion), and unification (other-communion). Individuals who incorporate meaningful actions towards contribution to something

greater than the self will find meaning in work (Ross et al., 2010). The result shows that work experience toward the self and toward others both can be meaningful.

Some studies define meaningful work in relation to spirituality and calling (Ross, et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Personal calling, career commitment and organizational commitment have been found to be work motivators (Pinder, 2008). Calling is different than a job or career. A job is having no other reward but to gain money, a career is tied to personal investment beyond money but with advancement for power, self-esteem, and social standing, and callings as mostly used in religious settings in the beginning but now even non-religious context use the term for a valuable work for the society (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). Callings do not focus on money or advancement, but on individual's "fulfillment" that is unbreakable from individual's identity (Stephens, 2012).

Individuals search for more meaning in their work than personal lives (Mishra et al., 2014). The meaning of work is can be different things to different people (Ross et al., 2010). The meaning of work has contributed to the important outcomes in organizational studies, such as work motivation, absenteeism, work behavior, engagement, performance, career development, organizational identification, purpose, and personal fulfillment (Ross et al., 2010). The meaning of work dissects the meaning of "meaning" and "meaningfulness" because of the reason that perceptions of meaning come from individuals' subjective points of view (Baumeister, 1991; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Meaning normally implies positive meaning and it is making sense of one's life significance (Ross et al., 2010). Meaningfulness emphasizes how one holds the weight of significance on a certain matter (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Meaningfulness comes from cultural value and/or purpose. Meaning and meaningfulness are related, but the

difference lies in the fact that work has a particular meaning but individuals may or may not find it meaningful (Ross et al., 2010).

Ross and colleagues (2010) talk about individuals who find the meaning of work encompasses self-values, motivation and beliefs, individual interactions and relationships such as those with coworkers, leaders, communities and family. Therefore, Ross and colleagues explain that the meaning of work comes from the design of a job, overarching organizational mission, financial circumstances, culture, and non-work related hobbies and activities. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) argue that meaning of work produces one of three forces: (a) the design of job and material benefits affect individual's meaning of work, (b) individual's "psychological attributes and characteristics of thoughts" influence the meaning, (c) social atmosphere at work (e.g., leaders and coworkers) impacts the meaning, which also aligns with Ross and colleagues.

Meaning at work. The organizational conditions change the micro-contexts where people function and the meaning that people draw from their experience (Cameron et al., 2003). These after thoughts of meaning-making can "increase or decrease the type and level of resources available to individuals as well as activate processes and structures that people find enabling or disabling" (Cameron et al., 2003, p. 260). Research has shown that effective leadership at work fosters well-being and creates a sense of meaning at work because it creates ownership and intimacy for employees for their work (Ackroyd & Thomson, 1998; Kelloway, Sivanathan, Francis, & Barling, 2005). Avolio and Gardner (2005) talk about how employees' sense of meaning at work is driven by restoring resilience, optimism, and confidence.

Pratt and Ashforth (2003) list aspects that nurture meaningfulness are: (a) building culture, ideologies, identities; (b) exercising visionary, charismatic, or transformational leadership; (c) building charismatic or leadership communities. They believe "promoting the

goals, values, and beliefs of the organization, and those that focus on changing the nature of the relationships among members” will bolster meaning at work (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003, p. 317). They postulate that meaning at work is more effective than meaning in work because challenging workers to find meaning in work might create more resentment and conflict within individual reflection to one’s organization. Thus, the interpersonal relationships and activities contribute to personal meaning and well-being (Grouden & Jose, 2015; Steger, Shim, Brueske, Rush, Shin, & Merriman, 2013).

In the next section, the literature on achievement, the fifth element of PERMA-H is examined. It will explore Seligman’s definition and the importance of achievement, the danger of high-achievers, grit, and how achievement contributes to well-being. Furthermore, we examine achievement and its impacts in the workplace.

Achievement. Achievement does not bring positive emotion, meaning, or positive relationship, but people still often pursue accomplishment for human flourishing (Seligman, 2011). Butler and Kern (2016) explain that superior performance is recognized in Western societies, however objective success is also influenced by opportunities, personal ambitions, and surroundings as people’s definition of success might be different. In a subjective view, accomplishment embodies execution skills, mastering a goal, determination to not quit, and efficacy to complete tasks (Butler & Kern, 2016). Accomplishment strongly ties in with Self-Determination Theory in using intrinsic motivation and personality (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Seligman (2011) explains how intelligence, mostly measured initially by Intelligence Quotient (IQ), is associated with the speed of learning and the environment of learning. However, he opposes this statement by emphasizing the importance of individual's positive character building and the environment that supports it. He introduces the importance of speed of

learning, grit, self-discipline, individual pursuit of character building, and the environment to nurture it, the benefit of slowness, and the importance of effort in achievement.

Achievement takes more than just intelligence alone. Duckworth (2016) defines skill as a result of talent and effort and achievement is the outcome of combining skill and effort. The clear distinction between talent and skill is that talent is an innate gift and skill is a mastery of repeated works. Duckworth elaborates that skill is not equal to achievement. “Without effort, your talent is nothing more than your unmet potential. Without effort, your skill is nothing more than what you could have done but didn’t. Without effort, talent becomes skill and, at the very same time, effort makes skill productive” (Duckworth, 2016, p. 51). Duckworth and Seligman (2005) emphasize how grit, self-control, and self-discipline (i.e. willful practice) can outperform IQ.

Seligman (2011) explains intelligence is more than speed and achievement. Mental speed comes at the expense of losing out on details, creating poor listening skills, and creating a high anxiety environment (Seligman, 2011). The strength of slowness fosters a better focus, memory, and executive planning and refining. It also represses impulsive thoughts and actions and promotes creativity (Seligman, 2011).

There are dangers to high-achievers. Suicide rates amongst popular, attractive, successful and talented people are high (Moore, 2015). The empirical data illustrates that over 1 million people a year commit suicide for various reasons, which is more than natural disasters, war and deaths by violent crime combined (Price, 2017). Stress to perform, achieve, never to show failure, constantly moving up the ladder are some of society’s standards that leadership expects. This indirect and unspoken expectation traps people in this swirl of hyper-achievement and pressure and makes people achieve goals but not happiness, nor even well-being. It can create

anxiety, fear, and anger, which are three basic elements of negative emotions (Seligman, 2002). Everyone responds to pressure differently. Pressure might propel some for individual gains, but for other successful people, the individuals will only feel the tension, stress, and anxiety without any meaning and purpose of the achievement.

Grit and self-control. It is inevitable that we will experience setbacks, obstacles, failure, fears, and trauma. It makes a great difference how one responds to adversities and goals. Grit is a more potent characteristic than intelligences or skills (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007; Wong 2011a). Grit is persistence and devotion to attain long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Duckworth emphasizes on both passion and persistence of motive. Grit has a strong tie with positive psychology, intelligence, and personality (Duckworth, 2016). The findings on grit show how unlike many transitional measures of performance, grit is not tied to intelligence (Duckworth, 2016). However, there has been a strong link between grit and the Big Five personality model that includes: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Goldberg, 1990).

Grit requires not only perseverance of effort, but the consistency of interests over time to achieve long-term goals (Duckworth, 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007). If the interests are unstable and inconsistent, execution of the goals will not be achieved no matter how zealous they were at the beginning of the goals. Grit includes one or more of perseverance, hardiness, ambition, self-control, needs to perform, and resilience. Grit is the key driver along with daily discipline to come back to the tasks and recommitment to the goals of individuals' satisfaction (Duckworth, 2016).

Self-control surpasses talent and opportunity (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). "Self-control--the capacity to regulate attention, emotion, and behavior in the presence of temptation"

(Duckworth & Gross, 2014, p. 1). The difference between self-control and grit is self-control includes an alignment between actions and goal despite the distraction or temptations, but grit requires a steady goal-oriented endurance toward a single ambitious goal (Duckworth & Gross, 2014).

Achievement motivation. Achievement goals in the workplace are divided into four subcategories: performance-approach, performance-avoidance, mastery-approach, and mastery-avoidance (Baranik et al., 2013). Performance is an individual's outcome in comparison to others. Mastery is for individuals. Avoidance is an employee who escapes from failures, and approach is employees who strive for the best. These achievement goals produce different results for employee's emotional health, engagement level, and cooperation with others at the workplace (Baranik et al., 2013).

Many scholars have given various definitions for achievement motivation in the workplace. Individual desire to obtain personal goals (Byrne et al., 2004), strive for excellence (Baum et al., 2007), or a perception of competence and expectation to improve oneself (Carragher, Buchanan, & Puia, 2010). Work achievement motivation involves task performance that comes with the expectation of an effort and concentration on setting and attaining a goal and has a positive outcome. It also includes accountability with co-workers to share responsibilities and tasks to collaborate to achieve excellence. Teamwork requires trust and commitment contributing to the participation of each worker.

Employee's achievement motivation in the workplace is through work empowerment to achieve a goal (Nasser & Saadeh, 2013). According to Nasser and Saadeh (2013), achievement motivation in the workplace is based two aspects; either on intrinsic motivation and emotion of their role in the organization or an accessibility level to the organizational structures change (e.g.

decision-making, opportunities, information, visibility, support, etc.) Their study was based on Kanter's theory (1977) on work structural empowerment and the results showed that work empowerment is affected by individual's background (e.g. education level, job position, experience) indirectly to attain the work position, but if they do not have any access to the line of power in the organization, then they will be demotivated. Thus, work empowerment comes with not only the position they are in, but how much influence they can make in the structural organization changes.

At times, personal success in the workplace can bring hostility from coworkers and different employee's personality differs in coping with the hostility (Rundle-Gardiner & Carr, 2005). Discouraging achievement motivation at work can come in different forms. Carr and MacLachlan (1997) present motivational gravity theory, which illustrates how positive or negative achievement motivation from bosses, peers, and subordinates can either bolster or restrain employee's performance at work. Individual differences including self-esteem, locus of control, and emotional resilience had little to do with discouragement in the results (Rundle-Gardiner & Carr, 2005). Self-efficacy (one's own ability to complete a task and reach a goal) (Bandura, 1997), grit, self-control and skills for coping with stress emphasized more success in achievement than individual personality.

In the next section, a deeper understanding of what it means to experience positive physical health and well-being and how it leads to positive outcomes in the workplace is explored.

Positive physical health. Seligman (2011) notes that pessimists and optimists produce different physical health outcomes when faced with challenges or misfortunes. There are times when both pessimists and optimists face setbacks, loss, failures, and defeats and feel a

momentary helplessness. The difference is, optimists believe that the condition is only temporary and also are hopeful that the situation is changeable (Seligman, 2011). Optimists will not despair or get depressed easily in failures (Seligman, 2006). The pessimistic group gives up easily by “learned helplessness” due to feeling a lack of control to change or escape the situation, which leads to low resilience to overcome setbacks (Seligman, 2011, pp. 184-185). Inescapable situations create limited locus of control and limited capacity to make changes necessary to escape for one who neither sees a way out nor has the power to change the conditions. Pessimists get depressed more easily and more often and their psychological state affects their physical health (Seligman, 2006). Therefore, Seligman (2006, 2011) recommends that a skill of mastering knowledge of the situation will empower the person to be optimistic and create or find choices or changes.

Seligman (2006) draws a strong link between mind-body health: pessimists view will lead to chronic diseases, lower immunity, fast aging, infectious diseases, and slow recovery. Seligman (2011) expands on how pessimistic views will have negative impacts on people by increasing the incidence of cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Seligman lists four reasons why optimism benefits physical health: (a) optimists do not fall into helplessness, (b) optimists stick to a healthy lifestyle and seek medical help; (c) optimists cope better with bad events; (d) optimists have a social network to support and share pains with (Seligman, 2006). Optimists and pessimists analyze good or bad events differently in their lives because of the difference in their perceptions. Therefore, the hope for pessimists is that optimism can be learned and is not purely innate for any individuals. Anyone who is willing can shift pessimistic views to optimistic ones because perception can always change when one is willing to learn (Seligman, 2006).

Social support, especially affectionate relationships, helps with physical health. Reis and Gable (2003) elaborate that affection and shared entertainment bring closeness in connection. Some studies have shown husbands showing affection in the first two years of marriage can affect the longevity of marriage (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). In terms of the neuroendocrine aspects of affectionate activities, there is a demonstrated increase in oxytocin level, especially with physical touch such as hugs, cuddles, sex, breast-feeding, and eye contact (Carter, 1998). Oxytocin reduces stress, contributes to psychological wellness (Uvnaes-Moberg, 1998), and influences “opioids” in the brain which help with pain management (Carter, 1998).

Seligman (2006) talks about how the brain affects the immune system through hormones. Neurotransmitters are the hormones that have a function to send messages through the blood and transmit emotional condition from one part to the other part of the body. Thus, when one is overwhelmed with negative emotions such as stress, depression, or grief, the neurotransmitters will be depleted. When hormones called catecholamine are low, endorphins are high. Endorphins are like a morphine that can reduce pain in your body. Subsequently, when endorphins are high, then your immunity detects it and partially shuts down. Negative thoughts and emotions lower the immune system function because psychological health can affect physical health (Seligman, 2006).

Pessimism and depression affect cardiovascular diseases, infectious illness, and possibly cancer (Seligman, 2011). Cardiovascular diseases are related to family history, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and life style (Seligman, 2011). Pessimism weakens the body, but optimism protects the body from cardiovascular disease (Seligman, 2011). Seligman adds that optimists can better cope with repeated stress. The stress hormone is called cortisol and when overexposure to cortisol and other stress hormones occurs, this leads to inflammation in

the body (Steptoe et al., 2005; McEwen, 2008). Long-lasting inflammation contributes to the build-up of fats, high cholesterol, and other substances in and on the artery walls, which leads to heart-related diseases (Steptoe et al, 2008). Ultimately, chronic stress puts your health at risk for all the aforementioned types of illness. Having hope, optimism and positive emotions mitigate illnesses.

Seligman (2011) divides positive health into three assets: subjective, biological, and functional. Subjective assets are optimism, hope, vitality, and life satisfaction. Biological assets entail increasing heart rate, increasing oxytocin, lowering fibrinogen, etc. Functional assets include exercising, work satisfaction, harmonious marriage, and rich social support. Overall, increasing the levels of happiness through other elements of PERMA-H, such as positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and achievement will foster positive health (Seligman, 2011). Hence, happy people tend to be more creative, productive, and healthier (Stein, 2008).

Enjoyable exercises such as tango (Mateo, 2018), ballroom dance (Alves, 2013), mindfulness practice, and yoga (Kwok, 2018) help increase heart rate, improve motor and functional skills, better balance with stress, anxiety and sleep quality, and create positive emotions in older adults' diseases. Dancing improves mental and emotional health and is proven to help psychological and physiological states of mind (Alves, 2013; Kwok, 2018; Mateo, 2018).

Physical health in the workplace. Achieving workplace health not only results in improving individual health, but also brings benefits to employers and to society. The World Health Organization (WHO) has many workplace health interventions to promote health and well-being (2008, 2010). The workplace is considered to be an ideal setting for health promotion since most people spend more time at work than at home. Chronic stress and burnout are often

results of an imbalance between job demands and an employee's mental and physical resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). One of the proactive solutions to reduce work stress, preventing chronic diseases and promoting optimal health to improve employees' physical health, is to increase physical activity at the workplace (Arrogi et al., 2019; Jirathananuwat & Pongpirul, 2017; To, Chen, Magnussen, & To et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2012).

Workplace health promotion (WHP) started around 1993 in the public health sector (Tones, 1994; Wilson, Holman, & Hammock, 1996). To et al. (2013) summarize published research from 2000 to 2010, a period of ten years, on physical activity and exercise interventions at the workplace. Based on their analyses, group physical activity promotions are most effective when it is shorter than 6 months, using internet-based approach for maintenance, and provides incentive for employees' long-term commitment to maintain the result (To et al., 2013). The key to success in physical activity initiatives lies more on the maintenance of behavior change than excitement in the beginning of the program. It requires more of people's discipline and dedication to change their habits, routines and lifestyle, which is more difficult.

Individualized programs seem to bring more benefits than group programs. Individualized counseling and follow up contacts build accountability for employees' overall fitness level (i.e. body mass index, body measurements, body fat, and muscle weight) (Arrogi et al, 2019). Jirathananuwat and Pongpirul (2017) also present evidence that the right set of framework will make physical activity promotion effective, including self-motivation, training and information along with a support system.

Another workplace health intervention encouraging companies to build healthier workplaces is to cut sitting time in the office by providing other options such as sit-stand workstations (e.g. height adjustable desks, ergonomic keyboards and mouse) and sitting trackers

(Jelsma et al., 2019). Any stagnant physical position is associated with health problems, cardiovascular diseases and mortality (Chau et al., 2013). Reducing sitting in and out of work time is encouraged for all workers to improve workplace health and increase employees' productivity, performance and wellness (Jelsma et al., 2019).

Levy and Thorndike (2019)'s study demonstrates workplace wellness programs that include nutrition and physical activity monitoring did strengthen employees' overall health, but that a program will not be effective if it is short-termed. Self-control is a health asset (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and adopting and maintaining healthy habits are far more efficient and sustainable for lifestyle than going on a diet. Dieting is usually short-lived and does not lead to better health because after the dieting period, most people fall back into their old eating routines, but adapting to healthier patterns of life (e.g. walking ten thousand steps, yoga, cutting down in sugar) will build more sustainable health achievement (Seligman, 2011).

Healthy dietary habits are designed to increase fruit, vegetable, and low-fat dairy intake and reduce unhealthy foods in order to reduce obesity and other health risks (Bandoni et al., 2010; Brouwer & Mosack, 2015; Quintiliani et al., 2010). In addition to healthy choice consumption, the time of consumption such as work schedule affects dietary habits (Quintiliani et al., 2010). Employees cannot make healthy choices if workplace food options (i.e. work, home, work cafeteria) are not providing accessibility to healthy food options. In order to encourage healthy eating patterns at work, the food menu needs to increase healthier choices availability by controlling nutritional values in measuring percentage of fat (e.g. saturated and total), carbohydrate, fruit and vegetable consumption (Swift, Fox, Marshall, Welch, & Willis, 2014).

Meditation is part of the positive health initiatives. Mindfulness meditation is paying attention and focus in the present moment, on purpose and embracing the present (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Chin, Slutsky, Raye, & Creswell, 2019). Mindfulness-based practices at the workplace, even mindfulness application on personal electronic devices has proven to de-stress the mind, give them better tolerance for strains, and be more open to better engagement with coworkers (Bostock, Crosswell, Prather, & Steptoe, 2019; Chin et al., 2019). Spirituality, meditation such as yoga, or other religious activities impacts with benefits for personal development to search for higher meaning in their lives and work that facilitates employees' mind-body wellness (Dwivedi, Kumari, Akhilesh, & Nagendra; Gull & Doh, 2004).

The rest of the paper is focused on providing a targeted review of the relevant literature related to the mid-career professionals, identifying its key facets in its relationship to well-being. Further, we present a framework for understanding mid-career professionals struggles, opportunities, and the reason for mid-career professionals to flourish in their career.

Flourishing in Mid-Career Professionals

Mid-career can be a difficult and challenging period of professional life with regrets, anger, doubts, confusion, burnout, and disappointments (Maree, 2013; Schwandt, 2015). Ten to fifteen years after college, mid-career is a stage of personal, family, and professional life coinciding and bringing its own set of challenges and rewards that requires more responsibilities, time, money, and energy to juggle (Rae, 2005). A natural career progression from an entry-level to a mid-career position brings its own challenges, doubts, and decrease in vitality, which leads mid-career professionals to re-assess their achievements, expectations, needs, and values (Gazelle et al., 2014; West, 2012).

Mid-career professionals are critical to organizations and society for several reasons, particularly because of the importance of their roles between the entry-level workers and executives. Most of the mid-career professionals who are ‘flourishing’ will happily continue to become successful executives and also be able to mentor, coach, and inspire entry-level professionals who are still navigating their career path. For any mid-career professional to flourish beyond job satisfaction or life satisfaction, they need to experience one or more aspects of the PERMA-H model (Seligman, 2011). Mid-career professionals also need to learn the skills to manage transitions, be ready for change, increase grit, and create possibilities in order to stay positive and benefit from wellness.

Although some research has been conducted on PERMA-H in the workplace and even less among mid-career, a substantial body of studies looked at elements of positivity and job satisfaction in this population. These upcoming sections will briefly examine what is known about the elements of PERMA-H among mid-career professionals.

Positive emotions in mid-career professionals are optimism, resilience, confidence, and self-belief. Mid-career professionals tend to begin to experience tension between their reality and the optimism they previously had in their career (Schwandt, 2015). When this happens, the disappointments from unmet expectations cause their job satisfaction to decline and the need for change increases in an urgent manner (Mallon & Cohen, 2001; Schwandt, 2015). The mid-career is a time to re-evaluate all past, present and future plans. This creates opportunities for growth in self and social identity transformation. Confidence, emotion, and self-belief are crucial learning tools to combat growing pain if one desires transformation and in order to avoid stagnation (Rae, 2005). Resilience is another pivotal tool to reverse burnout in mid-career professionals

(Waddimba et al., 2016). Frequent positive emotions, positive relationships, meaningfulness of work, and a high tolerance for ambiguity builds resilience (Waddimba et al., 2016).

Mid-career professionals experience work engagement through challenging works. Mid-career professionals' learning is problem-based learning to meet the needs of professionals rather than conceptual learning like in undergraduate years (Fenwick, 2002). Mid-career professionals now have gained substantial years of professional experiences as reference points, and their desire for a graduate program tailored towards professionals' needs such as challenges, setbacks, and opportunities they were facing have possibly changed from undergraduate education (Fenwick, 2002; Pacheco and Franzese, 2017). Pacheco and Franzese (2017) recommend mid-career professionals' education should be designed to have both theoretical and applied methodologies geared towards practitioners. Most mid-career professionals continue to work while pursuing higher education or vocational development programs. Therefore, mid-career professionals learn to adapt and engage through: challenging work, updating a knowledge database, social interactions and relationships, and self-reflective learning (Brown et al., 2012).

If mid-career professionals want to make a career shift, ability to adapt to a new career helps to make a smooth adjustment and expedite work engagement. In a successful transition to a career change, mid-career professionals develop in five pathways: control, curiosity, commitment, confidence, and concern (Brown et al., 2012; Maree, 2017). Career adaptability for career change raises one's aspirations to learn, and empowers one to take advantage of opportunities such as learning and development programs, which may be offered through the employer or by an outside source, to enhance one's career advancement (e.g. higher education, jobs training) (Brown et al., 2012).

Mid-career professionals engagement at work increases by obtaining new knowledge and skills and incorporating them into work-life, enabling them to recreate a new identity at work, especially through relationships with others in work experiences (Brown et al., 2012; Jorissen, 2003). The growth also requires one to obtain new attitudes and behavior in identity reconstruction (Brown et al., 2012; Jorissen, 2003). Therefore, new relationships at work are pivotal to developing a new identity in career transition.

New positive professional relationships with mentors and other members in the same training programs or transitional courses foster individuals' transitions (Jorissen, 2003). Workman (2005) adds how mentoring the mentors create mutually beneficial relationships for both mid-career professionals and senior educators who can guide career progression. Rae (2005) emphasizes that mid-career learning occurs through networks of resources, knowledge and helpful influences to make entrepreneurship learning in social context.

Mid-career professionals find meaning at work through self-discovery (Fenwick, 2002), re-commitment (West, 2012), and autonomy. For many workers, the mid-career time frame raises difficult questions regarding the meaning and purpose of their work (Fronczak, 2005). Fenwick's study (2002) showed the highest interest was on the topic of self-discovery for mid-career professionals. They also found value in understanding different perspectives, cooperation, leadership, conflict management, and evaluating long-term systems (Fenwick, 2002). The ideal resolution of the mid-career transition requires a shift toward generativity, re-engagement in personal goals, increased self-reflection, reconnecting to the original purpose of the job, and rekindling more fulfilling and meaningful aspects at work (West, 2012).

Mid-career professionals find meaning through contextual learning from considerable life experiences in the field that gives them confidence and competency to pursue entrepreneurship,

Rae (2004) shows the entrepreneurial learning model entails three pathways: personal and social relations, contextual learning, and negotiated enterprise. Personal and social relations represent the friction between present of certainty of paychecks and the future of uncertainty being self-employed. Self-employment includes independence, autonomy, and satisfaction of control, yet also brings consequences of risk of job loss, profitability, status change.

Achievement in mid-career professionals can be understood as high level learning at work, or outside work in various new challenges through critical thinking, motivation, and high level of adaptability. Quinn and Wennes (2008) emphasize the importance of integrating critical thinking skills to ask the right questions and be able to reflect on mid-career professionals programs. Therefore, critical thinking skills are not only to solve real-life work situations but challenging both learners and teachers for mid-career professionals in their research methods during education or development programs (Quinn & Wennes, 2008).

Mid-career professionals' aspirations to become a competitive candidate for the job market drives the desire for learning and to develop more in their career progression (Brown et al., 2012). Brown et al. (2012) explain how career changes may bring a reflection on one's actions, conflicts between past and present circumstances, and limits in individual's control of the new situation. One of the coping mechanisms for a successful career transition is career adaptability (Brown et al., 2012; Maree, 2017).

Summary

Most of the mid-career professionals who are 'flourishing' will happily continue to become successful executives and also be able to mentor, coach, and inspire entry-level professionals who are still navigating their career path. For any mid-career professional, to

flourish beyond job satisfaction or life satisfaction, they need to experience one or more aspects of the PERMA-H model (Seligman, 2011).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This research was guided by a qualitative phenomenological design to collect data through interviews on the experiences of flourishing in mid-career professionals, using Seligman's PERMA-H model. Seligman's PERMA-H model guided data collection on positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, achievement, and positive physical health in the workplace (Seligman, 2001). The qualitative design helped participants to talk freely and deeply about their experiences at work through a phenomenological approach to the interview (Moustakas, 1994). The interview was a one-on-one, in-depth interview with open-ended questions, guided by an interview schedule, aimed at collecting data and impressions of PERMA-H elements in the workplace.

This chapter provides details of the methodology of this study, including its rationale, goals, intended outcomes, and specific methods for data collection and analysis. A phenomenological method is effective in exploring meaning and perspectives of participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Flourishing in one's career is the phenomenon explored in this study. Interviews were conducted with mid-career professionals who self-identified as flourishing and experiencing one or more elements of PERMA-H elements at work.

Restatement of Problem

According to research, mid-career professionals experience more negative emotions such as regret, confusion, disappointment, frustration and anger than positive feelings (Caprino, 2016; Gazelle et al., 2015; Maree, 2016; Schwandt, 2015; Smith & Smalley, 2018; Spickard et al., 2002). However, many mid-career professionals are flourishing in their career progression and not experiencing such negativity (Rae, 2005; Waddimba et al., 2016). The purpose of this

qualitative, phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of five professionals who self-identify as flourishing in mid-career. This study addresses the literature gap concerning mid-career professionals who are flourishing. Prior studies did not utilize the up-to-date model of flourishing and specifically, Seligman's well-being theory and its PERMA-H model, to understand the elements that professionals perceive to have contributed to their flourishing and what role those elements have played in their flourishing.

Restatement of Research Questions

The following research question and sub-questions guided this study.

RQ1. How do mid-career professionals describe their lived experience of flourishing based on the six elements of Seligman's PERMA-H model?

- a. How do mid-career professionals experience positive emotions and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
- b. How do mid-career professionals experience engagement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
- c. How do mid-career professionals experience positive relationships and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
- d. How do mid-career professionals experience meaning and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
- e. How do mid-career professionals experience achievement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
- f. How do mid-career professionals experience positive physical health and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?

Description of the Research Methodology

The philosophy of research frames research problems, research questions, and how data is obtained to answer research questions (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative approach was selected for this study because one-on-one interviews through open-ended questions could provide the data to understand personal, lived experiences in the process of the flourishing phenomenon (Husserl, 2012; Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009). Qualitative researchers investigate reasons for behavior to find the meaning in their experiences (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research requires refining the design as the research develops (Neuman, 2003). Perspectives from multiple participants determine how different aspects of human experiences interact with their environment (Neuman, 2003). The qualitative method was more appropriate than the quantitative method for this study, because the study aimed to understand human behavior by gathering their perceptions of flourishing. Numerical data would not provide an answer to the research questions.

The qualitative phenomenological approach was chosen for this study because it describes the common meaning or lived experiences for several individuals (Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009). This study sought to understand participants' common experiences, specifically how they experienced the phenomenon of flourishing in their mid-career. Thus, the participants were able to share their unique experiences and perceptions of flourishing. Moustakas (1994) describes the phenomenological approach as when the researcher collects data from people who have experienced the phenomenon and also develops a composite description of the shared experiences in the "what" of the experiences as well as the "how" and the essence of those cumulative experiences. This study used phenomenology that concentrates more on participants' described experiences and less on the researcher's interpretations (Moustakas,

1994).

The theoretical orientation of phenomenology is in the quest of meanings and essences in knowledge (Husserl, 1931). Husserl (1931) also wanted to differentiate between facts and essences and find the real and un-real in knowledge. The value of phenomenological design and methodology are that it: (a) concentrates on the experience of the phenomenon; (b) seeks all angles of the whole phenomenon; (c) searches for meanings and essences of experience rather than quantifiable measurements; (d) is dedicated to first-person description of experiences rather than analysis; (e) investigates human behavior relating to the phenomenon; (f) connects all parts of the research and leads to the process; (g) includes all collected data such as experiences, thoughts, feelings, and reflections as part of scientific investigation; and (h) requires that the researcher formulate the questions in order to drive the participants to see, reflect, and know by always referring back to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 58-59). Thus, phenomenology is the most suitable method to investigate mid-career individuals who are experiencing flourishing at work.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Human Protections

Participation in this study was voluntary and confidential in nature and followed the guidelines of Pepperdine's IRB process. The IRB application was submitted through Pepperdine's e-Protocol system as an exempt study. The researcher received IRB approval (Appendix F). The study was approved as exempt because it involved interviews with adult subjects and posed minimal risks.

The consent form was given digitally as an e-mail attachment and scheduling of the interview is considered consent (Appendix C). The consent form informed participants of the voluntary nature of the study, risks, and benefits of their participation. Protecting participants'

identities minimizes potential risks in this study. Participants' identities were not used in the study and were only be known to the researcher. In order to protect the identity of the subjects, participants' ID code were only used in the study. All interview recordings were stored within a password-protected folder that had a different password from the computer password. The researcher created a master list linking study codes to the subject identifiers in a hard copy and stored it in an office drawer rather than in the password-protected computer. Even if the password-protected computer was stolen, nobody could identify the participants' identities. The master list was destroyed after data analysis was completed. The researcher ensured that all participants were informed of the necessary steps and elements prior to the interviews and that they would not be put at risk of any personal harm. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

Although there are no direct benefits of participation in the study, participants contributed by providing data that will advance understanding on flourishing in mid-career professionals. The research will also add to the literature related to flourishing at work through PERMA-H model, and creating further awareness on the topic of flourishing elements in mid-career professionals. Participants did not receive any remuneration or compensation for their participation.

Process for Selection of Participants

In qualitative research, participants should be selected based on their ability to share experiences about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This study sought to gather data from an abstract population that most likely includes hundreds of thousands of diverse employees working in all 50 states and various industries and organizations. What was common among those participating within the study was that they self-identified as being mid-career

professionals with ten to fifteen years experience in the workforce who considered themselves to be flourishing (Appendix D). Other criteria for inclusion were that they are fluent in English and able to use virtual meeting software for participating in the interview. Participants from any industry or organization were welcome to partake in the study so long as they met the inclusion criteria of claiming to be flourishing mid-career individuals.

Thus, a purposive sampling strategy was used for this study to recruit individuals who met the stated inclusion criteria. From those who volunteered, the researcher selected five different participants from different industries when possible. A sample of five was appropriate for phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2013). The researcher took the first five people who qualified and come from different industries. The researcher made an effort to select participants from different professional fields and industries.

Participants were recruited using the professional social media site LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). The recruitment process involved an initial recruitment post (see Appendix B) that was posted on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), asking for volunteer participants. Participants who had interest contacted the researcher, and the researcher informed prospective participants about the purpose of this study, the inclusion criteria, and how the interview would be conducted. All participants received a consent form before the interviews (see Appendix C). Inclusion criteria, the definition of flourishing and each element of PERMA-H model were included in the LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) request post.

Data Collection Procedures

An email to request consent (Appendix C) for research was sent to the potential participants. Then, the participants who were interested in the study sent an email verifying time and virtual location for the interview. Once the participants sent the preferred interview time, the

researcher sent an email copy of the informed consent form and a handout on the definitions that guided the interview (Appendix D). The researcher confirmed the time and sent the virtual interview link using Zoom (www.zoom.com). Prior to the interviews, demographic characteristics were collected from participants, including gender, type of organization or industry, years worked at the organization, and job title.

Participant ID codes were used instead of participants' names during data collection and analysis. The researcher reminded the participants that they were under no obligation to remain in this study and could withdraw at any time with no risks, as also stated on the informed consent form (Appendix C). Participants were insured of their confidentiality and security as the interview only mentioned them by the participant numbers. Their personal identities and contact information were kept confidential and secure on a password-protected computer.

The researcher planned to allow as much time as participants needed to express their in-depth lived experiences. The researcher conducted follow-ups and probing questions as needed. As each interview began, the researcher went over any concerns or questions on the informed consent form and a handout. The researcher reviewed with the participants the process of recording the interview and transcribing the interviews. With the permission of the participants, the researcher used Zoom (www.zoom.com) to record the interviews.

For phenomenological interviews, there is a great value in having the video in terms of making a connection with a participant and being able to see participants' expressions. It creates intimacy and flow of the conversation. All Zoom (www.zoom.com) recordings give two options: to record either to the cloud or directly to a password-protected computer. To minimize risk of breach of confidentiality, all Zoom (www.zoom.com) recordings are only stored on the researcher's computer. Zoom (www.zoom.com) produced two different types of MP4 files: (a)

audio-only; and (b) both audio and video. The researcher created a password for the folder where all recording data were stored to protect participants' security and prevent anyone from accessing the files. The researcher only sent the audio file to the transcription service to protect the identity of participants. The MP4 file with both audio and video did not leave the researcher's possession. After the researcher received the transcripts and ensured that they were accurate, the researcher destroyed from the computer all copies of the interview recordings.

Instrumentation

Interview protocol. The purpose of unstructured interviews is to collect the most accurate, full, detailed, and first-person perspectives on participants' experiences in flourishing (see Appendix A). The reason the unstructured interviews are appropriate is that: (a) participants were able to speak freely and reflectively to express their positive experiences in flourishing; (b) it created a more comfortable environment for the researcher and participants to have close connection in more of a dialogue form than survey; and (c) it was easier to "go with the flow" of the interview itself, rather than following structured questions, in order to capture more accurate data on flourishing (Smith et al., 2009). In this study, the unstructured interviews allowed close engagement between the researcher and participants in a dialogue, allowing for the development of rapport to encourage participants by providing the time and space for them to reflect deeply on their experiences and share them in their own words (Smith et al., 2009).

Furthermore, in an unstructured interview the researcher has the freedom to change the sequence or skip to any other area, which arises during the interviews to best gather the data that is sought for the study. The unstructured interviews helped the researcher to frame the interview questions in a way that steers discussion without directing participants towards a particular

outcome (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). During the interview, the researcher engaged fully with the participants, taking light notes, and audio recorded the conversation.

This study presented minimal risk. Participants may initially have had some difficulty recalling or discussing personal experiences. Prior to recording the interviews, the researcher notified the participants that they would not be referred to by name, and that they should also not refer to themselves by their names during the interview to protect confidentiality and identity. Instead, the researcher referred to them by participant ID. Since the study focused on positive psychological experiences at work, for the most part, the questions caused participants to reflect on the positive aspects of work. Due to the nature of the study focusing on the positive experience in the workplace, even if confidentiality was breached, there is a very low risk to the participants. Participants may even experience more positive emotions during and post-interview and possibly gain a deeper understanding of how the PERMA-H model promotes flourishing.

After building rapport, the first part of the interview began with a general understanding of flourishing and why participants define themselves as flourishing mid-career professionals. The main interview questions were supported with prompts or follow-up questions using probing techniques that provided the participant with the opportunities to clarify, expand, or take time to pause. The closing of the interview consisted of thanking participants and summarizing their responses. Each interview took approximately 60-90 minutes to complete virtually. However, depending on the interviewees, the questions were varied, altered, or not even asked as the researcher went with the flow of the interview (Moustakas, 1994).

Interview protocol validity. An interview guide was created based on the PERMA-H model (Appendix A). The researcher worked with a positive psychology expert to validate the interview questions. Prior to collecting data, a field test of the interview guide was performed

with two mid-career professionals who are flourishing. The field test was done to ensure the interviews would be of adequate length and to fine-tune the interview questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The researcher asked most of the questions in the field test to make sure that participants could answer them, which helped to refine the questions appropriately (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The field test also served as practice for the researcher to refine interview skills and flow naturally (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Reliability of the data gathering was enhanced by the researcher writing detailed notes during the interviews, a good quality recording of the sessions, and transcribing the interviews (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis Processes

The researcher followed Creswell's (2013) deductive coding approach for this study. Creswell (2013) explains how data analysis is an intertwined process. Creswell (2013) presents "the data analysis spiral" which consists of organizing, reading and memoing, describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes or categories and themes, and representing and visualizing the data (pp. 182-188). Thematic analysis was facilitated through the HyperRESEARCH software program. Creswell's (2013) 6-phases of deductive thematic analysis detailed below were followed in this study.

The first step in thematic analysis is to organize and prepare the textual data for analysis (Creswell, 2013). The researcher used a transcription service to convert the audio recordings of the interviews into transcripts. The transcription service was selected for speed and accuracy for the audio recordings of the interviews. Prior to the initiation of transcription services, the researcher and transcriptionist agreed in a non-disclosure agreement to protect participants' identity and the confidentiality of the data. After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher

re-read the interview transcripts while listening to the audio recording to check for accuracy before importing data into the qualitative data analysis software HyperRESEARCH.

The second step in Creswell's process is reading through to get a general sense of the information and its meaning. This was accomplished in HyperRESEARCH by choosing the transcript file and reading the transcript file. The researcher reviewed the data and read the transcripts several times to gain clarity and understanding of the data (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also took notes on thoughts that arose while reviewing the data.

The third step in Creswell's (2013) process is to begin coding by identifying meaningful pieces of text and assigning them to codes. The coding involves organizing the data into small categories of information based on what the researcher notices in the data (Creswell, 2013). The researcher used HyperRESEARCH to accomplish the following steps: (a) select the word or phrase and create a new code to assign; (b) apply code on the selected phrase or word; (c) add more codes to expand codebook. Creswell (2013) instructs that tentative codes begin with a simple list, moving to complex codes as the researcher progresses. Once all coding was finished in each transcript, the file was saved and these steps repeated for all five transcripts to code and recode.

The fourth step is to identify categories and themes across the codes. Initial codes from HyperRESEARCH were grouped in the categories in the coding method. The researcher pre-determined categories by using six elements of PERMA-H model (Creswell, 2013). After determining six categories, the researcher identified five themes across the six categories. For example, joy, excitement, awe were categorized as positive emotion and yoga, meditation, and running were categorized as positive physical health. However, the researcher also found

additional categories besides PERMA-H elements as discoveries were made based on what participants said about flourishing elements in the workplace.

The fifth step is how to best represent and visualize what the data illustrates in text, figure, or image forms (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also used the Word Counter and the Word Cloud tool in HyperRESEARCH to see the most frequently presented words in the data set. The Word Counter tool gave the researcher information about the where key words are being used and that helped the researcher to figure out areas of focus.

The final step is to make meaning of the text (Creswell, 2013). The researcher continuously refined the themes including a detailed examination of the lived experience from flourishing mid-career professionals. Interpreting the data involved making meaning of the codes and themes (Creswell, 2013). A peer with a doctoral degree and experience in qualitative coding reviewed the analysis and gave feedback for reliability of the data.

Internal Study Validity

A research design should allow an accurate interpretation of data to result in credible and trustworthy conclusions at the end of the study (Creswell, 2013). In order to achieve accurate data, the researcher increased the level of trustworthiness and comfort by providing several opportunities for participant feedback, follow-up during the interview, and ensuring the participants felt comfortable sharing freely their experiences (Shenton, 2004). Also, the researcher provided openness, receptivity, and authentic responses for a fully engaged interview with the participants. Bracketing is used in qualitative research to mitigate the effects of personal previous preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the topic to focus only on the analysis of the current data (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher used bracketing to reduce biases and approach

interviewees without prejudice and to be receptive towards participants' experience by engaging as an active listener (Creswell, 2013; Palloff & Pratt, 2011; Watt, 2007).

Reflexivity is defined as the researcher's position and creates self-awareness of how their past experiences can potentially frame the results and conclusions of the study (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Miller, 2000). The researcher used a journal as one of the tools to raise awareness and reflexivity and to manage any assumptions, biases, and preconceived interpretations. The journaling process helped to excluded bias from the data analysis process. The researcher practiced reflection on the researcher's behavior and beliefs both during and after the study to help to discover new perspectives as well as missed thoughts (Watt, 2007).

After reflecting in the journal, the researcher identified a bias related to only wanting to find positive elements and stories. The researcher wanted to raise awareness that at times, people are not always going to experience and say only positivity in their lives. Although some mid-career professionals are flourishing at work, they also experience some bad relationships, emotions, health, or other aspects of the six PERMA-H elements. Thus, the researcher at times struggled with how to incorporate negative stories and examples into a study about flourishing. Also, the way the research question and sub-questions were phrased did not allow much space to talk about any non-positive or negative experiences in flourishing. Therefore, the researcher intentionally probed the participants to share more positive experiences than any non-positive or negative experiences.

Positionality

Creswell (2013) advises on how researchers need to incorporate their roles as a researcher and their position so that they can methodically and consciously and carefully evaluate how they affect their understandings of the data. The positionality of the researcher was

that she was also a mid-career professional. The researcher was making a career transition. The researcher has a Bachelor's degree in Music, with major emphasis in music as a trained classical pianist, and a Master's degree in Intercultural Studies. The researcher's background includes music, education, business operation, and organizational development. Her career evolved over twenty years of work experience in K-12 education teaching, educational operation and marketing, and organizational training and development, emphasizing in talent development. As a result of the researcher's own career transition, the researcher understands the challenges that mid-career professionals face. Thus, the researcher empathized with other mid-career professionals striving to flourish and has strong beliefs regarding the importance of flourishing in the workplace. In addition, the researcher, being a mid-career professional herself, has a personal desire to gain a deeper understanding of Seligman's well-being theory to pursue wellness for herself as well as to be an ambassador for other mid-career professionals. The researcher wants that her own self-discovery path of flourishing in her career will further encourage and empower mid-career professionals.

Summary

This study is a qualitative phenomenological study exploring the experience of five mid-career professionals. The researcher conducted informal, confidential and comfortable unstructured interviews with open-ended questions to explore the topic of flourishing. The researcher used HyperRESEARCH to organize data and gain clarity on the interviews. Then, the researcher coded, found statements, found meanings in statements, and described the "essence" (Creswell, 2013) of flourishing in mid-career professionals using PERMA-H element.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of flourishing among mid-career professionals using Seligman's PERMA-H model. This chapter presents the detailed findings of this study. It begins with a restatement of the purpose, research questions, and research design that framed this qualitative phenomenological study, followed by a discussion of participant demographic information. The chapter results are presented by six sub-elements of PERMA-H specific to the participants' positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, achievement, and physical health. The chapter will end with a summary of thematic analysis findings with codes and themes.

Re-Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of five mid-career professionals who self-identify as flourishing. This study sought to understand which elements of Seligman's PERMA-H model (positive emotion, engagement, positive relationship, meaning, achievement, and positive physical health) subjects perceive to have contributed to their flourishing and what role those elements have played in their flourishing. This study used the phenomenological approach to explore meaning and perspectives of who have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

The following research questions and sub-questions were used to guide this study and understand lived experiences.

RQ1. How do mid-career professionals describe their lived experience of flourishing based on the six elements of Seligman's PERMA-H model?

1. How do mid-career professionals experience positive emotions and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
2. How do mid-career professionals experience engagement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
3. How do mid-career professionals experience positive relationships and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
4. How do mid-career professionals experience meaning and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
5. How do mid-career professionals experience achievement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
6. How do mid-career professionals experience positive physical health and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?

Research Design

This qualitative, non-experimental study used a phenomenological methodology to explore how mid-career professionals are flourishing in their careers. A qualitative approach was chosen to better understand participant's individual in-depth experiences of phenomena of flourishing through their interviews. The researcher conducted virtual, unstructured interviews using open-ended questions to explore five participants' experiences. The five unstructured interview allowed the researcher to have freedom to change the sequence of questions or skip to any other area to best gather the data that was sought for the study.

The length of each interview ranged from 45 to 60 minutes. The interview questions were based on the elements of flourishing in Seligman's PERMA-H model. The researcher provided a handout on Seligman's PERMA-H model before the interview. The audio recordings were

transcribed by Rev Transcription and coded in HyperRESEARCH. A pilot-test of the interview was performed to ensure efficacy of the interview questions and to allow mastery of interviewer skills for the researcher. The researcher strove to display openness, receptivity, and authenticity in order to be fully engaged with the participants. The researcher used bracketing to reduce biases and be completely receptive towards participants' responses to interview questions to increase validity.

Participants' Demographic Information

The researcher provided five participants who self-identified as flourishing mid-career professionals with three demographic questions. The questions solicited background information on gender, work position, and industry. They were all mid-career professionals whose years of experience ranged from 13 years to 17 years.

Participants' profiles are:

- Participant 1 is a female who is an engineer in the government industry.
- Participant 2 is a female who is a vice president in the education management sector.
- Participant 3 is a male who works as a manufacturing manager in the business industry.
- Participant 4 is a female who is a nurse in the healthcare industry.
- Participant 5 is a female who is a project manager in the technology industry.

Thematic Analysis and Findings

This study included one primary, overarching research question with six sub-questions relevant to PERMA-H model. The codes are presented by the six sub-elements of PERMA-H, which are also the same as the categories. For each sub-question, the following discussion highlights only the most common codes from participants' responses to the relevant interview

questions, and interprets, and relates them to previous research and theory. After the codes, themes of the findings are presented across elements.

Positive emotions. Research sub-question: How do mid-career professionals experience positive emotions and what role do these experiences play in their flourishing? Interviewees were asked to describe what type of positive emotions they feel at work and when they experience them. Participants’ replies highlighted five codes for positive emotions: inspiration, love, trust, gratitude, and excitement.

Table 1

Summary of Codes Related to Positive Emotions

Positive Emotions	Codes	Frequency	Examples
Sub-question 1. How do mid-career professionals experience positive emotions and what role do these experiences play in their flourishing?	Inspiration	9	“I myself get inspiration from my professors, teachers, instructors”
	Love	8	“A place that you believe in, that you would love to work for”
	Trust	8	“You always, always have to keep the trust of your team”
	Gratitude	8	“I’m really blessed with amazing mentors.”
	Excitement	7	“I mean for me this one is all about future looking and the excitement of ideas.”

Inspiration. The first positive emotion participants mentioned experiencing at work was inspiration. Their inspirations stemmed from their work and from people they were working with. Participant 2 shared that thinking and sharing big ideas inspired her. “When we think about really big ideas, that spurs positive emotion, I think in both of us [my mentor and I], and enables me to inspire the team in the same sort of way”. Participant 4 expressed how her inspiration comes from her network of people such as her mentor, a professor, and co-workers.

I think having a mentor helps, and you know having her as an inspiration . . . Then as the years go by I just see so many nurses at work in my unit, who are just high achievers who have been trying to earn her Master's while working. . . . So I feel like I want to be inspiring those that want to get their degree.

The participants were inspired by creating and sharing big ideas and their strong relationships with others.

Love. The second positive emotion participants exhibited in the interviews was love.

Participant 3 illustrated how his love for his work went well beyond monetary value. He said,

But if possible, find a place that you really like to work, a place that you believe in, that you would love to work for. And if you could get there, a place that might either services or products that you believe in that resonate with you or a bigger [than you] that contributes more than just the fact that you're making money.

Participant 4 displayed the love and support she experience with her family by stating, “There's more meaning in things because I have a husband that's loving and I have kids that are loving and supportive”. Participant 5 expressed her love for teaching and sharing her skills with others by saying,

But these organizations that I support also include sessions to help with career development, or resume reviews, or having technical discussions with people that are graduating from grad school and are looking for jobs. . . . Those are all talks that I really enjoy giving or participating in. I've been able to bring in people that ran leadership training when I was going through it. . . . I feel like teams work much better when they're getting what they want and it lines up with work that they love to do.

Participants experienced a lot of love in different aspects of their lives. They loved their work. They loved to teach and also loved to learn. They loved the people they were with.

Trust. The third positive emotion participants demonstrated was trust. Participant 3 said that a great relatability and open communication nurtured trust in the team.

Just having people like that who understand what you're going through. They can understand and relate to the challenges that you face because they face the same challenges with their people. . . . So, that alone and be able to discuss that openly with trust, knowing that people aren't experiencing the same things and then, you can say things to them in confidence and they can relate to you and vice versa. That actually does a lot to your morale.

Participant 5 also specified the importance of trust and how transparency, respect, and open communication can foster trust at work.

I do think the biggest thing that you need to have when managing is the trust of your team and your partners. . . . so really making sure that my team has that trust and confidence in me, that the relationship is very good where I'm very transparent, which I think is very helpful. . . . If you can level set that way and get the trust of your team, it makes things a lot easier . . . I think that's the best way to work with people is having respect, and trust, and open communication.

The participants shared that without trust, the relationships at work would not succeed. The trust helped employees to feel safe. Thus, it created and fostered transparency and openness in communication with one another at work.

Gratitude. The fourth positive emotion that participants expressed was gratitude in their lives. Some of the participants were thankful and content for their work and opportunities they

have. Some participants also said that they felt gratitude for their work when they were appreciated by others. Participant 4 expressed how helping others at work and feeling their appreciation brings her a sense of satisfaction and gratitude for her work and life. She explained,

Happy, satisfied, appreciated, fulfilled, I also stay happy when I'm giving back, so I feel a satisfaction with what I do because I'm with my patients. . . . Because when they're done, when they're done with the visit, they're appreciative of the work I did for them.

Participant 5 went on to describe how Her feeling appreciated and successful led to gratitude in her life,

I got really lucky in the sense that . . . Honestly, I'm very happy with where I'm at in my life. I think I'm successful enough based on my metrics at least. . . . Having people come to you and say, "Hey, we were successful and you helped us with X, Y, Z," or like, "You're doing this on a day-to-day basis, and that really helps us get our job done more effectively." Those two things are really big for me.

The participants' expressions of gratitude helped them feel lucky, happy, and fulfilled about their work and their lives. They appreciated others at work and also were appreciated by others.

Excitement. The fifth type of positive emotions participants illustrated is excitement. Some participants explained how when they think about their future, it brings them excitement in their lives. Participant 2 spoke on the excitement,

I mean for me this one is all about future looking and the excitement of ideas. . . . And so putting forth new and creative ideas that are sort of in the third horizon and long-term vision of where we can go as an industry, as a people, as a culture and taking us out of the moment.

His excitement grew as his optimism about the future and long-term plan expanded in his mind and work.

In summary, the meaning of their work inspired participants. They were also inspired by others at work to be motivated to seek for knowledge and skills. A sense of love came through their vision for their work and others. The feeling of trust made them feel safe in the workplace to be creative, honest, respectful and supported by others. The gratitude helped them to express blessings in their lives and inspired them to bless others. The excitement and hope brought optimism in their lives for their present and future.

Positive emotions expressed were also not only in their present lives, but also from their past and future. Inspiration, love, trust, gratitude, and excitement and hope aided flourishing their lives as well as others around them. The elements of the experience of positive emotions were with people whom they were sharing lives with (e.g. families, allies, coworkers, spouse), the type of job they had, the level of meaning and passion that was attached to their jobs, and how their significant role in the work ultimately contributed to society as whole. The participants perceived that positive emotions at work fostered positive relationships, better work engagement, and a positive environment, which ultimately all promoted their performance, learning, and success at work.

Engagement. Research sub-question 2 asked: How do mid-career professionals experience engagement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing? The interview questions asked participants to share what aspects of their jobs contribute to their engagement at work. Participants' responses displayed three codes of being open and seizing opportunity, feeling importance, and challenging work in their engagement at work.

Table 2

Summary of Codes Related to Engagement

Engagement	Codes	Frequency	Examples
Sub-question 2. How do mid-career professionals experience engagement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?	Opportunity	14	“Jump on this opportunity to get another chance”
	Feeling of importance/significance	10	“I'm more engaged in that sense, because now I have bigger role to play. It's a significant role to play and people are looking at everything that I'm doing”
	Challenging work	9	“Look to finding new challenges where I can grow in as myself”

Opportunity. Some participants commented that being open and seizing opportunity helped them to be engaged at work. Participant 3 directly addressed about the mutual benefit of opportunity for himself and his company motivated him to be engaged at work. He clarified, Promotion, meeting title and pay for me, because to me the more you contribute to a company, which is great, the more the company benefits, which is part of the reason why you are employed there because you're obviously trying to benefit your employer but at the same time too, there has to be a sense or feeling that your employer is looking out for you.

Participant 4 said about her opportunities at work, “jump on this opportunity to get another chance . . . You have to try it. You can't just dream about it. You have to do it now because later may never come”. Participants 5 added to seek learning and stay open to opportunity.

Your education is a toolbox and it gives you tools to be successful in whatever career you choose. If you look really hard into what opportunities are out there, you may like something different. So my advice is don't give yourself structure all the time. Give yourself short-term goals that align with your personal goals. Maybe you want stability in a few years.

Feeling of importance/significance. Some participants revealed how their feeling of importance at work increased the engagement at work. They feel emotional connections to their work such as pride, ownership, involvement, and power of influence were expressions of their commitment at work. Participant 3 went on to state that his engagement at work increased with sharing and achieving shared goals through partnership, “I would say that that is a way that I've contributed to flourishing for people in the workplace. . . . but we work to their partner that we work together very closely and has a big impact on our financial goals”. Participant 4 added how her work engagement is strong through her connection at work and the significant involvement with her patients. She said,

Then I've been working in the same building for 17 years so now in the same unit, I see the babies and the kids and the toddlers grown, and then I see the parents and the kids. I don't recognize most of them but I recognize the parents.

Participant 5 displayed how she takes pride and ownership of her work, which in turn enhances her work engagement and performance.

Sense of pride and ownership. Sense of pride because I do my best to put everything I have at my job. When I'm at work, I'm at work. . . . When you're doing something, you wholeheartedly do it, whatever it may be. So the time that I put into my teams and in my projects, I do put a lot of myself into that.

Challenging work. Some participants cultivated their engagement by taking on challenging work. Participant 2 stated, “Flourishing means a level of being content with where you are, but also balanced with challenges. So to the extent that every day is solving problems and working with people that I admire, that to me is a symbol of flourishing”. Participant 3 added,

I look to finding new challenges where I can grow in as myself. So, moving forward, what sense of achievement is a really big thing for me to feel like that I'm flourishing. It's mainly about getting a concept and actually making it come to life. Basically making it into a tangible product.

Participant 5 responded that she purposely took on challenging work to increase her engagement at work, “Those are the things that really break barriers and those are the challenges I like to take. . . . I take on harder jobs because doing something easy doesn't make me feel like I've accomplished something”.

Overall, participants were open and excited about opportunities at work and seized them. When participants see and seize an opportunity, it brought a lot of hope and optimism in their engagement at work. Participating in challenging work also enhanced participants' engagement at work. They shared a story that showed a strong sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when they completed challenging work compared to more modest projects. It boosted their confidence and worth in the company. They became influential employees through successful collaboration; and as a result, it increased their dedication and involvement in the work engagement.

Positive relationships. Research sub-question 3 investigated: How do mid-career professionals experience positive relationships and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing? The interview questions asked participants to share what type of positive relationships they experience and how positive relationships contribute to flourishing. The codes found in the participants' responses divided into two main areas in their lives: work relationships and personal relationships.

Table 3

Summary of Codes Related to Positive Relationships

Relationships	Codes	Frequency	Examples
Sub-question 3. How do mid-career professionals experience positive relationships and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?	Mentors	14	"I'm really blessed with amazing mentors."
	Mentoring others	9	"And because of the mentoring and the coaching that I've received from people, to me, it's the way that I can pay it forward is to be a mentor myself"
	Coworkers/Colleagues	15	"I have a few co-workers who are constantly giving me PEP talks, essentially every day".
	Family members	14	"My sister and my mother are also pretty influential in my life."
	Spouse	5	"Have an incredibly supportive husband who manages the household while I'm traveling"

Work relationships. The most influential positive relationships for the participants were the mentors and colleagues/co-workers. First, most of them were inspired, empowered, and found strength in mentors when they needed assurance and confidence. Participant 2 explained in detail about her three amazing mentors. She described the first as “a trusted partner when it comes to ideas and for sure, influential in what I do, but most of all, thinking bigger”. She shared her second mentor as “someone that I talk to on a regular basis on more tactical things. And so when I need a sounding board for a decision that needs to be made or reference on somebody within the industry”. She explained the third mentor as someone “who helps me very often deal with emotional type of challenges and his demeanor and style works very well to normalize some of the ways in which I look at things and he has a very different viewpoint”.

Participant 1 echoed about her mentors, “it's these mentors who provided me the guidance and the wisdom to persevere through it all and to even get technical guidance and just the way I should be handling things and the way I should be dealing with challenges”.

Participant 3 added, “So, it would help me to achieve or excel, and to help me to flourish, and give me actual constructive feedback and criticism where needed and guide me in the right

direction.” Participant 4 shared how her mentor helped her to find a balance between going back to school and work,

at work there was a senior RN that was very nurturing. She retired a long time ago but I think from the very beginning, even when I wasn't a registered nurse, I felt her support, and I felt that furthering my career was okay with her because with another department administrator, they didn't like that. I guess it depends who your manager is. They don't like you going back to school because you're going to ask for days off or you're going to ask for time off. . . . So asking to go back to school was a little bit of a challenge but the other, on the nursing side, the senior RN, which she's the manager of the nurses, she was very encouraging and I would say nurturing like the mom.

Participant 5 further spoke how mentors gave her guidance and wisdom,

I always love to mentor with people that are more knowledgeable than me, that have more experience than me, that can give me guidance and insight on the things that I might not see right away in the position that I'm in.

Most of the mentors tended to have so much positive influence in the participants' lives that some participants started mentoring others. They were inspired to be a good role model and tended to share meaning in other people's lives. Participant 1 explained, “And because of the mentoring and the coaching that I've received from people, to me, it's the way that I can pay it forward is to be a mentor myself”. Participant 2 added how her current role now includes mentoring others when she explained,

And what that means is that my role is very external capacity within an organization. So that gives me the chance to interface with a lot of people in different departments as well.

And so to the extent that I can have an impact on their performance and their ability to enjoy their work, that's one of the things that's important to me.

Participant 4 further discussed that she went on to pursue a higher degree to mentor others because her professors inspired her. She said,

I've always wanted to teach because I myself get inspiration from my professors, teachers, instructors, whoever they may be, and I've had many. You really, really remember the good ones, and when you learn something from the good ones, they stay with you forever.

Their mentors highly inclined to influence participants' career and personal development. They taught them what to do, what not to do, what to look for, how to overcome challenges, and how to turn challenges into learning experiences. Their wisdom and encouragement build their courage and confidence to tackle difficult situations and grow as leaders.

Secondly, all participants were inspired, motivated, learned, and empowered by co-workers/colleagues. They were challenged to work hard and find balance by making it on your own. Participant 1 described her colleague,

But I started talking to people who are city workers. So one of them who I spoke to was a manager and she was an engineering manager for I believe Bureau of Engineering or Bureau of Sanitation. And she told me that, even though city workers have this negative perception, the bottom line is it's what you make of it, right. You can try to fit that mold . . . or you can choose to change that and do your best every time you come in and just still put in 110% of your time and energy and try not to fit that mold.

Participant 2 acknowledged the help of her colleagues,

I go with a very directed ask for each of those and those relationships are very dear to me and I take them very seriously. And those individuals have become close friends, allies, colleagues, and have helped me to jump from opportunity to opportunity, particularly in the last couple of years to really advance both financially as well as my responsibility as well as my role in general.

Participant 3 also stated how his collaborative relationships with partner vendors bring shared experiences of learning and problem-solving.

I would say that that is a way that I've contributed to flourishing for people in the workplace. And granted they're not in the same building, but we work to their partner that we work together very closely and has a big impact on our financial goals. . . . there has been a lot of advice and learning passed on both from experiences together that we had separately that come together. And also, inadvertently being just naturally thrown in situations that have problems that come up in which we solve together. So, throughout the kind of collaboration and collaborative relationship or work relationship, there has been a lot of benefits that we've given to each other.

Furthermore, participants' co-workers and colleagues have walked by their sides in time of confusion, and challenges to cheer them on with encouragement and support. Their loyalty and sympathy gave them strength to continue and someone to understand. Participant 1 reflected on her struggle for work-life balance when she was promoted at work, but her personal life was challenged. Her staff helped her to get through it as she said,

And at the time I was going through a lot of personal stuff at home. I got married and then around the same time that I became a supervisor, I had a miscarriage. So that kind of took a lot from me. And I'm like, "Maybe this position is not for me. Maybe I'm getting

into it too soon and the stress of this job is just affecting me and my body and everything." But then I had some of my staff to kind of help me through the entire process and said, "We are going to teach you, everything. Don't worry. We've been in the group for so long."

Participant 5 reflected on how the support of coworkers makes a significant difference in her workday by stating,

Work is not always easy. If it were easy, we'd probably be doing something else. I think it's really important to have the go-to people on whether it's your most amazing day and you need to share something, or whether it's the most awful day you've had and you think that your project is going to end. I also have allies that are in the same role as me. It doesn't matter if they're male or female, but someone that I can go to that if I feel like I have a point that's not being heard, they will help me voice that. Or they'll listen to my ideas and validate. Or give me pointers on why it's not landing in a certain way. So allies to me, it's more of a partnership. Could be a colleague, could be a friend. But whatever it is, somebody that . . . It's kind of your eyes and ears, but is not in your day-to-day situation with you all the time.

Personal relationships. Most of the participants had positive personal relationships that directly contribute to their professional flourishing. First, some participants inclined to be inspired, influenced, supported heavily by their spouse or significant other. Participant 2 expressed, "I have an incredibly supportive husband who manages the household while I'm traveling and then he really likes to take some downtime for himself". Participant 3 went on to state,

I would say that the next biggest things probably your significant other. For me, that's considered family and so, I would say that my significant other has been a really big influence for me in terms of trying to help me deal with the work relationships at work They pretty much, for me at least here, a lot of the things that we talk about that I talk about when we come home from work, so they'd pretty much almost know your coworkers like as if they were there . . . it's also a big contribution to work relationships in terms of how you deal with it when you come home and going back and being positive at the workplace again

Secondly, many participants were also inspired and nurtured by their family members to pursue their career goals despite hardships and doubts. They were encouraged to persevere through failures, and confusions by family members to find vision in their careers. Participant 1 described a time when,

I started taking my Thermodynamics classes and I had labs where again, I was one out of four or five women in the class and I hated it. And there was up to a point where like, "Oh my gosh, I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to survive, maybe I should just switch out of engineering altogether and pursue international studies." . . . and then my dad's like, "Nope, you are not switching to international studies. You are not getting out of engineering." . . . my dad just kept saying, "No, no, you've got to power through it, you've got to go through some of your classes. Just stick with it. It's going to be fine."

So one of my motivation[s] is my grandfather. He worked for the city of LA and he was a drafting technician. He did a lot of signal lights drafting for the City of LA, but he always wanted to be an engineer. So to me it was like, "Oh my gosh no, my grandfather is very smart, yet he didn't have the opportunity to study in the United States and actually

continue on and become an engineer." So I was like, "Okay, maybe I'll do [it] for him.

Maybe I'll just stick it through and maybe I can do this and maybe it's going to be okay."

Participant 2 shared how their family members' deep admiration and respect for their work inspires them to flourish as an individual as well as professionally,

I have two children who are important parts in the relationship tree as well. So I have a 9 year-old daughter and a 12 year-old son that are growing. And our relationship is such that they admire the work that I do . . .

Participant 4 expressed how her drive came from her dedication to her family and inspired her to find deeper meaning in her work, "all my achievement is also dedicated to them [my family]. It's not just for myself. There's more of a drive to do well to inspire my kids, to inspire my husband. I feel like there's meaning".

Based on the data analysis on positive relationships, participants demonstrated that mentors are greatly important to them and due to their mentors' teaching, now the mid-career professionals are also thinking about how they can give back through mentoring or teaching others. Participants encouraged by their co-workers and colleagues who cheered them on. Overall, the participants talked a lot about both mentors and their co-workers and how the deeper meaningful connections added enormous value in their work life.

Flourishing mid-career participants also seem to have flourishing personal relationships. Those personal relationships gravitated to influence in their tolerance to cope with workload and work stress. They all had really positive spouses or children that contribute to family relationships. One participant did not mentioned about family. Positive relationship does not have to be a martial relationship but it can be allies whom they can go to for support.

Meaning. Research sub-question 4: How do mid-career professionals experience meaning and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing? Interview questions asked participants what type and how does their work bring meaning to their lives. The codes displayed that participants found meaning in their work through impacting others, finding a deep purpose or calling or a mission through their work, and by volunteering their time to meaningful work.

Table 4

Summary of Codes Related to Meaning

Meaning	Codes	Frequency	Examples
Sub-question 4. How do mid-career professionals experience meaning and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?	Impacting others	26	“Individual stories and what has something done to impact somebody's lives”
	Calling/mission	12	“I kind of started getting that vision that this is where I need to be and this is my calling, is to how do I create”
	Volunteer work	6	“I also do a lot of volunteering. I support a lot of nonprofits.”

Find meaning by impacting others. Most participants found meaning in their work by impacting others. Participant 1 described how her current project in earthquake-resilient pipe will bring more safety in the world of construction in people lives. She shared,

And then a couple of years later I started working on a project which is developing and leading the efforts and expanding the seismic resilient water infrastructure for the city. So which means my division started looking into different pipe materials that are earthquake-resilient. People living in California, people always say, "The big one is going to happen. And it's a matter of time before a big earthquake's going to happen." . . . the department wanted to start looking into, how do we make our water infrastructure earthquake-resilient and seismic resilient. And so I got involved in some of the pilot

projects at work . . . it really has brought me a lot of happiness doing what it is that I do and knowing that I'm creating something that would make a significant impact. . . . That how this impacts other city people, how they live, what type of quality they are getting from this life . . . I think now I've actually seen a clear vision of the impact of my work to the community.

Participant 2 expanded on how her work is meaningful by helping employees to finish their degrees that are funded by their own employers. Her passion for meaningful work comes with directly or indirectly influencing the quality of others' lives., She added,

But when I can bring big ideas to the table, that's when things tend to be incredibly impactful in a positive way to others as well. . . . So the work that I do focuses directly on access. And what that means is enabling students to access academics that they wouldn't otherwise have had the opportunity to do. So my entire career, I've solved for that one big problem, which is how do students attain the education that they have always dreamed of in their heart and have needed a way forward. And the work that I'm focused on now enables corporate funded opportunities, which means that their companies pay for them to go to school. And that opens doors for people that wouldn't have otherwise been able to get their high school diploma or college diploma or some certificate if they wouldn't have gone if their employer didn't pay. Individual stories and what has something done to impact somebody's lives . . . how they can change, how much money they make in the future, future job titles, pride, it ignites a lot of things that are impactful from an economics standpoint for an individual.

Participant 4 went on to share how she grew with her patients and became part of their lives in a meaningful way, “ So I think now at this point in my career where I'm at, that's the most rewarding, to see them [my patients] grow. . . . Yeah and I feel like I'm part of them”.

Calling/Mission. Some participants reflected on how they considered their work to be a calling or mission rather than treating it just as a job. Participant 1 indicated, “I kind of started getting that vision that this is where I need to be and this is my calling, is to how do I create, how do I help create the seismic and earthquake resilient infrastructure for the city”.

Participant 2 reflected on her calling in providing education to those who need opportunities,

It's really fun to do to make sure that all of those pieces are together and everybody's aligned and we've got the right resources in place in order to achieve the mission both for us and for our parties. . . . we're solving for a number of different problems related to student debt, from skills gaps to recognizing that there are individuals who might have started their college education but didn't finish their college education and being able to provide life changing career boosting opportunities for employees through partnering with higher education institutions around the world that are of the highest quality online programs.

Volunteer work. Some participants found meaning in their volunteer work by “paying it forward” to their communities. They found meaning by dedicating time and resources to something beyond themselves: by giving back to their communities. Participant 1 illustrated this by explaining how her extra hours encouraging women in engineering brought meaning to work and said,

So I'm actually one of the board of directors for the Society of Women Engineers at my work, which allows me to do a lot of presentations and outreach to high schools and colleges. But being able to receive that, to pay it forward.

Participant 2 went on to add,

Another one of them that I can think of immediately is making time to give back. . . . I make it part of my work and my mission to seek out opportunities to help others. . . . finding an opportunity to help someone else and be able to give of myself, whether that's money or ideas.

In summary, participants found meaning at work through their accomplishment and how their work tended to impact others. Their purpose and value of work went beyond their payable hours. They invested their time and skills to reach out to marginalized groups and created opportunities to those who needed them. They also donated their talents and insights to those who needed access, encouragement, and wisdom in order to enrich the wellness of others, just as they have gratitude for receiving these valuable and generous gifts from others in their own lives.

Achievement. Research sub-question 5: How do mid-career professionals experience achievement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing? Interview questions inquired about participants' achievements at work and what contributes to their success. Participants' answers demonstrated the codes of the importance of determination, grit and passion, and continuing drive to grow.

Table 5

Summary of Codes Related to Achievement

Achievement	Codes	Frequency	Examples
Sub-question 5. How do mid-career professionals experience achievement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?	Determination	18	“It’s very important for me to have kind of a sense of direction and not only a direction to go to whether it’s given or self-directed”
	Grit and passion	15	“It’s okay to fail and it’s okay to just keep searching for what it is that makes you happy”
	Continuous growth	9	“A sense of actually moving forward is something that would make me feel that downloading my progressing and making strides but also that I’m not just stagnating in one place.”

Determination. Some participants’ determination helped them to achieve their goals despite challenges, doubts, and setbacks. Their tenacity and courage to reach their goals was a powerful example and they served as strong role models to motivate others. Participant 1 said her energy and drive motivate both herself and others at work as described below,

And they see that I work really hard. And so by seeing that they get motivated by it. And now with my new group, they know about my reputation. They've worked with me before in other projects and they've seen me the way I ran my other group. And so they're like, we're so excited that you're with us because we see that you have so much energy, you have so much, it just drive." And because of that energy and drive now they feel like they're getting motivated and empowered. So I'm hoping that I can continue that and translate that into my new role in this new group and be able to serve departments in higher capacity.

Participant 4 reflected on her journey and brought attention to her determination,

I feel like I've gone a long way because I started as a vocational nurse. Then I became a registered nurse. Then I got my Bachelor's and now I'm getting my Master's so that in itself,

getting the higher degree, is super big achievement for me. So I feel really fulfilled. I know I'm already successful. There's no definition of success with just a degree. I know I'm already successful career-wise but just to get a higher degree is a higher achievement for me.

Grit and passion. Some participants had a perseverance of effort combined with the passion to achieve a goal. Their continuous grit and passion carried them to their accomplishments. If you have a passion for something, you would go to extreme to get it. This could be seen in Participant 1's interview when she shared,

So I really find the motivation in that. And I have so much passion and energy for my work because of what I do and because of the significance that it's making, so. I think advice that I can give them is that it's okay to fail. It's okay to try something different and something new. It's like, to me life is so short, but if you're doing something that you're not enjoying, you're doing something that you're not passionate about and you're not finding that significance in your work. You're just wasting your time. But don't stop there though. Just keep looking for it. Keeps searching, keep talking to people. Because it's through other people's experiences sometimes where you can get the motivation. . . . it's okay to just keep searching for what it is that makes you happy.

Participant 4 shared her grit and passion by explaining,

From the time that I've known them, they were all in the same page. So I feel like they can do it. I feel like I can do it too. Not to say that I want to be in their level but if it's possible, do it. If you have the drive to do it, do it. If you don't want to, there's no reason to do it. Nobody's forcing you, but if you find a purpose in doing something, then do it. Because that time may never come. Later may never arrive. That's my motivation. . . . I

would say it doesn't matter what age, if you're not happy with what you're doing, you have to find something that you're passionate about.

Participant 5 went on to state,

If I'm coming into work, it's because I want to move something ahead and get it done.

When you work long-term projects, like some of mine have been six years, eight years, you do have to set little goals. Because it might seem like you're not getting enough done.

So you have to look at the big end picture. Are you taking the right steps to getting there? That's something that I think for me is the sense of accomplishment at the end of the day.

Continuous growth. Participants' achievement motivation came from continuing to grow as a life-long learner. Participant 3 shared how his knowledge and skills were self-directed and now cultivated as entrepreneurship by saying,

So, it's very important for me to have kind of a sense of direction and not only a direction to go to whether it's given or self-directed, but also that this direction leads to tangible achievements every step of the way, because for me to stay stagnant in one position in my work is very frustrating. . . . I would say that yes, a lot of my experience especially in this industry, there's specific, has helped me to I guess cultivate a certain set of skills and knowledge and resources to try start my own company. And I have started on my own company in my spare time to try to develop products for companies.

On the whole, the richness of the individual experience of achievement was dependent on participants' determination, grit and passion, and their continuous drive to develop themselves in order to accomplish higher goals. Participants set realistic goals and not absolute ones for themselves and for others. They allowed time to cultivate their energy and talent. They also

practiced self-grace in their mistakes, embraced themselves for who they are, and remained true to themselves. Participants collectively shared their thoughts: to never to give up, keep seeking, and grow one’s passion to pursue and achieve a goal that’s worth seeking in order to flourish more at work and personally. In times of confusion, setbacks, and doubts, they used a positive outlook to stay resilient.

Physical health. Research sub-question 6 asked: How do mid-career professionals experience positive physical health and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing? Interview questions inquired about participants’ involvement with physical health in their lives and how their health contributes to flourishing. All participants have taken physical health seriously in their well-being and lifestyle. They prioritize the schedule to maintain a healthier life pattern.

Table 6

Summary of Codes Related to Positive Physical Health

Physical health	Codes	Frequency	Examples
Sub-question 6. How do mid-career professionals experience physical health and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?	Activities	10	“Definitely I am a very outdoorsy person. So biking, hiking, those are all really good things in my book”
	Healthy eating habits	3	“I just eat healthy. I drink a lot of water, get enough sleep, make sure that hygiene-wise, like taking care of myself.”

Participant 1 explained,

And just recently I got into health coaching. And health coaching to me that's something that I've just recently started and that's because I wasn't sleeping well. My mind and my brain is constantly thinking, it's thinking about work. It's constantly thinking about my job as a mom. It's constantly thinking about my job as a wife, what I

need to do. So usually my brain doesn't shut down at night and I'm not sleeping well. So one of my colleagues was doing this health coaching and she's like, "Oh, maybe you should try out the program and see if it's going to work for you. . . . So to me I needed to change my habits and I didn't want it to be all about work. I didn't want it to be all about worrying about everything and stressing about everything, but actually enjoying the moment.

Participant 5 referenced a proverb, "because if you don't have your physical health, nothing else really matters in my opinion". Participant 4 who worked in healthcare emphasized the importance of this aspect when she shared, "Right now we always have to wear a mask. Make sure that you're always up to date with your immunizations . . . You take care of yourself so you don't get sick. If I feel symptoms, I immediately take care of it".

Many participants also discussed their serious intension and discipline to healthy eating habits to promote a better physical health. Participant 1 shared how she corrected her bad eating habit by, "part of it is I was drinking so much coffee, you get the highs and the lows . . . So the health program teaches you to eat every two hours and to make healthy choices". Participant 4 responded, "I just eat healthy. I drink a lot of water, get enough sleep, and make sure that hygiene-wise, like taking care of myself. So yeah, fruits, vegetables, and being mindful of weight or sleep.

Most of the participants enjoyed physical activities such as outdoor activities (e.g. marathon, triathlon, swimming) and indoor activities (e.g. yoga, gym) to maintain their physical health. Participant 5 reported, "I definitely am a very outdoorsy person. So biking, hiking, those are all really good things in my book, but I do try to stay healthy . . . I actually have ran two half

marathons of which I never trained for because I thought how hard can this be”. Participant 2 explained,

I travel a lot. But one of the things that has been important to me is triathlon. So I tend to spend time in the mornings running or biking or if I can get a swim in. So I generally look for a hotel that has a pool so that I can get a swim in. I tend to work out in the mornings. That's sort of better for me. In the evenings, I might do some yoga, but generally my morning workouts are what drive me, gets me started for the day.

Some participants told stories that expressed how their physical health can affect their energy and stress levels, which in turn affect their career growth. Therefore, they make an extra effort and take time to incorporate physical health activities into their busy days. Participant 1 explained,

But again, it's kind of like choreographing all of these things in coordinating all of these things could be stressful. And to me the way that I'm able to deal with that stress is working out, like running or walking and going to the gym after work.

Participant 2 spoke to this issue further when she shared,

Physical health is an important one. I noticed that when I don't have the time or I'm too exhausted from travel to get my workouts in, I tend to feel sluggish and worse off than when I sort of muscle through and get even a 15 minute workout in. So I think it's really important to career growth to make sure that exercise is a part of what you do.

Mindful practices of positive physical health were a vital piece of their wellness. They participated in self-care rituals to maintain their focus, energy level, and positivity that contribute their well-being. Their positive physical health gave them strength and courage to better cope with life's stress and maintain balance, resilience, and optimism—a link between mind-body

health. Their physical exercise and healthy eating habits increased participants' productivity, performances, and wellness.

Themes

Data analyses of collected data from interviews showed that the lived experiences of flourishing mid-career professionals suggest elements of PERMA-H are all interconnected. Positive emotions were related to participants' positive relationships and meaningful work. The experience of engagement came from their accomplishments and meaningful work, which also produced positive emotions. Their meaning of work and life were strongly connected to their relationships and accomplishments. The findings also indicate flourishing mid-career professionals carve out time for meaningful activities and relationships in their lives. They prioritize their schedule for important people (e.g. family, friends, and allies) and activities for self-care management and for their communities. Flourishing mid-career professionals demonstrate continuous growth and life-long learning in their professional and personal life. The participants gravitated to seek new ideas, challenging work, and create opportunities of learning to acquire new knowledge and skill sets.

Although flourishing mid-career professionals inclined to value achievement, it was more worthwhile for them when it was accompanied by other elements of PERMA-H model. Flourishing mid-career professionals also invested their time in meaningful people and activities, including their personal growth as a life-long learner. Beyond the PERMA-H elements, flourishing mid-career professionals also practiced character strengths and virtues such as courage, trust, humility, and optimism. Ultimately, the collected data described that all PERMA-H model elements of the experience were interconnected in the participants' flourishing lives.

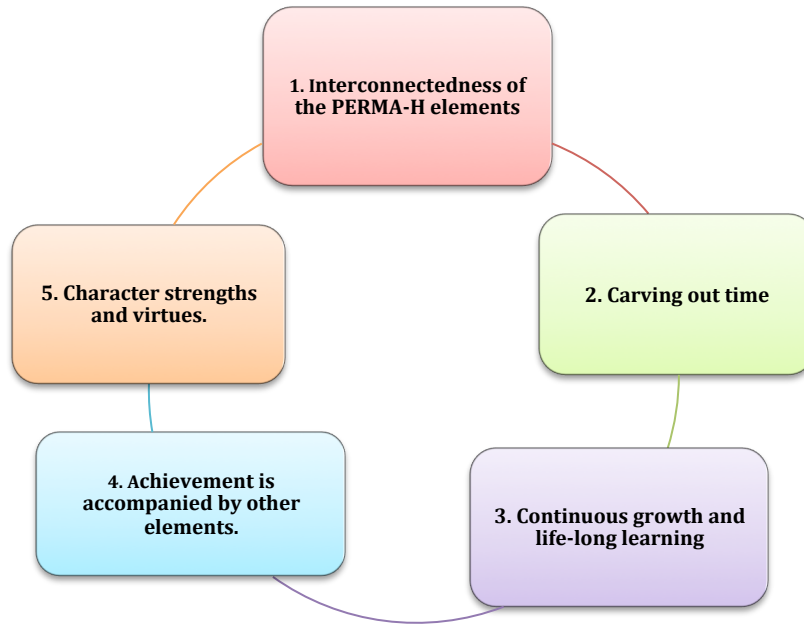


Figure 2. Themes

Theme 1: Interconnectedness of the PERMA-H elements. On the whole, experiences shared by participants regarding the phenomena of flourishing mid-career indicated an interconnectedness between the elements. The stories and examples shared by participants were often coded with positive emotions, positive relationships, and meaningful work. Participant 4 expressed “gratitude” and “love” through her meaningful work with her patients and how she feels “happy and fulfilled” through her relationship with patients because she said she felt “appreciated by them”. Participant 1 found better work engagement through her meaningful work in her significant role “I’m more engaged in that sense, because now I have bigger role to play and people are looking at everything that I’m doing.” Participant 3 found better work engagement through his accomplishments, which also led to his positive emotions of joy. He explained,

To tackle those challenges head on, to solve the problem, and then get it to a point where the product is pretty much close to 100% of what they originally wanted within the cost

that they wanted, and on time. And something really cool product that you made for them is, for me the biggest thing that gives me joy about developing product.

Each of these mid-career professionals demonstrated that work engagement was meaningful through their important roles as leaders who solved problems, took responsibility and ownership of their work, and told a story that showed a pride in their achievements.

All five participants experienced deeper meaning through their positive relationships and how those relationships helped them and others flourish. Participant 1, 3, and 5 found meaning through their achievements at work because “completing a task” or “delivering a positive performance” brought more meaning at work. Participants’ answers showed how all elements of PERMA-H model were interconnected to each other.

Theme 2: Carving out time. Another theme that arose from the collective of codes was that participants prioritize their time for meaningful activities and people in their lives. They set aside time in their schedule to focus on what they consider to be important in their lives. They let go of unnecessary obligations in their lives that derailed their happiness, but rather utilized their time on important things and relationships. The intention to carve out time required boundary setting, prioritizing, and scheduling downtime. Participant 2 said, “When I turn off of work, it’s all on them [family]. . . . I’m home but we do quite a bit of travel together as well. Next week we’re going to Europe as a family and so we certainly respect and enjoy family time as well”. Participants carved out personal time outside work for family and friends, hobbies, outdoor activities, volunteer or humanitarian work, and religious activities. Participant 5 stated, “I think it’s really important to have the go-to people on whether it’s your most amazing day and you need to share something, or whether it’s the most awful day you’ve had and you think that your project is going to end”.

These mid-career professionals did not have a lot of spare time, but they intentionally invested their time and energy into those things that are important (e.g. relationships, higher education) to their wellness. They carve out time to maintain physical health by incorporating indoor or outdoor activities for self-care exercises. They tended to spend time with family, friends and allies outside of work who encourage or empower. They also contribute their time by volunteering to help communities who are in need. They “pay it forward” and gave to the ones who are in need. Participant 5 highlighted her volunteer work educating youth through nonprofit organizations by stating,

I also do a lot of volunteering. I support a lot of nonprofits. They're all mainly supporting education. I also oftentimes go back to my alumni to teach courses in engineering and how your career is in engineering. I think those things really help. I do believe in giving back. I think some of my outside activities like the nonprofits, teaching at my university, those things are very, very helpful. Because it almost brings you back full circle . . . It almost gives you perspective as to where you were X amount of years ago, and you're being that person for someone else.

Professionals who are flourishing in their mid-career years tended to find simple happiness in little thing that adds to their overall wellness. They set aside time for important matters by setting boundaries and being cautious to not overcommit or overextend. They experienced flourishing as a whole person, not only through their work, but with a deeper meaning and purpose of their existence.

Theme 3: Continuous growth and life-long learning. Participants in this study tended to seek new ideas, challenging work, and opportunities. Participant 1 discussed how she recently learned about and incorporated healthy eating habits because she wanted to have more energy for

her work and family. Participant 2 tried out for a triathlon for the last few years to maintain her mental and physical resilience. Participant 3 was using different learning platforms to build his own business as an entrepreneur. Participant 5 recently challenged herself to train and run a marathon. Participant 2 articulated,

We tend to be in a lifelong learning society and culture today, which is different than it was even 15 years ago. And we have access to learning in so many short forms like LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) Learning and Courses and different platforms that enable people to access quick ways to help them grow and learn that have been tremendously useful to individual[s].

Participants 1, 3 and 5 all commented that they are “taking on challenges” on purpose to increase learning at their jobs. They stated that they found it most “satisfying” and they “feel more accomplished” when taking on new projects continuously. They perceive that continuous learning creates opportunities for them. The richness of the individual experience of learning “new ideas” brought them a greater sense of achievement and motivates them to be life-long learners because they simply love learning. Participant 5 explained that she is “very honest with myself as to see what my strength and what my growth opportunities are. I don’t really like using the word “weakness” because I think everyone has a lot to learn.” Obtaining new knowledge and skills helped them to create a new identity at work. Their desire to seek learning was an on-going process that was embedded in their mindset and life habits.

Theme 4: Achievement is accompanied by other elements. Most of the participants shared the value and importance of achievement in their lives. Their achievement has contributed to their well-being by adding a sense of accomplishment that comes from the results of their hard work, and sacrifices. Although some of their achievement came with heavy price tags (e.g. years

of dealing with demanding hours, a juggling in work-life balance, persevering through a doubtful time on the career path, or pursuing school while working) their achievement was attainable in part because it was accompanied by other PERMA-H elements.

For example, finding a deeper meaning in their job, cultivating positive relationships, and experiencing positive emotions all contributed to the perception that their achievements were worthwhile. Participant 1's achievement was accompanied by positive relationships. She shared how her work promotion and miscarriage came at the same time; it was not the promotion that helped her to get through difficult time of loss, but her positive relationships with her team who poured out encouragement and support for her.

Participant 2 voiced her strong opinion about how people seeking validation from others through materialistic measurements will fall short compared to looking for more meaning and finding their own self-worth in helping others. Her meaning in her work and how she helped to educate people who did not have access assisted in building her sense of accomplishment. "If people can start to internalize that and be validated by their achievements by helping others or feel confident in the work that they do as a result of being who they are, then what ends up happening is internal". Achievement is not all about getting or having more, but profoundly relies on fuller personal growth. This could be seen in Participant 4's interview when she stated, "really a lot of people flourish in their career even if they stay in the same position, but they have growth in learning more". She valued her self-growth more than her advancement at work.

Theme 5: Character strengths and virtues. The final overarching theme within the findings is based on how participants demonstrated character strengths and virtues beyond those found in the PERMA-H model. The interviews with the individuals who consider themselves to be flourishing mid-career professionals show examples of character strengths and virtues. The

VIA framework of 24-character strengths fall under six virtue categories (see Appendix E). For example, participants demonstrated the virtue of wisdom by sharing stories that involve love for learning, and perspective.

Participants mentioned their drive to pursue a character of courage and humanity. Participant 5 said “bravery” and participant 1 and 4 added the importance of perseverance by emphasizing “finish what you have started” and “persistence”. They also discussed the power of encouragement and empowerment. They spoke about how nobody can do it alone and in times of doubt and confusion, everyone can use the support of others to persevere t. Furthermore, all participants expressed their love and kindness that strengthens their confidence and worth in their professional and personal relationships to show the virtue of humanity.

Some participants recognized traits of justice such as teamwork and leadership that created better work environment. Participant 2, 3, 5 all shared that “trust in the team” and “someone has your back” is essential in teamwork. They became a role model who displayed leadership in the team to show their trust and loyalty. Most of the participants also commented on the strength of temperance, mentioning things such as forgiveness, humility, and self-regulation as significant parts of working with others. Participant 2 and 5 illustrated forgiveness by “giving people a second chance” and participant 5 shared “nobody knows everything”. They wanted to give people the benefit of the doubt even through mistakes, knowing that no one is perfect and we are all learning together. They practiced compassion and grace on themselves and for those they work with. Falling under the transcendence virtue, some participants shared gratitude, hope, and spirituality as positive traits. Participants 1 and 3 expressed “gratitude”, participants 2 and 3 used the terms “hope” and “optimism”, and participants 1 and 2 spoke of

“spirituality.” The virtue of transcendence brought meaning and hope in their present and future, knowing that a positive outlook will triumph over negative situations.

Summary

This qualitative, non-experimental study used a phenomenological methodology to explore how mid-career professionals are flourishing in their careers. A qualitative approach was chosen to better understand participants’ individual in-depth experiences of phenomena of flourishing through their interviews. Through virtual, unstructured interviews using open-ended questions, participants were asked to describe their lived experiences of flourishing. The interview questions were linked to one primary research question: How do mid-career professionals describe their lived experience of flourishing based on the six elements of Seligman’s PERMA-H model?

Research sub-question 1 explored how mid-career professionals experience positive emotions and what role these experiences play in their flourishing. Interviewees were asked to describe what type of positive emotions they feel at work and when they experience them. Participants’ replies centered around five positive emotions: inspiration, love, trust, gratitude, and excitement. Research sub-question 2 asked about how mid-career professionals experience engagement and what role do these experiences play in their flourishing. The interview questions asked participants to share what aspects of their jobs contribute to their engagement at work. Participants’ responses displayed how challenging work, new ideas, and being open and seizing opportunity increased their engagement at work.

Research sub-question 3 inquired about how mid-career professionals experience positive relationships and what role these experiences play in their flourishing. The interview questions asked participants to share what type of positive relationships they experience and how positive

relationships contribute to flourishing. Participants' responses were divided into work and personal relationships, which both increased their sense of well-being. Research sub-question 4 probed how mid-career professionals experience meaning and what role these experiences play in their flourishing. Interview questions asked participants what type and how does their work bring meaning to their lives. Participants' responses reflected that they found meaning in their work through impacting others, finding a deep purpose or calling or a mission through their work, and through volunteer work.

Research sub-question 5 asked about how mid-career professionals experience achievement and what role it plays in their flourishing. Interview questions inquired about participants' achievements at work and what contributes to their success. Participants' responses to these questions highlighted the importance of determination, grit and passion, and a continuing drive to grow. Research sub-question 6 investigated how mid-career professionals experience positive physical health and what role these experiences play in their flourishing. Interview questions inquired about participants' involvement with physical health in their lives and their answers were about making time for activities and having healthy eating habits.

There were five comprehensive themes from this study's findings. The themes present how mid-career professionals experience the six elements of the PERMA-H model and what role those experiences play in their flourishing. These are: a) interconnectedness of the PERMA-H elements, b) carving out time, c) continuous growth and life-long learning, d) achievement is accompanied by other elements, e) character strengths and virtues. In Chapter 5, these findings will be discussed in agreement with the previous literature on humanistic psychology, positive psychology, and Seligman's well-being theory.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter presents a discussion of the conclusions of this phenomenological study about flourishing mid-career professionals in the context of the PERMA-H model. The chapter begins with a restatement of the study's purpose, its research questions, and its design. This will be followed by the conclusions that were drawn from the data analysis. The chapter ends with the study's implications and provides recommendations for mid-career professionals and future research.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of mid-career professionals who self-identify as flourishing. This study sought to understand which elements of Seligman's PERMA-H model (positive emotion, engagement, positive relationship, meaning, achievement, and positive physical health) participants perceive to have contributed to their flourishing.

Research Questions

Through in-depth interviews, the researcher sought to understand the overarching research question and sub-questions were used to guide this study and understand lived experiences.

RQ1. How do mid-career professionals describe their lived experience of flourishing based on the six elements of Seligman's PERMA-H model?

7. How do mid-career professionals experience positive emotions and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
8. How do mid-career professionals experience engagement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?

9. How do mid-career professionals experience positive relationships and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
10. How do mid-career professionals experience meaning and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
11. How do mid-career professionals experience achievement and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?
12. How do mid-career professionals experience positive physical health and what role do those experiences play in their flourishing?

Research Design

This qualitative, non-experimental study used a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design to explore how mid-career professionals are flourishing in their careers. A qualitative approach was chosen to better understand participant's individual in-depth experiences of phenomena of flourishing through their interviews. The researcher conducted virtual, unstructured interviews using open-ended questions to explore participants' experiences. The unstructured interview allowed the researcher to have freedom to change the sequence of questions to best gather the data that was sought for the study.

Virtual interviews using Zoom (www.zoom.com) were recorded. The lengths of the Zoom (www.zoom.com) recordings were between 45 to 60 minutes. The interview questions were based on the elements of flourishing in Seligman's PERMA-H model. The audio recordings were transcribed by Rev Transcription and coded in HyperRESEARCH. To maintain the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher worked with a positive psychology expert. A pilot-test of the interview was performed to ensure efficacy of the interview questions and to allow

mastery of interviewer skills for the researcher. The researcher strove to display openness, receptivity, and authenticity in order to be fully engaged with the participants.

Conclusions

Thematic analysis of interview data gathered during this study resulted in five conclusions related to how mid-career professionals flourish at work. These findings, as seen in Figure 2 (Chapter 4), align with and expand upon the previous research related to positive professional experiences in mid-career. This section revisits the themes reported in Chapter 4 and provides further discussion of the conclusions.

Conclusion 1: The lived experiences of flourishing mid-career professionals suggest interconnectedness between all the PERMA-H elements. The participants' responses in this study demonstrated interconnectedness between positive emotions, positive relationships, and meaning. Positive emotions at work as expressed by all participants came from their positive relationships. This finding directly supports Seligman's (2011) emphasis on how all positive relationships are accompanied by one of the PERMA-H elements. He explains that humans are emotional creatures and have a natural need to connect and share their thoughts and emotions with others which can be fulfilled only by relationships—because no one can flourish in isolation.

All five participants in this study demonstrated strong bonds with their mentors, coworkers, colleagues, friends, spouse, and family members to keep themselves well balanced. All Participants described how their positive relationships enhanced their ability to regulate emotions, strengthened stress coping skills, and improved self-growth, self-awareness, emotional encouragement and flourishing in general. This finding is in line with the Colbert et al. (2016) and Reis and Gable (2003) studies on the benefit of interpersonal relationships that foster

emotion regulation, stress coping skills, self-awareness, identity formation, uncertainty reduction, collective task performance, and the fulfillment of personal satisfaction. Dutton and Heaphy (2003) also explains how high-quality work relationships improve employee's flexibility, resilience, and performance at work and Gittell (2003) further clarifies that high-quality work relationships aid in sharing goals and knowledge in a respectful space and fostering a team environment that encourages learning and collective effort.

Participants 1 and 5 also shared how they experienced positive emotions through the deep meaning of their work. Steger (2018) states how meaning comes from emotion regarding individuals' experiences and outlook on how one makes sense of oneself, others, and their communities. Steger and Samman (2012) says that meaning in life comes from satisfaction of accomplishment and feeling good about the significance of those accomplishments. Some participants even described meaning in their work as a calling (described by participants 1 and 2) and a mission (described by participant 4) valued beyond money or advancement. This finding is supported by Stephens (2012)'s research on how one's calling is not validated by achievement, but by individual's fulfillment, which is impossible to separate from individuals' identity. Individuals who find the meaning of work have a strong foundation of self-worth, motivation and beliefs, meaningful interactions, and relationships (Ross et al., 2010).

All Participants in this study also exhibited how work engagement arises through experiencing meaning and achievement. This finding agreed with Goswami et al. (2016) who describe how work engagement is a key driver that tends to influence employees' meaningful experience at work to produce high levels of focus, commitment, job satisfaction, and lower turnover. Work engagement reduced their job-related stress and produced positive job behavior (i.e. vigor, dedication, absorption) that leads to influence their experiences at work to successfully

reach a goal (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romá, Bakker, 2002). Participant 1 and 5 shared that managing a heavy load of politics at work wasted their energy and lowered work engagement. This finding disagreed with Eldor (2017) when he states how work engagement is improved by work politics because it creates opportunity for change.

Conclusion 2: Flourishing mid-career professionals carve out time for meaningful activities and relationships. Seligman (2011) defines meaning in life as devoting oneself to something beyond oneself with noble purpose and transcendent meaning. Meaning includes having a purpose, a direction, a connection to something bigger, and a value, all of which leads to well-being (Steger, 2012). In this study, participants described how they carve out time for meaningful activities such as volunteer work (participant 1 and 5), and personal time for reflection to find purpose (participant 3 and 4) in their existence and place in their communities. Piliavin (2003) and Steger (2018) explain that people who engage in good deeds such as volunteer work found that it brought a sense of purpose and meaning. Participants' purpose came to life when their work mattered to them and their communities. Whether it was to help students gain access to a higher education degree funded by companies (participant 2), or to build earthquake-resilient city pipes to create safe infrastructure in the city (participant 1), or helping patients (participant 4); participants said they felt their work made a difference in people's lives.

Reis and Gable (2003) talk how positive relationships that increase intimacy, affection, and shared activities bring interpersonal bonding, security, and safety. Also, the supportive networks of close relationships contribute to people's happiness and well-being (Myers, 2000). During the interviews, all participants shared their experience in meaningful relationships. All participants described being able to refresh and regain vitality from spending time with

meaningful people. This finding is consistent with Fowler and Christakis's (2008) research on how happy and positive attitudes and energy are contagious and happy people tend to be more creative, productive, and healthier. In addition, positive relationships at work (i.e. bosses, peers, subordinates) promote high performance at work, stronger commitment, and better citizenship (Baker et al., 2003; Tepper et al., 2004).

A third type of meaningful activity discussed by the study participants was making time for physical activities, as described by all five participants, to maintain their health and well-being. In the PERMA-H model, Seligman (2006) summarizes the research on the strong link between mind-body health and how the brain affects the immune system and other functions in the body. Most participants (participant 1, 2, 4, and 5) in this study had a strong intention to carve out time for their bodily wellness because they knew it tends to their productivity, concentration, and energy level.

Mid-career professionals who carved out time for meaningful activities and relationships were flourishing. This finding is in disagreement with Halbeslesben et al. (2009) on the idea that employee disengagement at work is caused by dispersing their energy with juggling all life's demands. The authors claim that highly engaged workers might fail to manage different roles in their lives and not achieve work-life balance. Contrastingly, participants 1, 2, and 4 told a story that demonstrated that juggling and achieving a work-life balance has rather added to their flourishing. Their time away from work and spending time with meaningful activities and relationships added more valuable meaning in their work and lives.

Conclusion 3: Flourishing mid-career professionals demonstrate continuous growth and life-long learning. Participants 2, 3, and 4 spoke at length about their love for learning and desire to create opportunity for challenges that produce learning. This finding is consistent with

Seligman's (2002) statement on how happiness is not about a competition or comparison, but it is about self-improvement. Also, Steigenberger's (2015) explanation of how positive emotions help employees attend to meaning through learning aligns with this conclusion. Additional authors agreed on how positive emotions can create a respectful space for learning and enhance employee engagement for effective learning (Hazelton, 2014; Gander, Proyer, & Ruch, 2016; Taylor & Statler, 2014).

Conclusion 3 is also directly connected to the literature on individual desire to obtain personal goals (Byrne et al., 2004), strive for excellence (Baum et al., 2007), and expectation to improve oneself (Carragher et al., 2010). As Duckworth (2016) says "without effort, your talent is nothing more than your unmet potential" (p. 51). Participants 2, 3, and 5 in this study stated that when work engagement is high, they tended to be more introspective and engaged in self-reflection. Thus, high work engagement leads to growth in self-esteem, self-efficacy, coping skills, and hope (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Strom & Rothmann, 2003).

Kokemuller (2018) describes how mid-career professionals gain expertise in more areas from years of experience, which tends to lead to more leadership with increased responsibilities. These challenges (participant 2, 3, and 5), responsibilities (participant 1 and 5), and mastery in training (all participants) gave participants chances for continuous growth into leadership for promotion and advancement. As Roger (1961) says that the good life is a process of constant transformation in transition, participants' flourishing elements came from continuous growth in their personal learning.

Conclusion 4: While flourishing mid-career professionals value achievement, achievement needs to be accompanied by other PERMA-H elements. All five participants in this study valued their achievement at work seriously. Although at times their achievement came

with high demands in other aspects of their lives, they still pursued it. This finding agreed with a perspective of eudaimonic well-being, but disagreed with the hedonic well-being viewpoint. Ryan and Deci (2001, 2008) differentiate how hedonic well-being is seeking pleasures and avoiding pain, whereas eudaimonic well-being goes beyond pain and pleasure to pursue and one's optimal potential. All five participants in this study did not tend to pursue achievement for hedonic reasons; they had other elements of PERMA-H to accompany achievement such as meaning at work, positive relationships, work engagement, and positive emotions.

These other PERMA-H elements helped them to overcome setbacks and challenges in achievement that seem to be the sacrifices that one has to make. Although achievement came with an unpleasantness, other PERMA-H elements made their achievement worth persevering for. Even as Seligman (2011) states, people often pursue achievement for human flourishing although it is difficult to attain, because happiness is not always about what makes us feel good, but what gives us meaning in our lives.

Participants in this study shared stories that suggest achievement often interconnects with work engagement. This finding supported Ouwenell et al. (2012)'s definition of work engagement as when one is strongly engaged in work and experiencing pride and passion of accomplishment. Participant 1, 3, and 5's reputation at work were taken seriously. Participants' work engagement helped them to stay innovative, proactive, have better coping skills, and share more knowledge with coworkers (Eldor, 2017). In addition, all five participants were engaged workers who provided better social support for their colleagues and teammates with positive words and feedback to motivate them (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Billet, 2001; Simpson, 2009).

Participant 2, 3, and 5 described how teamwork contributed to work achievements.

This finding is consistent with literature on how goals are attained through employee's emotional health, engagement level, and cooperation with others at work (Baranik et al., 2013). In other words, employees' holistic wellness tends to influence their performance in the workplace (Kwon & Hein, 2013). The narratives of the study participants illustrated how their achievements were reached through positive relationships supporting others and others supporting them.

Conclusion 5: Beyond the PERMA-H elements, flourishing mid-career professionals demonstrate character strengths and virtues. All five flourishing participants in this study demonstrated the importance of exercising character strengths and virtues in their daily lives. This is a new finding on how the values of character strengths and virtue support flourishing in mid-career professionals. Positive psychologists encourage anyone who wants to have a fuller and more meaningful life to spend more time on building one's signature strengths and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology emphasizes a strength-based philosophy. Positive psychology comes from positive experiences that stem from individual characteristics and personalities, and an environment that can nurture positive experiences to improve overall quality of life that results in well-being (Harris et al., 2007; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In alignment with 'Values in Action' (VIA) are a catalog of core virtues and character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004);

Maslow (1954) said the need for esteem is more about respect of others and being respected by others than love. Participants 1, 3, and 5 valued respect as a building block of trust with others and a way to enhance positive emotions at work as a virtue of justice for teamwork, fairness, and leadership. Gillespie and Mann (2004) argue that employee engagement is bolstered by organizational trust. Organizational trust builds a team with a strong foundation in value alignment (Cauldron, 1996), internal communication (Mishra et al., 2014), and organizational

citizenship (Gillespie & Mann, 2004). Thus, organizational trust results in psychological empowerment in the organization, which makes employees, feel significant in their contribution to the organizational success (Robbins & Judge, 2012). Participants 3 and 5' loyalty and commitment level increased work engagement because they told a story that demonstrated a feeling of importance in the workplace.

Seligman (2002) argues that exercising positive character traits engenders positive emotions. The virtues of transcendence such as optimism and hope are positive emotions about the future. Participants 2 and 3 in this study gravitated towards a strong sense of optimism and those responses align with previous research. Optimism, and the closely related virtue of hope are associated with better physical health and mental states, affecting both personal life and work life (Peterson, 2000; Seligman, 2002). The benefit of optimism is that people “see adversity as a challenge, transform problems into opportunities, put in hours to refine skills, persevere in finding solutions to difficult problems, maintain confidence, rebound quickly after setbacks and persist” (Schulman, 1999, p. 32).

Seligman (2011) further suggests how utilizing positive character strengths (e.g. gratitude, kindness, humor, love) can even convert negative emotions into positive ones. He recommends that in order to sustain long-term happiness in people's lives, they should consciously practice positive character traits in how they process emotions in life circumstances, in events, and memories (Seligman, 2002). Participants in this study spoke about how they practiced forgiveness (as described by participant 4), humility (as described by participant 1 and 5), and appreciation for themselves and others (as described by participant 4 and 5).

Finally, participants' positive emotions were in agreement with Fredrickson's (2000a) broaden-and-build theory on how positive emotions broaden novel thoughts, activities,

relationships, and build enduring personal resources such as social support, resilience, skills, and knowledge. Participants' positive emotions (e.g. inspiration, love, excitement) at work helped to overcome negative emotions. Their positive emotions at work as described by participant 1, 4, and 5 empowered them to cope with adversity and create an “upward spiral” towards their optimal functioning and well-being with positive outlook (Fredrickson, 2002, 2003, 2013; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). All five participants shared how the benefits of positive emotions build their personal resources to have more creativity, knowledge, higher tolerance, and physical health—the virtue of wisdom and courage, all of which lead towards optimal human flourishing (Fredrickson, 2003; Hazelton, 2014). Furthermore, their positive emotions promote their high performance, productivity, relationships, and a sense of accomplishment in the workplace (Fredrickson, 2003).

Limitations of the Findings

The study was limited based on the small sample size and the fact that people self-selected themselves as flourishing. This study had only five participants who all came from the United States of America. This created limitations on the generalizability of findings about what promotes flourishing in mid-career professionals.

In addition, the data analysis process relied heavily on a deductive coding process based on the six PERMA-H categories, specifically looking for evidence of those and how they positively play a role in flourishing. There could be other findings from this data set, but the analysis that was conducted and reported in this dissertation was limited to the six research sub questions.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study yielded four areas that the researcher recommends for further study.

Flourishing studies amongst different populations. A similar study using the PERMA-H model could be conducted amongst different populations. For examples, this research study was limited to mid-career professionals in the United States, but can be duplicated in other countries. Another option is to duplicate this study using the PERMA-H model for exploring flourishing among either executive-level or entry-level professionals. This would allow the opportunity to better understand how well-being theory is playing out in the workplace and in different cultures in order to better understand flourishing different contexts.

Mentorship and positive relationships. All the participants in the current study have expressed that positive relationships were important to their flourishing. This calls for more research on positive relationships, specifically on mentors and their influence on employees. Furthermore, the significance of encouragement in relationships and how people are encouraged by others to flourish in their careers needs further study.

Relationship between well-being theory and character strengths and virtues. This study demonstrated that there seems to be a great deal of overlap between well-being theory and positive character traits and virtues. Individuals who pursued well-being exercised positive character traits and virtues in their personal and professional lives. Thus, more research on understanding how those two are interrelated will enlighten our understanding of flourishing.

Study of flourishing in mid-career professionals using quantitative or mixed methods. The researcher recommends a study applying the PERMA-H model but based on a large sample size and using quantitative and mixed methodology. A large sample size using the PERMA-H model would potentially display different findings and allow researchers to discover if the same or different elements of PERMA-H contribute to flourishing and what role they play.

Recommendations for Mid-career Professionals

Previously, there were very few positively oriented studies during the mid-career years. This study shined a light on real-life mid-career professionals who are truly thriving and flourishing in work life. From their stories, and the thematic findings, a few recommendations are highlighted for managing oneself in the mid-career years. In order to flourish and experience well-being one must:

- Make conscious choices and efforts to flourish.
- Remove what distracts, derails, or stops one's progress towards flourishing in life and focus energy and time on one or multiple aspects that bring wellness.
- Know that one's past does not need to define one's life.
- Work on a holistic approach to all physical, emotional, and psychological wellness since they are all interconnected—do not neglect any part of it.
- Be brave and resilient in the face of opposition.
- Stay true to oneself, one's purpose, calling, or mission.
- Claim one's well-being by practicing self-care and self-forgiveness.
- Know that one is responsible for one's own happiness, since happiness is subjective.
- Try to find one's flourishing elements and environment.
- If one feels like one is flourishing, one is.

In conclusion, after reflecting on the data as whole, this researcher finds that flourishing is not just about existence. If one only exists, one will never flourish. One has to find something in life that inspires love and passion that makes life worth living despite all the struggles and troubles. Although it might take some time to find it, or find it and lose it, it is still worth seeking and finding this deep sense of purpose. Whether that is trying for a baby although it might lead to miscarriage, running a marathon and being injured, or falling in love with someone which could

possibly lead to a break up; flourishing comes to those who have courage to take risks. Those who have courage are open to the possibility of experiencing pain, have a fortitude to overcome, and an optimism to move past the hardships. Flourishing cannot happen if one's decisions are driven by fear and not being open to all the spectrum of life experiences—meaning either the good or the painful aspects. The participants in this study have expressed that it was not about how many times they failed, but that they are survivors who were brave to get up again and keep seeking. Flourishing seems to be given to those who embark upon the journey.

Flourishing also did not appear to be about having a perfect life, but more about finding beauty in the process. It is about feeling the positive emotions in the process and owning the process. Well-being is a personal pursuit. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) claim that subjective well-being is “how a person's values and goals mediate between external events and the quality of experiences” (p. 9). Seligman (2011) also states that environment can foster, enhance and nurture one's flourishing but cannot sustain it. As Rogers (1961) states, one's continuous discovery for oneself within the environment is the process of increasing happiness. Thus, while organizations make many recommendations for how workplace can create flourishing employees, it is ultimately a personal choice. Findings in this study showed how flourishing is largely personal disposition, combined with the environment.

Well-being is subjective; it heavily reflects on how one processes one's life events (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Diener, 2000; Diener & Oishi, 2005). Moreover, since the participants in this study were self-identifying, they found their way to flourish and claim their well-being. All participants had different experiences and richness of the various phenomena of flourishing. As long as it was in the scope Seligman's flourishing (2011) which defines as an experience of optimal human functioning that goes beyond happiness to well-being.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The intent of this study was to better understand the lived experiences of mid-career professionals who identify as flourishing. The findings provide organizational leadership an understanding of what aspects contribute to mid-career professionals' well-being and how organizational design can foster more mid-career professionals' ability to flourish at work. Based on the findings of this study, this researcher proposes the following steps that organizational development (OD) leaders, human resources (HR) policy makers, and organizational leaders should consider.

1. Human resources (HR) departments should design a professional wellness programs grounded in the PERMA-H model. Companies should offer holistic wellness programs to all employees where they have an access to help in emotional, physical, and psychological development. The well-being program should focus on a holistic approach to wellness that supports mental wellness (e.g. mindfulness practice to reduce stress and anxiety at work, counseling, mentorship), and physical (e.g. physical activities classes, pain management on site) for employees. When employers set up a wellness program, it is a direct way to show how they value employees as important assets in the organization (Kwon & Hein, 2013). The program will first create more awareness of the significance of positive psychology at work, how important wellness is, and ultimately provides an environment to encourage more mid-career professionals to pursue flourishing at work.
2. The researcher would encourage organizational leadership to focus on company cultures that value flourishing. Organizational leadership can hire positive psychology experts in the role of Chief of Learning Organization or Director of Learning

- Development who can implement organizational learning opportunities for all mid-career professionals. Learning opportunities would be a great way to design a curriculum and implement the value of flourishing in the organization. The learning courses can be about new skill sets needed for mid-career professionals. For example, people management, talent development, communication skills, and emotional intelligences would be good fundamental skills to begin. Mid-career professionals will also need coaching in disciplines of problem solving, conflict management, and emotion control. Mid-career professionals also need a reflection platform for self-discovery and self-improvement to explore the value of flourishing and they can teach these skills to other employees to raise more awareness of a culture of flourishing.
3. The researcher would recommend organizations to have a mid-career professionals learn-by-doing program in the form of mentorship. Organizational design would focus on mentorship programs for one-on-one executive-level professionals with mid-career professionals and mid-career professionals with entry-level professionals. The role modeling creates chances for each professional to practice positive character traits and virtues with each other, build organizational trust and transparency for emotional support, and explore positive relationships at work. It creates a safe environment for organizations to invest in strength and talent development, which also increases employee engagement at work (Anita, 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Eldor, 2017; Trust et al., 2006).

Summary

This study examined how mid-career professionals are flourishing in their careers in Seligman's PERMA-H model. The themes that emerged highlight the interconnectedness of

PERMA-H elements in flourishing mid-career professionals' lives, how they carve out time for meaningful activities and relationships, seize opportunities for continuous growing and learning, accompany achievement with other elements to make it worthwhile, and consciously exercise positive character and strengths.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

Open Question	In your own words, what does it mean to be flourishing in your career?
Positive emotions	<p>When do you feel positive emotions at work?</p> <p><u>Possible prompts/follow-ups as appropriate:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What type of positive emotions do you feel at work? - Share a story when you felt at the height of positivity at work.
Engagement	<p>In your job, what keeps you fully engaged?</p> <p><u>Possible prompts/follow-ups as appropriate:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What aspects of your job contribute to you feeling engaged?
Positive relationships	<p>Tell me about the positive relationships in your life?</p> <p><u>Possible prompts/follow-ups as appropriate:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who influences you the most at work? - How do positive workplace relationships help you to flourish?
Meaning	<p>How is your work meaningful to you?</p> <p><u>Possible prompts/follow-ups as appropriate:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What happens at work that brings you the most meaning? - Which relationships bring meaning at work?
Achievement	<p>What are you achieving in your career?</p> <p><u>Possible prompts/follow-ups as appropriate:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What type of achievement bring most meaning or positive emotions?
Positive work health	<p>How would you describe the role your health in playing in flourishing at work?</p> <p><u>Possible prompts/follow-ups as appropriate:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What opportunities do you have to be healthy in your workplace?

APPENDIX B: LinkedIn Recruitment Post

Participants needed for research on mid-career professionals who are flourishing

Examples of LinkedIn post:

Are you a mid-career professional who is flourishing at work? I, Sohyun Lee, am a doctoral candidate in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education and Psychology, interested in researching flourishing in mid-career professionals. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of professionals who self-identify as flourishing in mid-career. This proposed study seeks to understand which elements of Seligman's PERMA-H model (positive emotion, engagement, positive relationship, meaning, achievement, and positive physical health) subjects perceive to have contributed to their flourishing and what role those elements have played in their flourishing.

I am looking for individuals who have worked for ten to fifteen years. Your career can be in any field, so long as you consider yourself to be flourishing. The interview will take 60 to 90 minutes. To participate, it is important that you are fluent in English, a mid-career professional (not entry-level or executives), and have access to a computer in order to use Zoom video technology. The interview will be recorded for the purpose of data collection.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at

Sohyun.lee@pepperdine.edu.

APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form**IRB Number # 19-05-1055****Study Title: A Phenomenological Study of Flourishing in Mid-Career Professionals****Invitation**

Dear [name],

My name is Sohyun Lee. I am conducting a study on understanding individuals who are flourishing mid-career professionals. The study explores flourishing through six elements of PERMA-H (positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, achievement, and positive physical health). The purpose of this study is to find how each element of PERMA-H has contributed to mid-career flourishing at work. If you are considering yourself to be flourishing at work, you may participate in this research.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

This is a research project that focuses on the lived experiences of professionals who self-identify as flourishing in mid-career. In order to participate you must:

1. Be 19 years of age or older
2. Be a mid-career professional with ten to fifteen years of career experience
3. Identify as flourishing at work
4. Be willing to do an interview in English
5. Have a computer with audio and video capabilities

What will be done during this research study?

Participation in this study will require one interview of approximately 60 to 90 minutes. You will be asked to answer a series of questions related to personal experiences of flourishing at work. Interviews will take place via Zoom video conferencing.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Participants may initially have some difficulty recalling or discussing personal experiences.

What are the possible benefits to you?

The results of this study will be used to contribute to better understand the flourishing elements in mid-career professionals. Since the study focuses on positive psychological experiences at work, for the most part of the questions will be inclined to reflect on the positive aspects of work. Participants may experience more positive emotions during and post-interview, and possibly gain a deeper understanding of how PERMA-H model promotes flourishing.

How will information about you be protected?

Your responses to this interview will be kept confidential. Steps will be taken to protect your identity and confidentiality in this study. First, only the researcher will have access to your name. Participant ID will be used instead of participants' names during data collection and analysis. The researcher will take typed notes and an audio recording of the interview. All information will be stored in a password-protected computer file. Files will be backed-up electronically using a password protected domain. After the study has been completed, participants' information will be permanently destroyed.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may withdraw from the study at any point without reason or retaliation.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator:

Sohyun Lee at Sohyun.lee@pepperdine.edu

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

- Phone: 1(310) 568-5753
- Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University. You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of Informed Consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By scheduling and completing your interview, you have given your consent to participate in this research. You should print a copy of this page for your records.

APPENDIX D: Handout to the Participants

Definition of flourishing and PERMA-H Model for Participants

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of flourishing in mid-career professionals.

Definition of Flourishing, Well-being Theory

Flourishing is a concept about the quality of life beyond pleasure seeking, instead focusing on cultivating one’s life that takes into account both one’s personal interests and community needs and well-being (Seligman, 2011). Well-being theory measures PERMA-H (positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, achievement, and physical health) and its goal is to increase the opportunity of flourishing by using PERMA-H elements.

Seligman’s PERMA-H Model:



- **Positive emotions** are momentary good feelings from things or activities in one’s past, present, or the future.
- **Engagement** is happiness in the present during activities and feeling a high level of thankfulness.
- **Positive relationship** is humans creating and maintaining more positive and meaningful connections with others since positivity cannot be experienced alone.
- **Meaning** in life is found when one dedicates oneself to something bigger and valuable than ourselves. Meaningful life is a life worth a living with a purpose.
- **Achievement** is a belief and ability to do the things that one cares to achieve, such as a goal or task completion.
- **Physical health** impacts human wellness. High stress, negative emotions, and imbalanced hormones weaken immunity.

APPENDIX E: VIA Character Strengths and Virtues



VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues

Virtue of Wisdom

				
Creativity Original, adaptive, ingenuity, seeing and doing things in different ways	Curiosity Interest, novelty-seeking, exploration, openness to experience	Judgment Critical thinking, thinking through all sides, not jumping to conclusions	Love of Learning Mastering new skills & topics, systematically adding to knowledge	Perspective Wisdom, providing wise counsel, taking the big picture view

Virtue of Courage


			
Bravery Valor, not shrinking from threat or challenge, facing fears, speaking up for what's right	Perseverance Persistence, industry, finishing what one starts, overcoming obstacles	Honesty Authenticity, being true to oneself, sincerity without pretense, integrity	Zest Vitality, enthusiasm for life, vigor, energy, not doing things half-heartedly

Virtue of Humanity


Virtue of Justice

					
Love Both loving and being loved, valuing close relations with others, genuine warmth	Kindness Generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruism, doing for others	Social Intelligence Aware of the motives and feelings of oneself and others, knows what makes others tick	Teamwork Citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty, contributing to a group effort	Fairness Adhering to principles of justice, not allowing feelings to bias decisions about others	Leadership Organizing group activities to get things done, positively influencing others

Virtue of Temperance

			
Forgiveness Mercy, accepting others' shortcomings, giving people a second chance, letting go of hurt	Humility Modesty, letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves	Prudence Careful about one's choices, cautious, not taking undue risks	Self-Regulation Self-control, disciplined, managing impulses, emotions, and vices

Virtue of Transcendence

				
Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence Awe and wonder for beauty, admiration for skill and moral greatness	Gratitude Thankful for the good, expressing thanks, feeling blessed	Hope Optimism, positive future-mindedness, expecting the best & working to achieve it	Humor Playfulness, bringing smiles to others, lighthearted – seeing the lighter side	Spirituality Connecting with the sacred, purpose, meaning, faith, religiousness

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APPENDIX F: IRB Approval

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: December 10, 2019

Protocol Investigator Name: Sohyun Lee

Protocol #: 19-05-1055

Project Title: A Phenomenological Study of Flourishing in Mid-Career Professionals

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Sohyun Lee:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research