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FINDING AUTHENTIC MEANING AT WORK AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION FROM
AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY FOR EARLY
CAREER, FEMALE THERAPISTS

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Finding Authentic Meaning at Work and Self-Actualization from an Existentialist
Perspective: A Qualitative Study for Early Career, Female Therapists
Varoluşçu Perspektiften İş Yerinde Otantik Anlam Bulma ve Kendini Gerçekleştirme: Erken
Kariyer, Kadın Terapistler İçin Niteliksel Bir Araştırma

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ABBREVIATIONS

EC: Early career

ECFT: Early Career, Female Therapists

FT: Female Therapists

IPA: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

P: Participant

WLB: Work-life balance

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this qualitative research is to answer ‘What are the lived experiences of therapists finding meaning at work?’ The aim of this study is to address this question by exploring early-career female therapists' experience of finding meaning at work in Turkey. The study collects data from semi-structured interviews with six female participants and is analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Analysis conveys how finding meaning at work can contribute to finding meaning in life while uncovering the challenges of the occupation. Results are collected under three categories as listed: 1. How do they define finding meaning at work, 2. How do they find meaning, 3. Factors that affect finding meaning at work. Each category has multiple super-ordinate themes, which are described here: 1.1 Comparison With Other Occupations, 2.1 Flow, 2.2 Taking Responsibility Of Their Choices, 2.3 Therapeutic Relationship, 3.1 Advantages Of Being A Therapist, 3.2 Existential Limitations, 3.3 Changes With The Effect Of Time, 3.4 Different Approaches, 3.5 Being A Woman/Sexism, 3.6 Early Career, 3.7 Work Environment. The results show that finding meaning at work is highly correlated with finding meaning in life and that all the participants claim to find meaning at their jobs. Although the results suggested that being a therapist is perceived to be a challenging occupation due to its nature, all the participants emphasized that they couldn't have find similar meaning in a different occupation. The general objective of this study was to investigate how therapists define finding meaning at work, what the factors that impact how and how much they find meaning at work, and to question the link between finding meaning at work and in life. Additionally, this research approached finding meaning at work from an existentialist perspective; particularly focusing on self-actualization and authenticity and their relation to finding meaning at work.

Keywords: Meaning at work, self-actualization at work, meaning from an existentialist perspective, IPA, early career female therapists

ÖZET

Bu nitel araştırmanın temel amacı, “Terapistlerin iş yerinde anlam bulma deneyimleri nasıldır?” sorusuna yanıt vermektir. Çalışma, altı kadın katılımcıyla yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin verilerini yorumlayıcı fenomenolojik analiz (IPA) yöntemiyle analiz eder. Analiz, işte anlam bulmanın, hayatta anlam bulmaya nasıl katkıda sağlayabileceğini aktarır ve mesleğin zorluklarını ortaya çıkarır. Sonuçlar listelendiği gibi üç kategori altında toplanmıştır: 1. İşyerinde anlam bulmak nasıl tanımlanır, 2. Terapistler nasıl anlam bulurlar, 3. İşyerinde anlam bulmayı etkileyen faktörler. Her kategorinin birden fazla üst teması vardır: 1.1 Diğer Mesleklerle Karşılaştırma, 2.1 Akış, 2.2 Seçimlerinin Sorumluluğunu Alma, 2.3 Terapötik İlişki, 3.1 Terapist Olmanın Avantajları, 3.2 Varoluşsal Sınırlamalar, 3.3 Zamanla Değişenler, 3.4 Farklı Metodlar, 3.5 Kadın Olmak/Cinsiyetçilik, 3.6 Erken Kariyer, 3.7 Çalışma Ortamı. Sonuçlar, işte anlam bulmanın, yaşamda anlam bulma ile yüksek oranda ilişkili olduğunu ve tüm katılımcıların işlerinde anlam bulduklarına inandıklarını gösteriyor. Sonuçlar, terapistliğin doğası gereği zorlu bir meslek olarak algılandığını öne sürse de, tüm katılımcılar farklı bir meslekte benzer anlam bulamayacaklarını vurguladılar. Çalışmanın ana amacı, terapistlerin işte anlam bulmayı nasıl tanımladıklarını, işte anlam bulmayı etkileyen faktörlerin neler olduğunu ve işte ne kadar anlam bulduklarını araştırmak ve işte anlam bulma ile hayatta anlam bulma arasındaki bağlantıyı sorgulamaktır. Ek olarak, araştırma, işte anlam bulmaya varoluşçu bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşmıştır; özellikle kendini gerçekleştirme ve özgünlük konularını ele alarak, bunların işte anlam bulmayla ilişkisine odaklanmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: İşte anlam, işte kendini gerçekleştirme, varoluşçu bir bakış açısıyla anlam, IPA, kariyerinin başında olan kadın terapistle

INTRODUCTION

Psychology is one of the most, if not the most popular majors for undergraduate students in social sciences in Turkey. Most psychology bachelor students pursue psychology programs specifically being interested in being a clinical psychologist. In western cultures, the demand for studying psychology is getting increasingly more popular among teenagers as well (Jarvis, 2012; Walker, 2010). A similar increase is also seen in Turkey; there is a high and increasing demand for psychology programs in Turkey. In 1996 there were 10 psychology programs and in 2015 there were (including bachelor's degrees, graduate programs, and higher education colleges) 71 programs in psychology in Turkey (Arik, 2015). Even in the last decade, from the time I declared my major to today, there has been a sharp increase in psychology students thus the grades to get into psychology programs have increased. A sudden, piercing, and visible increase in the psychology field has been quite interesting to me thus I wanted to research what kind of meaning many psychology students find in the field. The aim of my study was to answer two questions I was particularly curious about: why so many people are interested in being a therapist and what sort of meaning as a job, it can provide to employees?

In our current era, work is occupying the majority of our waking hours. For that reason, to find meaning in life, finding meaning at work is quite relevant. Possibly in the post-industrial revolution era, when working hours were taking up less of the upper class' time, or when a majority of the people needed to work for the financial benefits to sustain their lives, it may have been less significant for one to find meaning at work. In modern times (approximately after the 1950s) there has been more interest in employee happiness and wellbeing, job satisfaction, and finding meaning at work in the field of industrial and organizational psychology. Especially in Western Europe, many organizations are worker-friendly, focusing on employee wellbeing. In today's given conditions (where work is quite demanding; and most of one's time and energy goes to career-related activity) it may be harder to find meaning in life when spending a large amount of one's time is spent at the workplace. Furthermore, when the welfare standards rose, employees had an

opportunity to approach their careers not only as means to sustain the bare minimum for their lives (such as for nutriment and accommodation) but also as a path to self-actualization, space to discover their potential and pursue their profession-oriented dreams.

In certain jobs, where it is harder to have a work-life balance or a clear distinction between work and personal life topics due to the nature of the job, it is especially vital to have a meaningful job. Since therapists are exposed to trauma and need to be cognitively, and emotionally present while interacting with their clients, and witnessing challenging parts of peoples' lives and psychological states, it may be challenging to have a distinct separation between work and life. Due to the immense cognitive and emotional involvement in the nature of their jobs, therapists are unlikely to completely draw a line between their work and casual lives, thus carrying their jobs to their lives post-work hours. Being a therapist while not receiving something meaningful back from the work would be psychologically challenging for most. For all these reasons, researching how and why therapists find meaning in their jobs and how finding meaning impacts their lives was an intrigued topic for me to research.

I was particularly interested in questioning finding or creating meaning at work due to a personal investigation. My own lack of finding meaning at work has led me to question how other people find meaning at work, or if they also lack finding meaning in what they do, via which motives they cope with it. To discover others lived experiences of finding meaning at work, the research was aimed to focus on a group that either intrigued me due to my personal interest or due to the peculiarity of their occupation. Working with therapists was my first choice of occupation for multiple reasons. The first one is my interest in therapy and being a therapist. Secondly, being a therapist has been exceptionally popular in the last decade. Graduate Study in Psychology, which was published in 2017, shows that there is an increase in psychology programs for the majority of the ethnic groups and races (Cope et al, 2017). Majority of the psychology bachelor's students aim to get their masters in clinical psychology and become therapists. I was intrigued by this spiked popularity and was curious to see the motives and reasons behind leaning

towards becoming a therapist rather than desiring to specialize in other branches of psychology. Third, due to the exposure to emotionally involving stories and secondary trauma, being a therapist is thought to be a challenging occupation (Charlemagne-Odle et al., 2014). Considering the emotional labor, protecting the professional boundaries with a client, and witnessing dark, upsetting, and even frightening facts about the human mind and others' lives, being a therapist is thought to hold a different; more distinct spot compared to other mechanical or technical occupations (Yang, Y., & Hayes, J. A. (2020).

Due to these personal and also literature-based considerations, I was drawn to studying the concept of meaning at work with psychologists. I wanted to work with therapists who all are specialized in counseling by having their master's degrees in addition to other pieces of training they hold. (Working only with clinical psychologists would be restricting criteria because it would not allow a comparison between clinical psychologists and other types of therapists such as marriage and couple therapists to better understand if the meaning creation was experienced differently by therapists who are specialized in different methods.) The present research particularly focused on early career therapists who have had a couple of years of experience because having participants who had enough experience to have a sufficient amount of involvement to have a full grasp of their occupation was aimed; thus newly graduated therapists were not targeted. At the same time, early-career therapists were targeted because the researchers wanted to reveal the experiences of a group who did not work for a couple of decades and thus possibly reached a certain level of burnout or specialization in their careers. Lastly, female therapists were targeted because of the female dominance in the field (Cope et al, 2017). According to Cope et al's report which was published on APA's website, approximately three out of four higher education psychology students are female (2017). Psychology can be considered a soft science, and is related to feelings, emotions, and analyzing human behavior. Being a therapist requires deep listening and analyzing skills. Considering the gender roles in Turkish culture (and globally) and the gendered and sexist judgments toward the field, it is not astonishing to see the unbalanced female dominancy in the field. I was curious to see if the female

therapist thought that their gender has an impact on their career choice and how they conduct their jobs.

When questioning meaning, understanding the depth of the issue lead me to focus on the existentialist perspective and intrigued me to approach this matter from Sartre and Frankl's lenses. Evaluating how much meaning one finds at their job was a personally interesting topic for me from the get-go, yet deepening this concept and identifying what meaning might be defined as was plausible by approaching this research question from an existentialist perspective. When I studied more about creating meaning from Frankl's approach and studied responsibility and choice concepts from Sartre's manuscripts; I had a better understanding of how meaning might be defined. For that reason, approaching how therapists find meaning at work from an existentialist school of thought made this research more specific.

OBJECTIVE

The proposed study aims to address existing gaps in the literature and bring in an original point of view regarding finding meaning at work. Although finding meaning at work has been getting more popular in the organizational psychology field, research on finding meaning at work for early-career female therapists is scarce. Moreover, approaching meaning from an existentialist perspective; using a philosophical background to comprehend finding and creating meaning is quite rare. The project specifically focuses on how female therapists define finding meaning at work and if their career choice is an authentic one. Further, finding authentic meaning at work is investigated through the lenses of self-actualization. The definition of meaning at work is supported by an existentialist perspective on how to address meaning. The purpose of this cross-sectional, qualitative study aims to reveal (i) how therapists define meaning at work, (ii) if they think that meaning is created individually or if being a therapist is inherently a meaningful occupation, (iii) the relationship between finding meaning as a therapist and in life (iv) if being a therapist aid them to have self-actualization (v) the relationship between their authenticity and how they find meaning at work. The sample group for this study is early career and female psychologists or therapists who either work at an

organization or have a private practice in Turkey. Throughout this research, clinical psychologists, counselors, psychotherapists, and psychoanalysts were recruited under the therapist/psychologist umbrella since Turkey does not have specific labor conduct for therapists. Any therapist who has specialized with a master's degree to see clients and source therapy could have volunteered for this research, as long as they were currently seeing clients. Selected participants hold their degrees from Turkish or foreign universities but reside and work in Turkey at the moment.

The research is conducted using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) thus semi-structured interviews were conducted. A set of questions were prepared before the interviews yet the flow and which questions were asked varied depending on the participants' responses. Fourteen questions were prepared to unpack one question: "how and if therapists find their jobs meaningful". The questions below were studied in this study:

Research question 1: How do the therapists define having meaning at work?

Research question 2: Does being a therapist support them on their way to self-actualization authentically?

Research question 3: Do therapists think that they need to find meaning at work?

Research question 4: Is the meaning inherent or self-created?

This research found how early-career female therapists found meaning at work. It also uncovered what kind of challenges they experienced as a therapist in Turkey.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Authentic Meaning and Self-Actualization

Finding purpose in life and authentically creating meaning from what we do in our lives has been one of the biggest questions of humanity. Most argue (from ancient philosophers such as Aristotle to modern-day psychologist as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi) that to have a fulfilling life, people seek to have meaning in their lives. That being said, finding authentic meaning in different parts of our lives; in our relationships, hobbies and careers is quite important to have a purposeful life that is worth living. The existentialist school of thought defines authenticity as the alliance between one's genuine values, desires, beliefs, and actions without external societal pressures. Many existentialist philosophers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Erich Fromm contemplated this topic yet Jena-Paul Sartre is probably the first name that comes to one's mind when thinking about authenticity and existentialism.

Psychotherapy, personality, and development theories created most of the existing career theories (Brown & Brooks, 1996). Bandura's (1986) social learning theory was later turned into Krumboltz's decision-making theory (Michell and Krumboltz, 1990). Maslow's theory (1968) was used as a template for Roe's career theory. In other words, self-actualization or self-realization concepts were mentioned before Abraham Maslow yet his "hierarchy of needs" theory made the self-actualization concept particularly popular in modern-day psychology. Maslow theorized that human needs are listed hierarchically, starting with physiological needs and ending with self-actualization (Gawel, 1997). According to Maslow, self-actualization is maximizing one's talents and capacities to their full potential. When it comes to actualizing one's self at the workplace, the discovery of one's authenticity and potential would not only support one to have higher job satisfaction but also would intensify one's success at work as well. When employees make an authentic decision in choosing their job and can align their character with what they do; they can find authentic meaning at work and meet their potential. This path to meeting one's potential is the way to self-actualization. Self-actualization is not an

endpoint but a journey to self-realization of one's full potential (Maslow 1969). For that reason, having a career path through actualizing oneself can be the key to both job and life satisfaction. Moreover, actualizing one's self at the workplace could increase work productivity, success, and even organizational commitment. According to Goler, Gale, Harrington, and Grant's article, Maslow's theory can be interpreted in today's world by claiming that if a job does not pay enough, focusing on self-actualization may not be realistic yet when one's physical needs at the work place are met, then they can focus more on meaning-making at work (2018). According to Goler et al.'s article in Harvard Business Review, the companies who invest in their employees' well-being; not just meeting the survival standards but focusing on motivating the employees and supporting them both physically and psychologically, get much more by means of productivity and success from their employees (Goler et al, 2018).

Work takes a significant amount of one's lifetime; thus finding meaning at work can be directly correlated with finding meaning in life. Most American adults spend more of their time working, compared to any other activity (Baumeister, 1991). Moreover, with the increased economic problems and more challenging life conditions (such as the adaptations that arose since 2019 because of the pandemic) job opportunities have been getting scarcer and demand from employers is rising notably. As it would be expected, specifically in the economically less developed or developing countries, the demand and time that is spent on work are increasing even more significantly. In other words, work is taking more of one's time in the modern-day world and thus, finding authentic meaning at work may have a larger impact on finding meaning in one's life.

“A musician must make music an artist must paint, a poet must write if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself” (Abraham Maslow, 1954, p. 91). Self-actualization can be aimed at different parts of one's life. Since working is taking the majority of most people's time and energy it is important to commit ourselves to a path in which we feel belonging, alliance, and authenticity. For that reason, if one is to actualize themselves, it is likely mandatory for them to pursue a career path that

feels close to who they are. According to Cohen (2003), “career satisfaction and stability are obtained when there is correspondence between the vocation and the meaning and opportunities for authentic existence that the vocation provides.” When one does not obtain meaning and authentic existence at their jobs, it results in an “existential vacuum and existential guilt” (Cohen, 2003). Considering the time and energy spent at the workplace and how much work occupies one’s life, for self-actualization, having an authentic choice regarding one’s career and pursuing a meaningful occupation is quite significant.

1.2. Definition of Meaning Through Existentialism

Existentialism is a school of thought, which seeks to understand the nature of human existence and questions possible meaning(s) there might be in life. According to many psychologists and philosophers, from ancient times to modern psychology or modern philosophy, such as Victor Frankl, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Irvin David Yalom; people seek meaning in life. Existential meaning refers to a meaningful human existence, which is considered to be worthwhile, appreciated, purposeful, and fulfilling. In Aristotelean terms, this could be referred to as a life of “eudaimonia”. ‘Eudaimonia’ is an ancient Greek word, which can be translated as ‘happiness’ in modern-day language. According to Martela and Ryan’s interpretations of Aristotelean eudaimonia, it shouldn’t be considered subjective happiness but is about a valued way of life that can produce positive emotions such as happiness and wellness as an outcome (Ryan & Martela, 2016). For modern-day happiness, considering that most of our adult lives are spent at the workplace, finding meaning at work is important for a good way of living, which can produce happiness, vitality, and wellness. As finding meaning at work can contribute significantly to finding meaning in life, it is important to study the relationship between finding meaning at work and in life. To better understand this topic, studying meaning from an existentialist perspective through Jean-Paul Sartre and Victor Frankl can give a specific window in the study.

1.2.1. Jean-Paul Sartre's perspective on meaning

One of the most well-known existentialist philosophers, who define the era is Jean-Paul Sartre. According to Sartre, “the meaning of life cannot be said to subsist somewhere beyond the province of individual human existence, since meaning is born of a fundamental freedom which inheres in human consciousness” (Wardle, 2016, pp. 336). Sartre argues that humans are obligated to make decisions and take responsibility consequently; even when one claims that they are not making a decision, by not making a decision, they are making one. Thus, finding meaning in something is also a decision that one takes and is required to take responsibility for. According to Sartre, existence is absurd; there is no logical explanation for the scheme that humans are exposed to; further, we are blasted into this world and there is no inherited meaning to our existence (Sartre, 2003). He states that existence “has no meaning a priori” (Sartre, 2007). That being said, people choose to create meaning or rather not; and are responsible for this choice regarding finding meaning. This perspective may suggest that one is responsible to make a decision concerning finding meaning at work and that, there is no a priori meaning in an occupation itself; people amend meaning to their jobs or careers; or even pursue their careers as a calling – by choice.

To explore the meaning therapists experience at work from Sartre's perspective, questions regarding a priori meaning, responsibility, and choice were asked from the participants in the present study. Especially, how the participants claim to find meaning in their occupations were looked under the spotlight during the interviews. I was particularly curious about how therapists found meaning at work; for instance, if the therapists believe that they authentically choose this occupation due to the meaning being a therapist withholds inherently or if they believe that the job itself does not have a particular engrained meaning but they choose to create meaning at what they do.

1.2.2. Victor Frankl's perspective on meaning

Another very important name on this topic is Victor Frankl. The existential psychiatrist (1905–1997) lived an extraordinary life; witnessing brutal acts of anti-

Semitism. Ironically, his experiences in the concentration camps molded his quest for philosophy of human nature, specifically, the search for meaning. One of Frankl's best-known works, *Man's Search for Meaning*, suggests that people can choose their behavior and thus can also have the capacity to choose their meaning in life (Frankl, 1964). In this manuscript, he argues that meaning is mandatory for humans to survive or drive in life. If people have free will and they can find their own meaning, there are three ways to go with it: The first one is what humans create or offer to the world, such as what our inputs are through our careers. The second one is what we take from the world such as our relationships. The third and final way is, choosing our attitude towards suffering (Frankl, 2010). This perspective may suggest that, to have a fulfilling and purposeful life; people need to find meaning in what they do; in other words, in the modern-day world, where people spend most of their time at the workplace, people need to find meaning at their jobs to drive in life. By finding meaning at work, one can share their offerings to the world, can take from the relationships they gain through work, and can choose their attitudes towards the challenges of their work; and still can create meaning.

While analyzing the therapists' approach to meaning during the interviews, Frankl's tenets were also considered. Almost all the therapists emphasized that they create meaning in their jobs and that if they were lacking meaning in what they do or if they could not find meaning in their jobs, they could not sustain a job in this field. In Frankl's words, the participants claimed that meaning is mandatory for them to survive or drive at work. The questions were asked considering the three ways Frankl approached meaning: The first one was about what the therapists offer to their clients. The second one is what being a therapist provides to the participants' lives. The third is, how to the participants choose their attitude towards the challenges of their jobs.

1.3. The Importance of Work and Meaningfulness

American author, speaker, researcher Jim Collins once said, "It is impossible to have a great life unless it is a meaningful life. And it is very difficult to have a meaningful life without meaningful work." (Clum, 2020). As I have mentioned

earlier, in today's world most people spend majority of their time being occupied with a career related or work duties. For some, work is still closely and directly correlated with its financial benefits, but as discussed by many psychologists, economists and philosophers (such as work is also about Mihaly Robert Csikszentmihalyi, Jim Collins and Victor Frankl in order) work is not only a means to a sustainable income, but also can give people dignity in their lives. In other words, work can support one to come closer to self-actualization and may fulfill one's desire for belonging (Maslow, 1971). In the hierarchy of needs belonging and self-actualization both have a spots. A job can support one to feel belonging to a coterie. At the same time, working on a path which helps one discover themselves and place their energy into what matters to them can support them on their path to self-actualization. In Goler et al.'s study, employees state that what matters to them and motivates the most are career, community and cause (Goler et al, 2018). Believing that their work is making an impact, is aligned with their ideologies, close to their values and is meaningful is quite important for employees to for self-actualization; thus these are the qualities they require at their work place. According to Kahn (1990), one needs to find meaning at what they do at work. He even defines work as a "task or role that satisfies personal and existential needs for meaning in work and meaning in life" (Kahn, 1990, p. 704). This statement suggests that work is much more than just part of our duties we meet for financial stability but can be perceived as a path to satisfaction and self-actualization. In a nutshell, work can help employees to reach a higher purpose regarding their authenticity, and the more meaning one finds at work, the more engaged they may be towards their job. Thus, researching the link between finding meaning at work and in one's personal life is a significant topic both for organizations to increase productivity and for individuals to feel more satisfied with their accomplishments.

1.4. Meaning And Self-Actualization At Work

There are many types of research on finding meaning at work or the meaningfulness of work (e.g., Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Michaelson, Pratt, Grant, & Dunn, 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010;

Yeoman, Bailey, Madden, & Thompson, 2019). Because the majority of one's waking hours are spent at work, understanding the meaning of work is quite important for one's quest to live a meaningful life (Frankl, 1959; Terkel, 1974). Similar, concepts such as calling, happiness, satisfaction, well-being, and meaning at work have been studied by many researchers regarding different sample groups from a variety of occupations. This research will focus on therapists' / psychologists quest for meaning at work.

Finding meaning at work is vital considering the amount of time and energy one spends at the workplace. Kahn (1990), demonstrated that there is a correlation between meaningful work and work engagement. For that reason, finding meaning in work can increase one's personal motivation in life, but also, can decrease the risk of employee disengagement. "Meaningfulness is a subjective experience of the existential significance or purpose of life" (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009, p. 492). For that reason, meaningful work gives purpose to one's life but also holds a significant spot for the employer as well, considering how finding meaning increases work engagement thus is important from a business perspective as well.

Each person can have a different form for defining the meaning of work (Schwartz, 2015; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). For some, work can be directly associated with income; thus is mainly about enabling a higher quality of life standards. However, the reason for working is not necessarily all about capital. According to many economists, who studied employees' relationship with work, work can have an intrinsic value for the jobholder (Marshall, 1961; Besley & Ghatak, 2005; Akerlof & Kranton, 2005). Ideally, work can bring meaning to one's life by creating positive inputs in one's life. On the other hand, it can cause burnout, stress, and similar negative emotions. To analyze why some types of work generate happiness and positive emotions, while others cause stress and similar negative emotions, it is important to understand the varying factors; thus considering meaning-creating's role in one's approach to how they feel about work is noteworthy. As Locke and Taylor (1990) suggest, a person's sense of purpose and social needs can be met at work, as well as material needs. Ideally, work can bring

meaning to one's life and support them to actualize themselves by creating positive input.

Today's workplace has increased competitiveness, challenge and demand thus keeping employees work up to their potential is important for the organizations. Likewise, finding meaning at work, having their financial and psychological needs met through work is also quite important for employees to feel satisfied and commit to their work (Goler et al, 2018). In order to maintain the productivity at the workplace, employees should be adaptable, multitalented and self-reliant (Maslow, 1971). On Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954), self-actualization is the highest-level need in the hierarchy. Reaching to the top of the triangle has positive implications both for one's personal and work life. Further, using Maslow's theoretical construct to improve workplace performance is plausible. When an employer finds more meaning at work, it can lead them to self-actualization and that journey can increase their motivation at the workplace (Kahn,1990). Although self-actualization through work can appear as a personal motivator, it is strongly correlated with finding meaning at work and finding meaning at work is related to commitment to the organization (Goler et al, 2018). Considering the relationship between meaning, self-actualization and performance at work, I was interested in investing the lived experiences of the participants regarding how they find meaning at work and how it affects the way they approach to their jobs.

1.5. Meaning at Work for Therapists

Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (1976) focuses on the relationship between characteristics of a job and personal differences and it's affects on satisfaction, productivity at motivation at work. According to the Job Characteristics Model, what motivates one to perform at their best is the meaning and alignment they have with the occupation (Casey et al. 2019). Any occupation can have substantial impact on an employer's life; thus researching meaning at work in any given occupation would be worth the discovery. Yet there are some occupations, which have a closer connotation with meaning. Any sort of occupation, which may have a direct impact to a person, group or to their environment, may be

considered to be closely associated with being meaningful; or the meaning of the activity may be more visible. Teaching, healing or health-related occupations may be considered some of these occupations; thus being a therapist is under this group of professions. Although psychologists may be exposed to trauma or mental health disorders, if they recognize the change in their clients and feel like they have a positive impact on another persons life and inner world; it might be easy to create meaning at work and generate positive emotions for their occupation.

Besides the impact therapists may harvest in their clients' lives; other aspects of being a therapist may be appealing, thus may make this occupation meaningful as well. Firstly, being a therapist may be part of self-concept; having a successful business or achievement, making decent income, having a popular occupation is appealing to most students, who are about to make a career decision (Jacobsen and Diseth, 2019). Secondly, there is an increasing and high demand for therapy. According to APA's research, especially in the last few years (due to the pandemic) the demand for therapy has increased significantly. From 2020 to 2021, psychologists who receive referrals have gone from 37% to 62% (American Psychological Association, 2021). Lastly, unlike the 9:00 to 5:00 regular office jobs in which one does repetitive and uneventful monotonous task, being a therapist, interacting with people and abstract issues may be interesting and exciting; thus cultivate meaning (Johansson, 1991). That being said, when thinking about the meaning of work, a large part of it may not come from the work itself or the inherent meaning being a therapist gives but from the relative ease by which young therapist can make a living. If that is the case, it can be conclude that the job itself isn't inherently meaningful by its nature but the therapists appoint meaning on this occupation for individual reasons and create meaning themselves.

1.5.1. Early Career Female Therapists

Early career female psychologists are not a group that is studied widely, despite its prevalence in the field (Burke, 2022). Since therapists are exposed to trauma and extremely personal and sometimes disturbing stories of others, it can be expected to be a challenging job with high burnout rates (Burke, 2022). Although

ECF psychologists can be considered a high-risk profession due to their exposure to trauma work and the risk of vicarious trauma (Canfield, 2005); research on ECF psychologists is quite scarce. Studying early career therapists is important to reveal the challenges therapist experience when they enter to the field; where they may not have sufficient experience or knowledge about how to deal with possible negative affects of their occupations such as burnout. Focusing on female therapist is important because gender component in any system is worth the inquiry due to the gendered societal norms. Psychology being a female dominant field is just one of the prominent reasons why gender component should be studying while researching therapists lived experiences.

The existing research suggests two dimensions to the issue: the first one is ECF psychologists report higher risks of emotional exhaustion and burnout and thus have less job satisfaction (Dorociak et al, 2017). This may suggest that finding meaning or at least positive meaning at work may be challenging for ECF psychologists when they are exposed to extended trauma at work. The second one is that Kolar and colleagues' research suggest that early career psychologists may (Kolar et al, 2017) utilize coping mechanism such as workplace management or self-care tactics to increase their emotional exhaustion and thus can enjoy the positive meaning they get from their work. The existing studies focused on ECF psychologists' relationship with burnout and ways to avoid work-related exhaustion. In this research, instead of focusing on the negative emotions, ECF psychologists experience due to work stress, ECF psychologists' relations with meaning and self-actualization at work will be studied further.

1.6. Identified Research Gaps

Following preliminary research concerning therapists/psychologists finding meaning at work in Turkey, some gaps in the literature have been recognized. The literature regarding psychologists' approach to finding meaning at work is scarce, not much exploratory, and mostly quantitative. On a larger scale, the literature regarding early career, female, psychologists' finding meaning at work from an existentialist perspective is not an invested topic globally. Unal and Turgut (2017),

studied meaning at work from an existentialist perspective in Turkey nonetheless, this research was conducted with quantitative research methods and for that reason does not provide the type of personal data qualitative studies do (since they focus on collecting in-depth data from a smaller group). Likewise, Ozaslan's research on the meaning of self-actualization for school principals focused on five themes for principals' fully realized potential (these skills are: communication, organization, motivation, empathy, and self-improvement) yet, this research provides insight on self-actualization for school principals, not therapists (Özaslan, 2018). Applying a similar research question to therapists will enlarge the current data on the subject matter.

In the Western globe, early career, female, psychologists have been studied yet, that study has focused on exploring ECF psychologists' experience of trauma work (Burke, 2022). Although different parts of my research question have been investigated under different lights, no research directly focuses on early career, female, and therapists psychologists' finding meaning at work and self-actualization from an existentialist perspective, using qualitative data.

First, most studies target doctors, nurses, social workers and teachers and mostly focus on the relationship between finding meaning at work and burnout. For instance, on Malloy and their colleagues' international study regarding finding meaning at work for nurses, four themes were found which are: relationships, compassionate caring, identity, and a mentoring culture (Malloy et al, 2015, pg1). The study found that, the leadership and the mentorship they have at work is nurturing a meaningful work environment for the nurses and support them to become developing resilient employees (Malloy et al, 2015, pg1). This study focuses on finding meaning at work for nurses, thus applying this question to another field of occupation (being psychologists) would contribute to the literature and would give an opportunity to compare different themes that may come up for nurses and psychologists.

Second, the research on psychologists mostly focuses on the negative aspects of their job, such as burnout, stress, and trauma. Charlemagne-Odle and their colleagues' study regarding the challenges of being a clinical psychologist expands

the existing literature on the distress among clinical psychologists working in Britain (Charlemagne-Odle et al, 2012). Previous research also focused on the distress clinical psychologists are exposed to. According to Gilroy and their colleagues' research in 2002, clinical psychologists have a higher risk of depression (Gilroy, Lynne, & Murra, 2002). Farber's study in 1983 also concluded that the suicide risk for clinical psychologists is increased (Farber, 1983). Multiple studies conclude that clinical psychologists experience high rates of stress, which increases the risk for physical and mental health problems. On the other hand, Good, Thoreson, and Shaughnessy (1995)'s research studied the life satisfaction, work stress and psychological stress counseling psychologists experience and concluded that overall psychological was content both with their personal and professional lives and reported low to moderate levels of work stress. Since there is contradicting approach (one suggesting that psychologists have overall high stress and their job have a negative influence on their mental and psychological health, and the other arguing that they have low to moderate stress and higher satisfaction), it would be beneficial for the literature to research psychologists' work satisfaction further, so that the inconsistency on this area may be narrowed down. I was initially interested in this research because the popularity of the field was intriguing. Although psychology and being a therapist are very popular, most therapists complain about the stressful nature of this occupation thus I thought there must be a mediating factor, which explains this contradiction (that being a therapist is thought to be a stressful occupation with high burnout rates but also is very popular for psychology majors). This research aims to uncover the contradiction by analyzing meaning as a mediating factor for the popularity of the occupation besides its challenges.

Third, existing studies on psychologists focus on happiness, well-being, or calling for therapists, and very few focus directly on finding meaning at work; and none of them specifically studies meaning from an existentialist perspective (engaging Victor Frankl and Jean-Paul Sartre's views on meaning). In Duffy and their colleagues' study on counseling psychologists who view their careers as a calling, they have focused on eight psychologists who viewed their careers as a calling. In this research "six domains emerged: definition, the process of discerning,

content of the calling, professional impact, personal impact, and maintenance. Generally, interviewees viewed the discernment of their calling as the result of an indirect route that included self-reflection, support from others, and an identified calling source” (Duffy et al, 2012). The participants interpreted calling similarly as one’s purpose in life or the one thing they are meant to do in their lifetime. Overall, participants stated that they were “satisfied with their personal and professional lives and noted that the calling positively impacted their daily work tasks and interpersonal relationships” (Duffy et al, 2012). Duffy and his colleagues’ research is quite similar to studying psychologists’ sense of finding meaning at work thus particularly focusing on calling. In other words, clinical psychologists approach their occupations, as their purpose in life is an intersecting topic yet, the divergence of calling and meaning will be investigated in my study. Moreover, Duffy and his colleagues’ study focuses on purpose and calling at work thus, does not analyze this concept from an existentialist perspective. Duffy and his colleagues’ research approaches to finding meaning at work from a philosophical perspective, particularly will benefit from existential philosophers' approach to meaning and purpose in one’s life; thus will approach this subject from a unique perspective.

Fourth, those studies focused on finding meaning at work are either international or in the West but research in Turkey is scarce. Steger and Dik’s article on the relationship between finding meaning at work and in life suggests that there is a correlation between finding meaning in life and in their careers; people who find meaning in their lives also find meaning in their careers (2009). This study, answers one of the questions my research aims to answer (the relationship between finding meaning in life and at work) thus it focuses on undergraduate students instead of early-career female therapists and is conducted in the western globe, not in Turkey. As mentioned early, Unal and Turgut, studied meaning at work from an existentialist perspective in Turkey in 2017 (Unal and Turgut, 2017) thus since this research was conducted with quantitative research methods and does not provide in-depth, personal data as it would in a qualitative study. Another difference between Unal and Turgut’s research and mine is that their research group was based on convenience sampling of 237 employees from different companies in different

sectors. Whereas, my research focuses on 6 ECF therapists (Unal and Turgut, 2017). Unal and Turgut's findings also suggest that there is a positive correlation between finding meaning in life and at work (2017). Sub-dimensions of meaning at work were listed as: "unity with others, inspiration and balancing tensions (being/doing, self/others) have positive contributions on experiencing meaning in life" (2017). The difference between the nature of the occupation as a therapist is quite different than working at a corporate company, thus focusing on a different sample group is expected to change the results and contribute to the studies which analyzed the relationship between finding meaning at work and in life. Keles also studied 'the relationship between meaningful work and psychological well-being' thus that study does not focus on psychologists but, focuses on well-being whereas this study focuses only and specifically on meaning without handling it together with the positive impacts of finding meaning at work (Keles, 2017). Similarly, Polatci and Sobaci (2021) researched the 'meaning of work as a sought source for job performance in the Covid-19 Pandemic' however; their research focus group is doctors and focuses particularly on the pandemic era. In other words, it does not answer this research's focus on psychologists and the general meaning one finds in their jobs, at regular times. Sungur's recent study on 'the meaning of work for young people without work experience' also focuses on finding meaning at work, but again her focus group is not psychologists but young people without work experience.

Fifth, the majority of the topic-related studies have adopted a quantitative approach, therefore relying solely on questionnaires, which have failed to produce rich, in-depth data. Kernes and Kinnier's research in 2008, also studied psychologists' sense of meaning in their personal and professional lives. According to this study "overall, psychologists rejected the notion that there is no cosmic meaning to life and instead generally supported the belief that the meaning of life is to love, help, or show compassion for others. Psychologists also rejected statements indicating that nothing was personally meaningful to them and generally reported that intimate relationships, family, and friendships brought the most personal meaning to their lives. Finally, as a group, psychologists indicated that helping

others live more satisfying lives was the most important aspect of their professional work” (Kerner and Kinnier, 2008, pg 196). This research is directly focusing on satisfaction and meaning for psychologists in their personal and work lives yet, since it is a quantitative study, it does not give the specific inputs that a qualitative study uncovers. Due to the nature of the qualitative study, it supplies more in-depth, personalized data compared to the statistical data quantitative studies provide (Firestone, 1987). Thus, focusing on a similar research topic but specializing in female, early career psychologists instead of general psychologists gives a more specific window. Moreover, the nature of quantitative research methods will flourish the depth of the data.

Sixth, there are few studies that examined the effect of gender on finding meaning at work as a female psychologist, but most of the studies have not examined being in early stages of one’s career. Couple dissertations focus on female therapists or uncover gender component to an extent: In Williamson’s dissertation “Engagement And Meaningfulness At Work: The Moderating Roles Of Life Satisfaction And Gender” the gender component regarding finding meaning at work and in life but does not focus on therapists as the research’s focus group (2011). The study also supports the positive correlation between finding meaning in life and at work; and also adds that gender strongly moderates psychological meaningfulness on work engagement. Martin’s dissertation focuses on ECF psychologists yet the research focuses on wellness and self-care rather than specifically analyzing finding meaning for therapists (2009). The study highlights the significance of self-care for therapists to proceed at their jobs long term. In Turkey, Boyacioglu and Hünler’s article named “A Study on Women Studies in Psychology and Working Conditions of Women in Academia” also bring upon the gender component and mentions the sexism and discrimination female academicians experience at work (Boyacioglu and Hunler, 2018). This study contributes to the literature by focusing on Turkish women and Turkish culture. In my research, possible sexism, discrimination or gender related issues may be brought upon yet the main purpose of my research is to uncover potential link between meaning at work and gender’s effect into meaning

making as a therapist.

2. METHODOLOGY

This is qualitative research, which used qualitative methodology to explore the impact of finding meaning at work and its effects on a therapist's personal journey to self-actualization and authenticity. Six individual interviews were conducted with early-career female therapists to discuss if and how they find meaning in their work. The research was designed to comply with guidelines for conducting research with adults and all the ethical issues were concerned throughout the data collection and analysis procedures. Ethical approval was provided by Istanbul Bilgi University Ethical Committee before the data collection process (see Appendix A).

2.1. Participants

Female therapists, who are practicing for 2 to 6 years hold a psychology master's degree and are currently seeing clients, were interviewed.

Table 2.1.1. Demographic information regarding the participants

Participants	Years of being a therapist	Affiliated with an organization	City	Country	Age
P1	2 years	Yes, but also sees clients independently	Istanbul	Turkey	28
P2	2,5 years	No, has a private practice	Istanbul	Germany	29
P3	4 years	Yes, at a clinic.	Istanbul	UK	28
P4	3 years	Yes, at a hospital.	Izmir	Turkey	29
P5	2,5 years	Yes, but also sees clients independently	Istanbul	Turkey	28
P6	6 years	No, has a private practice	Ankara	Turkey	35

Participants were residing in Turkey's largest top three cities and they were all actively working. Two of the participants had private practices, two of the participants were working at a corporate organization as a therapist and two of them were seeing clients independently while also being affiliated with a corporate organization. All the participants hold a psychology bachelor's degree and had their

master's degrees (in different fields of psychology such as clinical, psychoanalysis, couple, and family therapy). The participants received their master's degrees from the UK, Germany, or from Turkey and they were all experienced in working with Turkish clients in Turkey.

2.1.1. Sampling

The sampling type is non-probability (convenience) sampling. The study sample consists of 6 early-career female psychologists. Female therapists, who are practicing for 2 to 6 years hold a psychology master's degree, and are currently seeing clients, were the sampling group. In this research, clinical psychologists, counselors, psychotherapists, and psychoanalysts are considered therapists/psychologists. Participants were recruited through a social media ad, which was posted by the researcher and shared by her existing contacts. Participation in this research were fully voluntarily and anonymous.

The sample group was confined with six therapists because the data retrieved got similar after first four therapists. Data collected from six therapists could be assembled under three groups; in other words there were pronounced similarities between P 1 and P 5, P 2 and P3 and P4 and P6 perspectives.

2.2. Procedure

The data was collected through online semi-structured interviews. The interviews were semi-structured because the researcher wanted to digest any area spontaneously if the participants brought up an interesting topic. Interviews were carried on in Turkish since participants' native tongue helps them give more elaborative answers and may feel more comfortable. Interviews took place remotely yet the privacy settings of the interviewees were assured by emailing the participant before the interview and underlying the importance of having the interview at a comfortable spot, where they are not worried about others hearing their answers and at a time of their convenience. When the participants contacted the researcher after seeing the ad on social media, the researcher collected the participants' email addresses. The participants were contacted through email concerning the interview. Before the interview, they were presented with a participant information sheet and

consent form. Their permission was acquired to audio and video record the interviews. They were informed that their participation was fully voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Participants had the chance to ask any questions during and at the end of the interview.

Table 2.2.1. Duration of the interviews

Participants	Interview date	Interview duration
P1	27.03.22	1 hour 7 mins
P2	27.03.22	1 hour 8 mins
P3	29.03.22	59 mins
P4	29.03.22	1 hour 4 mins
P5	3.04.22	45 mins
P6	4.04.22	38 mins

The interview dates were set almost in a week and were conducted in 9 days. The interviews were expected to last about forty-five minutes to an hour initially. The average amount of time the interviews took was 56,8 minutes. As shown in Table 2.2.1 the longest interviews were the first two interviews, which took 1 hour and 7 minutes and 1 hour and 8 minutes. The last interviews took an average of 41,5 minutes. This change in the period may be caused by how the researcher got accustomed to the questions and learned to lead the conversation in the desired direction throughout the process, thus being able to conduct the last two interviews more efficiently time-wise.

Since the questions were on challenging topics, which required an in-depth introspective look regarding one's existential gaze, multiple participants on multiple times required some time to think and digest some of the questions. Sometimes these setbacks were unraveled giving little extra time for the participant to contemplate the questions. At other times, the researcher further explained what the question means.

2.2.1. Ethical consideration

The anonymity of the participants was protected throughout the study. All the identifiable data was removed at the transcription stage. The participants' confidentiality was protected, as codes were used to identify them throughout the process. After the thesis defense, all the audio files were demolished.

2.2.1.1. Data Protection

All information collected was kept strictly confidential. The recordings were stored on a password-protected personal computer until the transcription process was finalized. The transcriptions were stored on a password-protected personal laptop and was only be viewed by the researcher. After the completion of the analysis and the thesis defense, the audio files and all the information that could make participants identifiable was dispelled.

2.2.1.2. Privacy

In terms of privacy, participants were protected against abuses of their personal information. During the recorded Zoom interviews, they were asked to source only the information concerning their interpretation of meaning at work.

2.2.1.3. Sensitive Topics

Participants were asked to discuss the meaning of their work which may be considered a sensitive topic, moreover, may open up some other sensitive issues regarding the meaning or the lack of it in their personal lives or while investigating their self-actualization and authenticity. Specifically, the questions regarding how they define the meaning and if they find meaning at work may raise other related existential questions. The risks were allayed in two ways: 1) Participants were informed that their participation is voluntary; 2) Participants were able to withdraw at any time. During the interviews, when the conversation was personal or when the participants opened up about their personal journey to self-actualization, the researcher kindly reminded them that they can stop at any point, or that they could skip the question. In none of the interviews, the participant want to end the conversation or skip a question.

2.3. Materials

The interviews started with explaining the procedure, the aim of the research, and their rights as participants. The conversation was followed by asking a couple of demographic questions to the participants, such as how many years they have been working as a therapist or where they reside. The interview questions are presented in Appendix 1. In the interviews, the researcher aimed to direct the conversation to gain the most data regarding finding meaning at work and self-actualization through work. The interview questions were originally written in English, which then was translated into Turkish for the interviews. Questions were prepared to be as open as possible and questions that could be answered with few words are followed by possible prompts that may be used during interviews. Additional materials for the proposed study include a personal cell phone or a computer for the online meeting and a program for recording participant information and participant consent forms emailed to participants before the interview. Both forms were originally written in English and then translated to Turkish by the researcher. These forms, interview questions, analysis stage some in vivo statements were translated back to English by the researcher. The interview questions were established after an extensive literature review on finding meaning at work and existentialism. The interview questionnaire was finalized after revisions of two psychologists during the ethical approval procedure and were tested in a pilot study.

Qualitative data analysis software tool (called MAXQDA) was used to systematically code the data. The researcher developed a coding framework after reading the transcripts multiple times. The initial coding process took place on paper; by taking on the printed transcripts later the MAXQDA program was used for analytically grouping the data.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

In this research, because IPA was the implemented methodology no hypotheses were set; the aim of the interviews was to better understand how therapists define finding meaning at work and if they did find the meaning, the impacts of those feelings were questioned (particularly focusing on it's relationship with self-actualization). Since the aim of the study was to explore the personal experiences of how does someone make sense of their individual world, IPA was the chosen method of this study (Smith and Osborn, 2008). All the research questions were framed broadly and openly; there were times that the researcher would skip the order of the questions on the list and focus on what the interviewee is sharing; to discover how the participant views a particular phenomenon. Multiple instantaneously prompted sub-questions were asked during the interview to understand how participants perceive and make sense of their jobs and the relationship between their work and meaning in their lives. Following the participants' interests and concerns made the interviews quite dynamic, interesting, and unique.

After conducting six interviews the researcher transcript the audio recordings. During this procedure, listening to the recordings multiple times intensified the digestion of the data. As Smith and Osborn suggests the importance of getting familiar with the data, the researcher read and reread the outcomes multiple times to better understand and make sense of the data (2008). Once the transcription was complete, all the data were printed and read while taking notes. These notes and comments on the paper were the first stages of data analysis and basic coding. During these readings, the researcher took simple notes and created mindmaps by grouping similar concepts. The first step of coding on the MAXQDA program was similar to the grouping the researcher did manually. The basic meaning or the theme was coded and those codes were grouped together. It should be noted that the analysis procedure was also a personal process since the researcher interprets and investigates the data from their unique perspective (Smith and Osborn, 2008). For that reason grouping the outcomes and making sense of the data individually was a significant part of deepening the analysis. For instance, if the participants talked

about challenging aspects of their jobs, these were coded as the “challenges of being a therapist”. In the second stage of the coding, the researcher tried to approach the topic from a more existentialist perspective and attempted to understand how these challenges affect the way the participants create meaning regarding their jobs. In this particular example, those challenges were approached as the encounters the participants acknowledged and took the responsibility for voluntarily and consciously. In other words, the challenges were analyzed from Sartre’s approach to responsibility. The second part of the data analysis required taking breaks and re-analyzing the data with fresh eyes a couple of times. Creating new codes and sub-codes for each interview was the initial approach yet later on in the analysis process, a more holistic approach was adopted and all the codes were grouped through an existentialist perspective. In each step (transcription, reading on paper, coding on the MAXQDA program) the researcher started the process from the last interviews (Interview no 6) and moved backward. The reason behind starting from the last interview was that the interviews get more precise in the end since the researcher learned how to conduct the interviews in a more systematic matter. That being said, analyzing the interviews from the last one to the first one made the procedure easier.

3.1. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

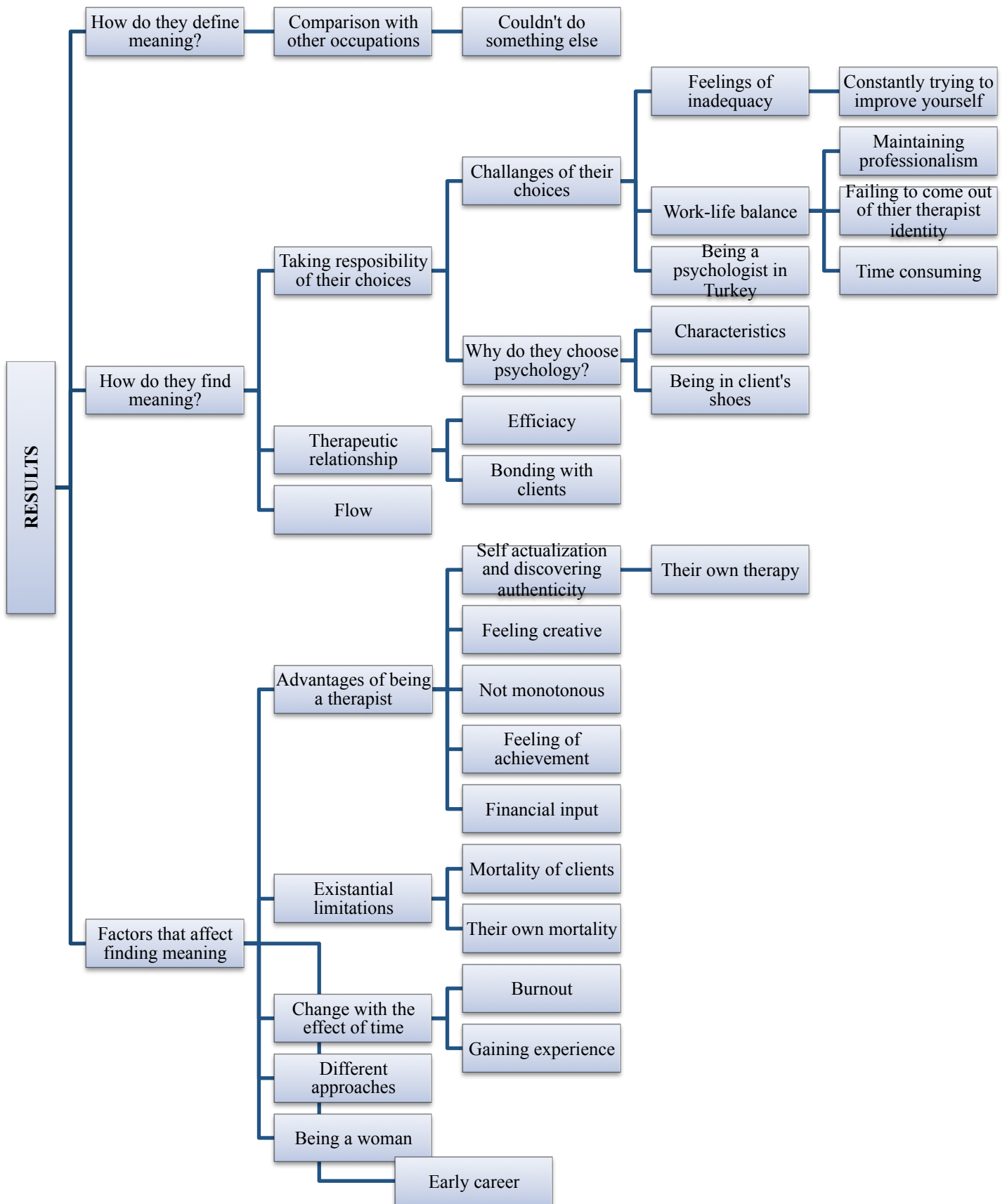
Interviews were analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method. IPA is a psychological qualitative research method and a systematic procedure design that aims to explain how a person makes sense of a particular phenomenon by exploring a lived experience, which allows understanding of meaning, cognition, or an occurrence. According to Smith and Osborn (2008) “the aim of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA study is the meanings of particular experiences, events, states hold for participants.” IPA is usually preferred when studying one’s personal experience such as a major event in their life or a significant occasion (Smith & Shinebourne 2012). Similarly, according to Reid and their colleagues the IPA method

can be preferred when analyzing one's insights and the meaning they attained to a specific matter (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). In this study, the data collected aims to offer insights into how a specific person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon from their own perspective thus using IPA was the desired research method. Both in existentialist perspective and IPA methodology hermeneutics approach is used; which bases its approach on Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Edmund Husserl's philosophical techniques (Smith, 2007). This methodology particularly allows interpretation of how participants experience meaning at their jobs.

4. RESULTS

Analysis conveys how finding meaning at work can contribute to finding meaning in life while uncovering the challenges of the occupation. Results were collected under three categories as listed: 1. How do they define finding meaning at work, 2. How do they find meaning, 3. Factors that affect finding meaning at work. Each category has multiple super-ordinate themes, which are described here: 1.1 Comparison With Other Occupations, 2.1 Flow, 2.2 Taking Responsibility Of Their Choices, 2.3 Therapeutic Relationship, 3.1 Advantages Of Being A Therapist, 3.2 Existential Limitations, 3.3 Changes With The Effect Of Time, 3.4 Different Approaches, 3.5 Being A Woman/Sexism, 3.6 Early Career, 3.7 Work Environment. The listed super-ordinate themes all have subthemes. The results showed that finding meaning at work is highly correlated with finding meaning in life and that all the participants claim to find meaning at their jobs.

Figure 4.1. Overall Coding Map



4.1. HOW DO THEY DEFINE FINDING MEANING AT WORK?

Before the participants were asked how they found meaning at work, they were asked how they defined the concept of finding meaning at work. The majority of the participants said that finding meaning at work is about having your wishes aligned with what you are doing; in other words focusing on the things that you find meaning in life, at work. According to the participants, work is an area where they spend most of their time and for that reason, their jobs occupy a substantial place in their lives.

"I mean, I think it's about your own values in life being parallel with your work; what kind of values, that is, what you want. For example, if you want to earn a lot of money, if that's the most important thing, then it's a job where you can do it. Or, if you want to be beneficial, it's a job where you can do to something. What do I want to do, what do I want to add to life - I think it would be meaningful if you could get that thing in return for it." [P 3; Position: 2 - 2]

The importance of finding meaning at work, due to the amount of time it takes in our lives, was emphasized by Participant 1. When she highlighted the amount of time at work, she added that work is intertwined with life thus thinking about finding meaning in one without the other is not plausible.

"Finding meaning at work comes with feeling alive. Work is literally a place where five days of the week are spent. If that place is meaningless, then it means your life is meaningless and lifeless"[P 1; Position: 5 - 5]

The participants generally tried to explain the concept of finding meaning at work by making a comparison between other occupations vs. being a therapist. At the end of these comparisons, most of the participants stated that they would not be able to do another profession because other occupations do not fit into the definition of meaning at work for them, as being a therapist does. In this context, two themes emerged, namely 1.1 Comparison with other occupations and 1.2 Couldn't do something else, on how they define finding meaning at work.

4.1.1 Comparison with other occupations

While some of the participants defined what it means to find meaning at work for them, they also gave examples explaining why other occupations have less meaning and why their own profession is more meaningful for them. These participants believe that other occupations are materialistic and superficial; more than half of the participants gave being an economist an example of a job that does not carry a similar meaning to being a therapist. They stated that they did not find these occupations beneficial for themselves or others.

"At the bottom, doing something other than finance, economy, other intangibles, rather than a more materialistic, more physical world related... Actually working with a person makes this job means to me. Because what's real in life is human, it is not economy or anything else. I'm trying to change one person. I try to get to know that person, I try to touch the feelings of the person. That's why I can't really imagine myself as a finance person or an economist. Because I feel like they are delaying their lives; it's like saying 'here you go, play with this toy. It doesn't feel real to me there.'" [P 1; Position: 16 - 16]

Other professions, which are also beneficial for people or directly, help people, such as teachers, doctors, etc. were compared to being a therapist. These professions were mentioned to be important in society but did not recall a similar meaning for the participants since these occupations did not require getting to know people deeply and aimed to transform them personally according to the participants. Although they did not openly say that being a therapist is the most meaningful job relatively, while comparing their job with other occupations, they claim that other professions do not tackle important matters as a therapist does.

"I think, it is similar since we work with people too, the first thing that comes to my mind is teaching... But I'm not sure if it would be comparably satisfying. Because I think that's what teaching is, after all, they also work with a person and have an impact on their lives. It's not about just teaching, you become a role model, and you witness their emotional change and development. You touch their lives for real. But again... I don't think it's like

being a psychologist. I mean, because it's a very limited field. You don't have those limitations as a therapist. In therapy, of course, I do more. I love to get to know that person, to get to know them deeply. ... In NGOs, in teaching, in other fields that work with people ... There is much less space to get to know people there, there is a limited space to get to know them. I love to comprehend the person I work with. Understanding that person as a whole deeply gives me such serious pleasure. Therefore, I might not have received the same amount of pleasure if I worked in an NGO, as a teacher, or as a doctor. I would like to go a little further." [P 1; Position: 18 - 18]

Participants did not openly reveal a type of god complex while mentioning the importance of their occupation. None of them openly said that being a therapist is more meaningful than other occupations yet, some indicated that they put being a therapist on a different level of importance, which may indicate some type of god complex. One of the participants (P3) was aware of the god complex some of her colleagues may have thus stating that putting being a therapist on a pedestal may be coming from a narcissistic perspective. She added that a similar feeling of importance might be predominant in doctors and psychiatrists as well.

"Because do I really think that I change a person's life like this, for instance, this is a slightly different point of view, a little narcissistic... There are also psychiatrists and such, I mean, doctors also have such a god complex... I think a variant of this can also happen with therapists, I think some say I save and fix people, but this doesn't happen all the time, it can't be. I mean, we can't solve everything, I don't think we have such power..." [P 3; Position: 43 - 43]

Some participants, on the other hand, stated that the factor that makes the job meaningful is not the profession itself, but both the society that provides the formation of that profession and the people who do that profession. According to P2, being a therapist does neither hold a special spot compared to other occupations nor does it have higher importance, more meaning, or more beneficial than other professions.

"I mean, doctors have great benefit, teachers have benefit, and so do the lawyers. I mean, they are all really valuable professions, and that's why I think therapists do not hold a special place, I cannot say "it comes above all else; but without therapy, the others mean nothing". I'm not saying that at all. Totally "This is also a job now. So it's something I make money on." You know, I don't think it has such a lofty side, more than as being a lawyer, being a teacher, etc. does" [P 2; Position: 44 - 44]

To sum up, all the participants mentioned finding their occupations meaningful. Some approach their job as something, which has more special importance relative to other occupations due to the nature of working with the depth of individuals as a therapist. Others stated that they find their jobs meaningful thus it does not hold a unique spot if there was a ranking of occupations significance.

4.1.1.1 Couldn't do something else

Almost all the participants specifically said that they could not be doing anything else; which actually is maybe the best answer if the participants are happy with their career choices. Throughout the interviews, when asked about their career choice and any possible regrets about being a therapist, no participant questioned if being a therapist was a questionable decision for them. As a matter of fact, while asked about comparing their occupation with others; regardless of finding being a therapist more meaningful than other occupations or not, all the participants said that they could not be doing any other occupation.

"I thought I couldn't do anything else. I couldn't have done anything else anyway."

[P 2; Position: 103 - 103]

Even when they mention some of the disadvantages of being a therapist such as not having a clear career path for advancement, they still state that they could not see themselves internalizing another occupation.

"Because, how can I say, you have your own goals in life, normally when you get a job, that's how it is; you want to be a manager, earn a certain amount of money, etc. More like that, going step by step, this to that. I don't

know if it makes sense but... I also thought that I could not find meaning in a corporate company, for example, because I thought I could do that kind of job because I mean, it doesn't benefit anyone at all, in my opinion, does it have any use for me? I don't know, for example. There may be a feeling of accomplishment or something. There is no such feeling here." [P 3; Position: 27 - 27]

Similarly, P4 lists the disadvantages and burdening nature of being a therapist yet still states that she finds meaning in her job and could not see herself doing something else.

"It is not very satisfying when you get a low wage in a professional group that patiently carries other's emotional burdens and deepens their problems, and in fact, many people do not have the patience to do so much." [P 4; Position: 47 - 47]

One of the participants suggested that she could do any occupation that aligns with her ideals. That being said, she said she enjoyed being a therapist because of the altruistic nature of the occupation. She said, she could also devote herself to similar altruistic occupations such as being a doctor.

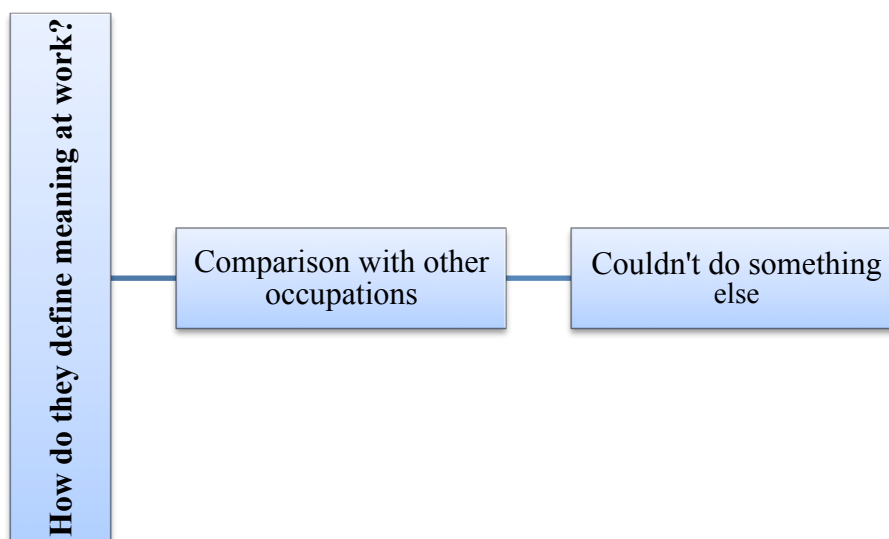
"... more like altruism. I could have been a doctor, I mean, not necessarily a therapist. It's a similar thing, I think, it's not that different. In the same way, being a doctor is higher status, of course, that's why it's usually chosen. Well, it can be defined as someone who works with a person and provides a benefit to them. As long as I do a job like that, even if I was not a therapist, that's fine." [P 3; Position: 72 - 72]

Although P3 suggests that she could see herself doing similar altruistic occupations, still she says that she would not know what else would she be if she wasn't a therapist.

"For example, I don't know what I would do if I didn't do this job. What kind of thing am I going to do, maybe this is the meaning of my life, for example. I don't know." [P 3; Position: 68 - 68]

Overall, all the participants talked about their career choice as the one. Considering other occupations, they all said that they feel like they have made the right choice by being a therapist.

Figure 4.1.1. How do they define meaning at work



When asked about how they define meaning, directly many of the participants compared their jobs with other occupations. By making a comparison between how they find their jobs meaningful and the lack of meaning they would find in different occupations, they shared how they find meaning in their jobs and thus could not imagine themselves working in a different field.

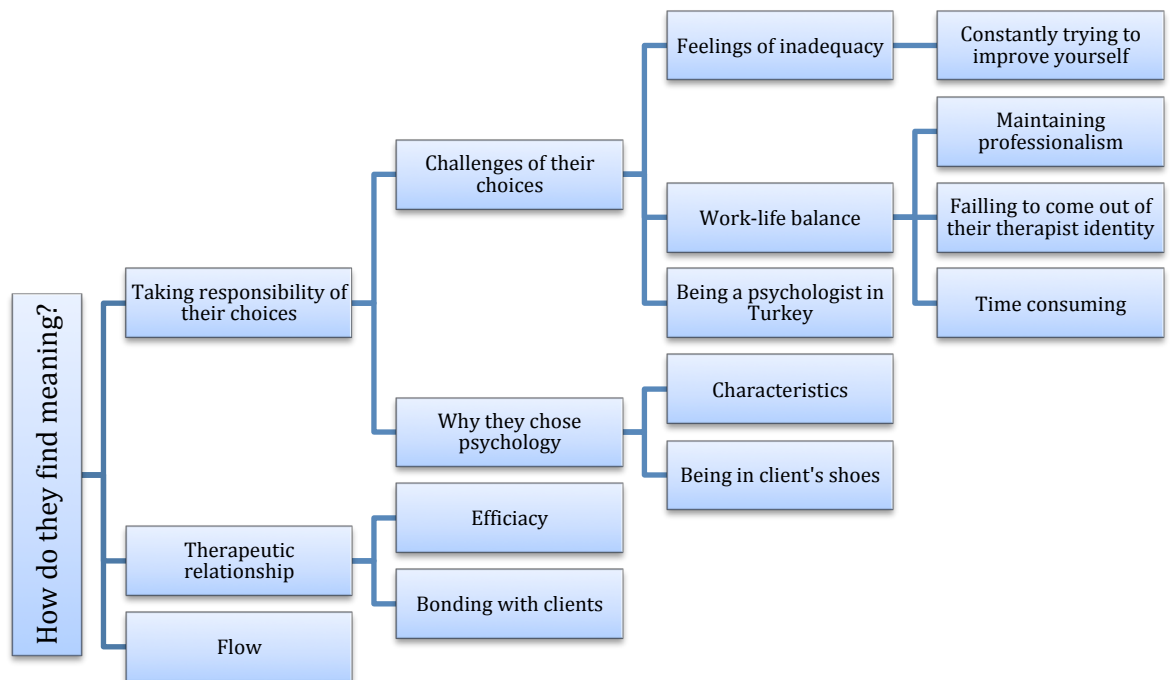
4.2. HOW DO THEY FIND MEANING?

After the participants were asked what it means to find meaning at work for them (the general definition of meaning for them), they were asked how they found meaning in their own work as a therapist. Three themes have emerged while discussing finding meaning at work as a therapist from an existentialist perspective:

1. Taking responsibility for their choices,
2. The therapeutic relationship,
3. Flow.

Since the analyses are approached from an existentialist perspective, focusing on responsibility and choice was planned to be an important part of this section yet the therapeutic relationship and flow themes emerged without any leading questions. The participants themselves brought up these topics without the researcher's anticipation.

Figure 4.2.1. How do they find meaning?



While answering this question, the participants talked about why they chose to be a therapist, their choice to enter psychology early on, how they are constantly choosing this career path for themselves every day, namely the difficulties of their profession, and the fact that struggling to overcome these difficulties by taking responsibility for their choices adds meaning to their profession.

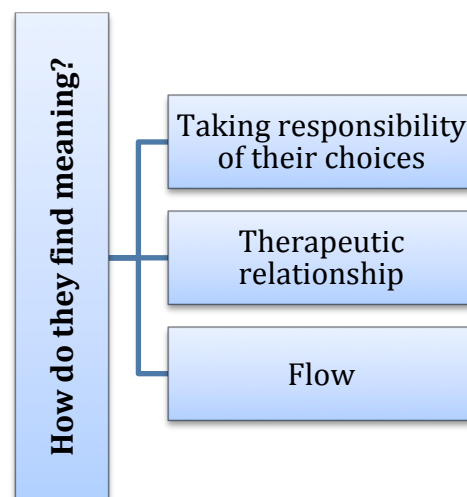
"Because every day I understand why I chose this career once again, every day I say "yes, thank god I am in this". So I choose it once more every day. Saying 'I would have chosen this profession again if I were to do it all over

again', makes this profession more meaningful for me. " [P 1; Position: 38 - 38]

Participant 1's statement on choosing psychology every day aligns with Sartre's approach to freedom. According to the existentialist school of thought, we are doomed to making decisions on daily bases; a choice is not a one-time made-and-done deal, yet is an over-the-lasting process of choosing. P1 directly touches on this perspective when she says that she is choosing to be a therapist every day.

Participants also stated that the bond they establish with the client and the fact that their profession does not make them feel like they are at "work" obligatory is also a sign of how much they find meaning as a therapist. In this context, in the "how do they find meaning?" section, three main themes emerged: flow, taking responsibility for their choices, and the therapeutic relationship.

Figure 2.2.2. Close up map for how do they find meaning



4.2.1. Flow

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who is the father of flow theory, defines flow as "the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; cited in Donaldson et al., 2011). The type of focus experienced during flow is similar to breathing; it occurs without conscious control,

it is the main focus of the person and it happens naturally; it flows. Flow is a state in which one stops being the observer but becomes the participant. The involvement and the focus of the activity are so focused that time flies and the external world becomes insignificant. The researcher studied flow theory before this research yet when focused on meaning, she decided not to include a section about flow theory, and thus did not include any specific questions regarding flow during the interviews. However, while discussing meaning, the way participants described their experience of how they feel at their jobs was aligned with flow theory.

"It really becomes an area that I don't see as a 'work'. Because this is an area where I can build something more with the characteristics, which make me who I am; and make money doing so. That's why it becomes much more meaningful to me..." [P1; Position: 13 - 13]

"But how can I describe it, I mean, actually, it's more like enjoying what I do, it's like a hobby; I won't notice how the time passes. I spend most of the day at work, where I can enjoy what I do..." [P 4; Position: 1 - 1]

"I think it is about finding what feels close to you. I'll give a personal answer again, but I think it's something you're curious about, that doesn't really seem like a burden to you, that doesn't feel like a job, that you enjoy doing, that is close to who you are, and that attracts you. It can be anything, you know. Reflecting on your work, it seems as if it makes the existing process more enjoyable. It's as if the meaning is something like that. I guess to find something close to you, that describes you, that is directed towards you, in business life"[P 5; Pozisyon: 2 - 2]

Participants talked about how they do not think of being a therapist as a burdening job; it almost feels like a hobby. They feel aligned with their job; their interest, character, focus is captured by their occupation voluntarily. Thus they get lost in the activity and do not understand how time passes. One of the defining indicators of flow is the sense of time getting distorted. During flow, time perception gets inaccurate. In other words, time seems to pass very quickly from one perspective, but at the same time, the time passed also feels longer than it actually takes. During

the interviews Participant 6 mentions how she does not realize how time passes when she is at work.

"For example, not noticing how time passes. So if I'm not looking at the clock and counting minutes, I feel like I'm finding meaning." [P 6; Position: 28 - 28]

P5 talked about passion when asked to amplify her sense of meaning at work. When she described meaning other concepts she included was passion, creativity, being captured by the activity, feeling close to the activity, and feeling alive. All these concepts listed are part of the flow experience.

"I feel passionately close to what I find meaning. It can be for anything. And that passion makes me love what I do so much and keeps me in a very creative place, you know, in a functional place. It's about that thing being close to me." [P 5; Position: 8 - 8]

"Well, it's about not feeling like it is a duty. I find myself in it intuitively; I am not curious, interested, creativity. Creativity is incredible! Creativity that I have not felt in any other field... I feel really very competent here. I know that I can do it. I feel very creative, very full of life; lively, I feel much more alive when I'm doing it. I feel it deep inside of me." [P 5; Position: 27 - 29]

Discussion regarding finding meaning at work leading to the description of flow theory was an unpredicted aspect of the interviews.

4.2.2. Taking responsibility of their choices

Sartrean thought suggests that humans are obligated to make decisions in this absurd world and take responsibility consequently. Thus, finding meaning at work is also a decision that one takes and is required to take responsibility for. His perspective may suggest that one is responsible to make a decision concerning finding meaning at work and that, there is no a priori meaning in an occupation itself; people amend meaning to their jobs or careers. During the interviews, how the participants claim to find meaning in their occupations was looked at in the spotlight. The participants who had an existing knowledge of existentialism had an

easier time answering questions regarding responsibility and choice. For some participants, questions regarding existential choice were abstract thus the researcher needed to explain the concept before the discussion.

"First of all, I find it meaningful because I chose it. I mean, this is my choice in blood, I said I want to do it. I said I want to do this job. I said I want to pursue this career... It was what I wanted to produce, what I wanted to be in, so I am in a profession that I feel very close to me, so I can do it. This job is very meaningful to me, as I chose to be in a profession where I can create my best and show myself at my best." [P 1; Position: 13 - 13]

After mentioning how she chose this occupation and took the responsibility for her choice, she mentioned how this decision was an authentic one. The authenticity of this choice made the decision more meaningful for her; as Sartre would state taking the responsibility for this decision made her career choice more meaningful.

"Well, it's something about you, something you want, something you choose authentically becomes your choice. Something you choose is already extremely meaningful, something that gives life, something you enjoy, something you feel alive doing so. It is very difficult for anything meaningful to come out of when that path was not chosen by you. It is not your choice, you don't believe in it. Since it is my choice, I can be a therapist authentically" [P 1; Position: 71 - 71]

Participants stated that the difficult aspects of their profession do not affect the meaning they find. On the contrary, these difficulties distinguish the profession from others, force them to improve constantly and contribute to the meaningfulness of their jobs. They claim to choose to take responsibility for their choices despite these difficulties.

"Actually, the meaning is always there basically, nothing is meaningless. Even if everything goes wrong, there is always meaning. " [P 2; Position: 32 - 32]

"I find it meaningful, I think, despite all this. But I have a hard time finding that meaning sometimes." [P 3; Position: 21 - 21]

"It's definitely my choice. Even, how I do this job is my choice. It's also my choice when I experience negativity. For example, if I was not taking care of myself very much, and if it reflects on my work, that's also my choice, then I don't do it. I mean, if I'm burned out; this is also a choice, it's always my responsibility. I totally agree with that." [P 5; Position: 23 - 23]

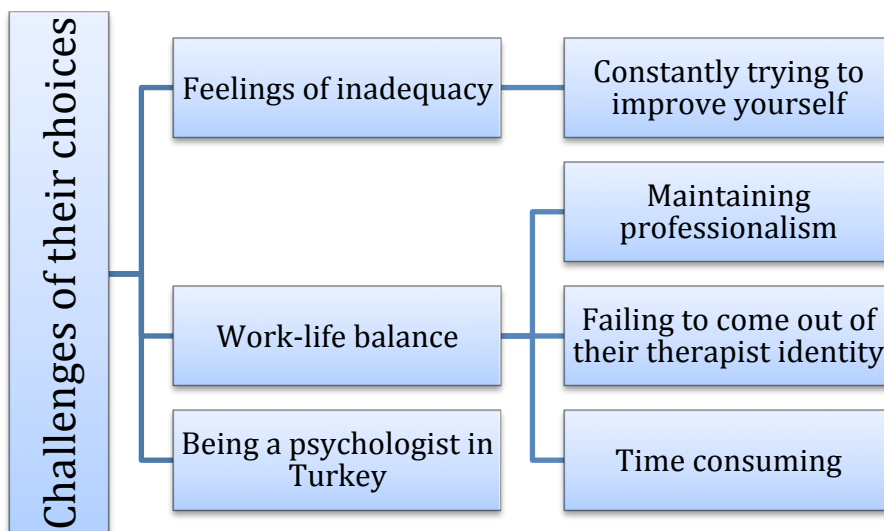
"I create the meaning and take the responsibility of it." [P 6; Position: 26 - 26]

They explained the reasons for their willingness to accept responsibility for these choices by explaining why they chose psychology and how and why this profession is suitable for them. In line with this main theme, 2 sub-themes emerged as challenges of their choices and why do they choose psychology.

4.2.2.1 Challenges of Their Choices

The sub-theme Challenges Of Their Choices were divided into three groups, which also created four more subthemes.

Figure 4.2.2.1.1. Challenges of their choices



The difficulties that the participants mentioned are regarding the nature of the occupation. Some of these issues mentioned by the participants are the effects of the profession on their personal lives due to the difficulties they experience in establishing a work-life balance, the difficulties arising from insufficient knowledge about the profession in Turkey, not being sure if they are doing their job well, and the feeling of inadequacy that they constantly deal with. In this context, three more sub-themes emerged the sub-theme of the difficulties of the profession depending on feelings of inadequacy, Work-life balance, and Being a psychologist in Turkey.

4.2.2.1.1 Work-Life Balance

One of the reasons why the participants have difficulty in establishing a work-life balance is that being a therapist does not have a rigid separation between work and nonwork time. Participants emphasized that even after their sessions are over, the conversations they have to stay with them; for the rest of the day. One specifically says that it is not like a corporate job in which you leave the office, turn off your computer and that you are done with work; all the emotions and heavy information shared during the sessions stay.

"It's very mixed with this profession. Well, I don't know. In some jobs, the issues stay at work once you leave the office, you close the office, leave, and come home. I think it's not the case in our profession." [P 5; Position: 68 - 68]

Most participants said that many questions or deliberations on issues, such as the effectiveness of the sessions, follow the therapist throughout their post-work hours. Moreover, the emotions experienced during therapy stay with them. For that reason, the participants stated that they had difficulty coming out of their role as a therapist outside of the therapy room. Another challenging aspect of the lack of coming out of their role as a therapist is the feeling of inadequacy. Four out of six participants mentioned constantly thinking about what could they do better for their clients, even after their session time is over. Most revealed how they feel the need to do research

regularly, follow the developments in the field, and educate themselves consistently. Within the scope of work-life balance, three sub-themes were formed: time-consuming, failing to come out of their therapist identity, and maintaining professionalism.

4.2.2.1.1.1. Time Consuming

Participants stated that being a therapist requires them to stay up-to-date and work on their clients after the session is over.

"I think it's hard because you have to think about benefits, you know, I need to set aside a special time for my clients, I question if I did it well, is it good enough? Could it be better? Should I do something different, is it possible that I misunderstood?" I keep saying 'Let me think about it a little more, let me ask this question next time, let's research what the literature says about this...' All these inquiries require time, you can't spare that for everyone. [P 3; Position: 37 - 37]

They stated that another problem regarding work-life balance is the work schedule of the therapist. Therapists work post-work hours, in the evenings, and also work during the weekends.

"It's not a job that has a normal schedule. You know, your session can be in the morning, it may be in the evening, you have to work on weekends anyway. There is no weekend concept. Well, that's a disadvantage in my opinion because what do I do if I have a free day on weekdays? I mean, no one is free on weekdays. What should I do? I do the housework and stuff by myself. Feels like I continue to work... When I work with teens, it also feels like I work with their parents because I need to spare time for the parents as well. They always have questions, and they want to ask more and more. You need to convince them ..." [P 3; Position: 18 - 19]

Since most other occupations have their weekends off, some of the participants mentioned how challenging it is to socialize since their none work schedules are not in line with their surroundings who have different occupations. Another topic was, that working with children also requires extra non-session time because they need to

share their impressions with the parents as a result of the sessions they have with the children and that the parents should also spare time for the parents regarding their concerns about their children.

4.2.2.1.1.2 Failing to come out of their therapist identity

Another issue the participants brought up was how they could not get out of their therapist identities. Some of the participants stated that they habitually start to think like a therapist while socializing with their friends and that they had difficulty maintaining an ordinary conversation.

"So when we meet new people, there is always the same conversation. I mean, when it comes to the profession, someone keeps asking me for a consult. Since the profession is always outside of work, in other words, in your life, you can't get out of that head very much. So this makes me a little more mature and keeps me serious all the time. In fact, you are always in a state of something like this; questioning, renewing, constantly as if my brain is always working, I think this is the hardest part" [P 4; Position: 12 - 12]

Participant 4 also mentions how her surroundings also expect her to act like a therapist at all times.

"I mean, even if I want to get out of my psychologist identity, I can't quit. I mean, thanks to the social environment, I hear them say "you are a psychologist, what are you talking about, why are you angry, so why are you getting angry right now" etc. I think it affects " [P4; Position: 63 - 63]

To this end, their social environment expects the participants to approach every situation with a solution-oriented and constructive approach, but the participants stated that they have feelings like other people and that they feel uncomfortable with these expectations. Always, feeling the need to protect their therapist identity seems to be a challenging part of their jobs.

4.2.2.1.1.3 Maintaining professionalism

As therapists should separate the client's problems from their own feelings, but the participants stated that it is difficult to maintain this professionalism with some

clients. Some participants stated that when they encounter, in their own words, “difficult” clients, they sometimes empathize more than they would like to.

"It is a difficult occupation to be a therapist, when we have excessive empathy, it is difficult to keep professionalism. The burden, the weight, the trauma, the negativity experienced there follows you... It is difficult to keep professionalism because the client's story may affect you as a human being, as well as your traumas..." [P 6; Position: 8 - 8]

Keeping a distance, maintaining professionalism, and not being personally affected by the clients' stories can be challenging for therapists. Not only it is about being exposed to secondary trauma but some of the stories may trigger therapists' own traumas as well.

"There's empathy first of all. Well, anger, I get very angry; I definitely get very angry. Well, now I work with high school teenagers. Well, sometimes I get very overwhelmed. Well, I do feel very helpless. Despair is an incredible thing. Sometimes you involuntarily feel like; 'let me take them home; let me rescue them' inevitably. Sometimes empathy can lean toward sympathy. Usually, these things are not talked about; you bring these issues to your supervision." [P 5; Position: 51 - 51]

Some participants stated that they can sometimes feel anger when they come across people who contradict them ideologically and that they have difficulty coping with that feeling.

"... generally negative feelings. Also empathy, yes, you feel empathy a lot, but at some points, there is also anger. For instance, a man is cheating or physically abusing his wife." [P 4; Position: 49 - 49]

All the participants who have brought up challenging feelings they need to deal with to maintain professionalism mentioned the importance of supervision.

"Therefore, there is supervision, so as not to mix up the feelings that you brought with you into the story of your client. You are separated. Well, it is a feeling that belongs to you. For instance, yes, I am very sensitive to animals. I love and I can't understand when a person shows violence to them, then I get angry with my client, but this anger is against me. It's my responsibility

to deal with my personal issues. I don't have to reflect it to my client.”

Position: 35 - 35]

The participants shared how dense the emotions they experience (both positive and negative) as a therapist during the sessions and how challenging it can be to keep a boundary with the client and separate their experiences and feelings from their own feelings and lives. Multiple participants brought up the importance of self-care and supervision to distinguish their feelings from the clients' experiences and keep a healthy boundary with the clients.

4.2.2.1.2 Being a psychologist in Turkey

Participants stated that another issue they struggle with as a therapist is regarding being a therapist in Turkey. Half of the participants shared how being a therapist in the country they are located is affecting negatively them and was making it harder for them to be a therapist. During the interview, there were no questions regarding being a therapist in Turkey yet multiple interviewees (P3, P4, and P6) mentioned Turkish culture-related disadvantages of their occupation. The main issue they shared was the lack of established knowledge of what therapy is in Turkey and the issues they experience due to the lack of a rigid legal vocational frame.

"our job description is not very clear...we don't have a professional code...knowing that there are things that pollute our profession is detrimental." [P 6; Position: 8 - 8]

Participants said that the issues they had difficulty with were the lack of adequate recognition of their profession in Turkey. Not recognizing the profession causes people to act in line with false information about therapists and prevents the profession from being legally protected. At the same time, these limitations show how therapy is not fully adopted nor accepted by Turkish society. They stated that there are no laws or formations to protect the profession and to provide sanctions in case of ethical violations, the requirements of being a therapist, who can be a therapist, and in Turkey.

"So I think Turkey is not a very suitable place to do this job. I think it would be easier if we were abroad. Because it is not respected enough." [P 3; Position: 61 - 61]

" Nobody knows what therapy is, what it does. They come and ask 'Are you a doctor?' That concept is already mixed up. Most of them don't know what we are doing. 'why did you come, what did you do, what do you think we will do. You know, if I'm going to save the world here? What am I doing - the concept has never been settled. Therapy is something crazy people go to, and if you don't have such a problem, you won't go. "Why should I go to therapy, my dear? I'm going to Reiki or something. There are such concepts. "Oh come on, I'm doing something with energy" or something... It's not clear what we're doing. Okay, I think they are right about that, it needs to be explained. You know, because therapists stay in secret rooms without telling them what they're doing... Maybe it's better if we tell them about it. However, some watch the 'Kirmizi Oda' TV show and take action like this. If they knew what we were doing if there was a better system in the country... If they said if you want to see a psychologist you can find them there. For example, maybe we would be more useful if there was a system like this. Because how we can benefit is very limited. Well, if there is domestic violence, for example, you know what can I do, we are not living in America, I will tell the state then what the state will do? I think there is a situations where I cannot solve the things I want to solve and know how to. And that's why there is the problem." [P 3; Position: 62 - 64]

P3 specifically mentioned how the lack of an established working system in Turkey is affecting how others find meaning in therapy. While discussing how much meaning she finds at her job as a therapist, she stated that she finds meaning yet most people don't find therapy meaningful or useful because they do not know what therapy does. Hence, how others approach therapy changes how she finds meaning at work.

4.2.2.1.3 Feelings of Inadequacy

One of the issues that the participants emphasized the most was the feeling of inadequacy they experienced. Participants stated that they could never feel good enough. They specified that one of the situations in which they experienced this feeling most intensely was when they could not see the progress they expect in clients. The participants stated that when their clients show slow progress or they think that they do not benefit from therapy, they focus on themselves and question their abilities.

"So there's no place where I say 'I am done'. You know, you can never say "I am a very good therapist". It always feels like I'm trying to be good enough. I don't think I can ever say "I've become a good therapist". Position: 18 - 18]

"Because for now, inadequacy is an overwhelming feeling. I don't know if I'll be able to survive this feeling and move on." [P 2; Position: 85 - 85]

"If those sessions were tough, If I couldn't perform well, if the feeling of inadequacy was overwhelming, then I continue the day questioning 'If I will ever be good enough' and it becomes a really dominant feeling" [P 2; Position: 93 - 93]

I don't want to go to some sessions. There are too many spots where I feel very unsuccessful and inadequate. I'm dealing with these feelings so just think, does that sound appealing to you?" [P 2; Position: 109 - 109]

Participant 2 talked about the feeling of inadequacy and the intensity of the challenge this feeling delivers for her. Other than P2; P3, P4, P6 also talked about the feeling of inadequacy. P3 also talks about how this questioning can lead to feeling inadequate themselves both as a therapist and outside of their therapist role.

"It's a job that makes you question yourself, your own skills and everything, in every way. I think it's a job that makes you question all your skills, apart from being a therapist, as well as your own proficiencies"[P 3; Position: 10 - 10]

The participants who mentioned this feeling said that feeling inadequate is quite challenging and depressing yet it does not change the meaning they find at their jobs. P2 emphasized how she still finds meaning in this occupation even when the feeling of inadequacy and failure is dense and drowning.

"Therefore, it is essential for my job to be meaningful. Otherwise, how could I deal with these feelings of inadequacy? I can continue because I find meaning. Besides these feelings, if I can stay here, it is because I find meaning. I can be inadequate right now, that's true, I can't do some things right, but when you see people who can, how well the results are, how much actually, you can't do it right now, but then learn better, weigh better, understand better; then it motivates you to work harder. What gives me this motivation is that I basically believe in what I'm doing." [P 2; Position: 109 - 109]

Other participants affirmed that they learned to cope with the feeling of inadequacy over time and that they blame themselves less when they see a problem in the client; acknowledging that they may not be the right therapist for that client or that the client may not be ready for the process they expect. (P3 and P6)

4.2.2.1.3.1 Constantly trying to improve yourself

One of the ways of trying to cope with feelings of inadequacy is constantly following the developments in the field by reading and updating themselves or participating in various training, etc. to improve themselves in their profession. According to the participants, development is necessary for every profession, but due to the competitive nature in the field of psychology and being a therapist, everyone receives various pieces of training to catch up with others.

"...it takes a lot of training. You have to pay the fees which cost more than the money you earn. Let's go to that education, let's go to that, let's go to this, let's go to that as well... you have to make a comparison like that because everyone has a continuous education. For example, you learn someone has received fifty pieces of training... you have to take everything. Supervision, they say go to your own therapy - it's money; it is not enough, so at one

point, there is no such world. It also has such a problem" [P 3; Position: 18 - 19]

Due to the continuous efforts to improve themselves, therapists feel the necessity to spend most of their income on education, certification programs, books, etc. Most participants stated how they constantly spent time and money. Some participants stated that they spend a significant amount of their financial income just to become a therapist.

4.2.2.2 Why did they chose psychology?

Despite the difficulties mentioned, one of the reasons why the participants find their profession meaningful and enjoy it is that they find the choice they make quite suitable for them. All of the interviewed participants stated that being a therapist is aligned with their personalities, temperaments, and characteristics, so they feel quite compatible with their profession.

"... it was definitely an authentic choice... I chose this profession as follows: My whole family is an economist, my father is a manager, and my brother is a business owner who follows in my father's footsteps. My father has a strong network in the field. Going into business would have been a safe and easy choice for me, actually. My family has already shown me the path to business. But I stood against everyone and made one choice. My field choice was very clear. It was psychology, I mean, I never thought of any other profession other than that. I think that I stand behind what I feel, that I have remained outside of the expectations of society and the things they oppress me despite everyone, I think I have my authenticity. Choosing this job was about owning the part of myself that I knew. Because I didn't pay attention to the part where they expect me to be, but they say "you would be a good economist". Because I came out on what I believed and felt, so yes, it was definitely an authentic choice. If it wasn't an authentic choice, I don't think I would have found the meaning I do now. [P 1; Position: 69 - 69]

Participant 1, particularly focused on authenticity while, discussing her choice regarding studying psychology and being a therapist. The last part of her quotation

regarding the relationship between making an authentic choice and the meaning she finds in this decision is directly related to what existential philosophy suggests about making a choice and taking responsibility for it.

P3 and P6 gave a more neutral answers regarding their choice of being a therapist. They said that they eliminated some other options and that being a therapist was one of the choices that made sense and worked for them for different reasons (such as their interest, master's acceptance, or the price of the programs).

"Do I know the reason why I chose to be a therapist? I don't know, actually. Was there such a definite reason? For example, I don't remember exactly how I chose it. But I remember that it was a subject I was interested in. I think I might not have chosen to become a clinical psychologist in the first place. So I was interested [in my first university]. I don't think I have any other math or science skills, I don't have that kind of mind. It doesn't work that way. That's why. I didn't want to do anything corporate either. Business, economics - I have nothing to do with them. What can I do, law I didn't want to study. That's how they were eliminated. I suddenly thought that I would become a psychologist. I don't remember how I made the decision without being a clinical psychologist." [P 3; Position: 88 - 89]

The other four participants (P1, P2, P4, and P5) approach being a therapist as their only and primary choice. For most participants getting into psychology was a decision they made early on in their lives.

"Actually, it's like this, so I decided in high school that I wanted to study psychology. Well, it's always something like this, I'm in a process where I realize everything I want slowly and gradually, so it still continues, but it's always such a yes, studying psychology, master's degree... I was very curious to work on it in a hospital. My father is also a doctor, he had his own practice, so it is very attractive to open a clinic, but the hospital environment made me very curious" [P 4; Position: 3 - 3]

One other reason multiple participants gave for choosing psychology was regarding getting to know themselves better.

"I wanted to learn about myself as well. I mean my own body, my own mind... So what do I actually feel, what do I think, why can't I tell them? ... But something is blocking me, I can't express it. You worry about it for days, so it was about getting to know people more in the first place. Then, after studying psychology and then again, I realized the thing, so I wanted to get to know myself a little bit. It was my own choice." [P 4; Position: 75 - 75]

The majority of the participants talked about how therapy became meaningful to them when they experienced being a client themselves. They shared that when they found meaning in the process they believed in therapy and wanted to become a therapist later. For this bit, there is another theme named "Being in the client's shoes" below in 2.2.2.2 section.

4.2.2.2.1 Characteristics

While mentioning their choice to become a therapist, or rather they find meaning at work or why they want to continue their occupation; most of the participants talked about how their personality traits are one of the important factors in choosing this profession. According to the participants, their decision regarding choosing to be a therapist goes back to their childhood years. How they approached people, their places in their families and friend groups and their temperaments are important factors that make them compatible with being a therapist.

"It's very suitable for my character, so I'm thinking about my personality, another profession... It all seems like a lot to me, it seems like I wouldn't be happy. When I think about my personality, I'm more introverted, actually, it's a very introverted type of person who isn't very skilled at maintaining very human relations. Actually, I think like that. Let's not say human relations, rather than executing daily relationships. I mean, my character structure... Finding it meaningful, as I learn what a therapist is like, it's also suitable for me, it's suitable for me to come to that realization from the

beginning. If one says, but I can't do that, off I like socializing too much, maybe you won't want to. Or I can't listen to someone, I can't listen to someone, sit down all day, I'll get bored; you can say. It is very hard to be a therapist if you don't think that this occupation is suitable for you. It is not just about finding meaning in it." [P 2; Position: 105 - 107]

"I've been very curious since I was a child anyway. So everybody says the same thing. "You're like a detective." Well, you are questioning this, you are questioning that, you always have something so you always say Why and how did it happen? Everyone says that I am a very careful person, even when I was little, my primary school teacher always said something like this at the parent meeting, "[her name] listens very carefully, so she is there with her eyes and ears." Actually, you look at things very carefully. You make a lot of eye contact at work, or these were the things I heard very often, "how do you not forget that detail at work? It's been so long. Do you have an elephant memory?" or something, I don't have that many elephant memories right now, you know, it feels like a past life since I probably got away from the social sphere a bit. But people always said this, for example. Or "you are a very good listener" or "you really give me confidence". You have energy, you have something different." [P 4; Position: 75 - 75]

"I've always been interested in this. Since I was a kid, I have always been interested in the unseen background, the deeper part, I mean, I kept asking what's going on there? Well, I also had a cooperating side, I was a listener. I was a kid who wrote poems. I really had compassion in me, it is still there. And I think the most important thing is the emotional part. Not everyone has to be like that, of course, it's about my temperament. Well, I am sensitive, really sensitive. I never was afraid to experience feelings, emotions, I feel a lot, I'm very empathetic first of all." [P 5; Position: 85 - 85]

Talking about characteristics that influenced their choices; participants highlighted different traits. For instance, P1 and P5 talked about how they were good listeners from the get-go; thus being a therapist was a great fit for them. P2 talked about how

being a therapist is aligned with her introverted character and how she may have struggled with this occupation if she was an extrovert. P4, on the other hand, talked about multiple traits such as how good of a listener she is, how curious she has always been, the intensity of her focus and attention to detail, and her overall energy which people find “trustworthy”. [P 5; Pozisyon: 85 - 85]

4.2.2.2.2 Being in client's shoes

One of the determinant reasons why participants both find their profession meaningful and choose to become a therapist is related to their own therapy processes; during their own therapy process as a client. Participants (P1, P2, and P5) experienced how beneficial the therapy process was for them and how it changed their lives first. This powerful experience as a client leads them to desire to become a therapist one day and pass this experience on to others.

"My own therapy. That's where it all started. Going to my own therapy has always been my own choice, out of all that I've been through there. It was always something I found beneficial." [P 2; Position: 101 - 101]

"Because I experience this pleasure as a client, I mean, I observe my own therapy process, I understood how useful it is in my own daily life, as I experience how much one can benefit there as a client in my own daily life, I decided to go for it. That's why I say, "Okay, I'm doing a very good job" because I already benefit from it a lot, first of all, I experience the benefit myself, I already take that vitamin into my body, and I feel it revives me. That's why I'll give this to people, it's really very valuable" [P 1; Position: 38 - 38]

"As I said, this started when I sat on the chair as a client. My first inclination to this field was in my adolescence. Since I volunteered to work on myself, I volunteered for others' path..." [P 5; Position: 19 - 19]

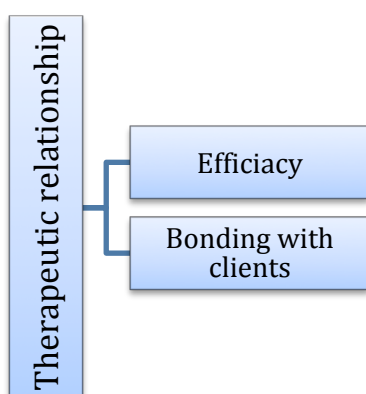
P1, P2, P5 all talked about their own therapy process while describing how they found meaning in their jobs. The fact that they find meaning in the therapy process, believe in the outcomes, and can empathize with their clients because they also

know how it feels like to be sitting on the other side of the chair made them find meaning in this profession.

4.2.3 Therapeutic relationship

The therapeutic relationship with the client is one of the features that make the profession meaningful for the participants. Helping clients cope with the difficulties in their lives, supporting them on their journey to discovering themselves, opening up a space for them to be just as they are, taking a place in their lives, and being the person they trust are some of the important trades that enable the participants to find meaning in their profession.

Figure 4.2.3.2. Therapeutic relationship



In this context, two sub-themes emerged depending on the therapy relationship: efficacy and bonding with the client.

4.2.3.2 Efficacy

Knowing that it is beneficial to people and watching the progress of their clients throughout the therapeutic relationship makes the participants feel that their profession is meaningful because they are affecting others. Participants stated that seeing clients create positive changes in their lives made them feel that their profession has healing power.

"... like a doctor, you have to give the medical attention during a heart attack at that moment and if you do it, you will save a life. Actually, I never say

that I save a life, but I think it is a very satisfying profession. that is not understood by anyone that is not seen by anyone, but you know that you cause someone to breathe. And it's clear from his eyes that you're actually creating that space for him to breathe, "You've finally created a space for me, I can finally breathe." It's like opening his windpipe. From a doctor's point of view, it's as if he has such a satisfaction to see a person in his life, that is, you are witnessing him, in a sense, by standing next to him. So I think touching someone's life is the most fundamental thing." [P 1; Position: 16 - 16]

"I mean, it's a tough job, but I feel like I'm useful. Or I feel like I've made a difference at work. Then it makes more sense." [P 3; Position: 4 - 4]

"Because sometimes people who are on the verge of suicide come to you, or many of them come to therapy because they don't enjoy life anyway. Well, I think it makes sense to bring those people back to life." [P 4; Position: 27 - 27]

"I feel happy to make a difference; I can follow that change in their lives and it satisfies me. [P 6; Position: 39 - 39]

Not all the participants directly mentioned the healing power of therapy, especially P6 shared her dilemma regarding how therapists do not actually claim to 'heal' or 'do good for people. If someone asked her if therapy does good to people and if she needed to take a side, she would have said 'yes, therapy benefits people.' Yet she also added that she is aware of the fact that therapy does not have a mission to 'heal' people nor does it guarantee happiness. [P 6; Pozisyon: 42 - 42] Others, openly mentioned how they feel like clients benefit from therapy, and that creating a space for them to heal, get better, and find themselves is a satisfying part of being a therapist.

4.2.3.3 Bonding with clients

Participants stated that they establish bonds with their clients, no matter what place they have in their lives and that each client occupies an important place in their lives. They mentioned that establishing bonds with their clients, being the most

trusted person of people they did not know before, and witnessing their life experiences are important factors that add meaning to their profession.

"I love being here. Love sharing an important story with someone. Staying focused only on that allotted time, to that person, I like focusing on that in the relationship in that limited time." [P 6; Position: 18 - 18]

"And I become a part of those stories, so they take me in; they trust me, they make me a part of their story and include me in their journey. This is probably the most meaningful thing to me. I really get involved in the journey of someone's life... I think that trust makes this profession more meaningful, that they reveal their most private, most intimate experiences, they share their thoughts with me; the fear of death, the fear of not knowing, and that they trust me in all these processes." [P 1; Position: 14 - 14]

"That relationship is meaningful. That relationship is something that heals anyway. We built a relationship, and the relationship is important on its own. Actually, you develop a relationship with a client, you get closer, you can be in an area where he can get close for the first time to anyone, as the therapist. "It is meaningful to establish a relationship and to work in that relationship, to be able to deal with every aspect of his life, to meet regularly. It is meaningful to be able to carry the process as far as it can." [P 2; Position: 66 - 66]

"You also get attached to those people, even if they say they that don't exist, the dynamicist therapists don't like that approach. You know, dynamic therapists are more distant from such things, but in the end, you want a person you meet every week to be happy and satisfied in their life" [P 3; Position: 23 - 23]

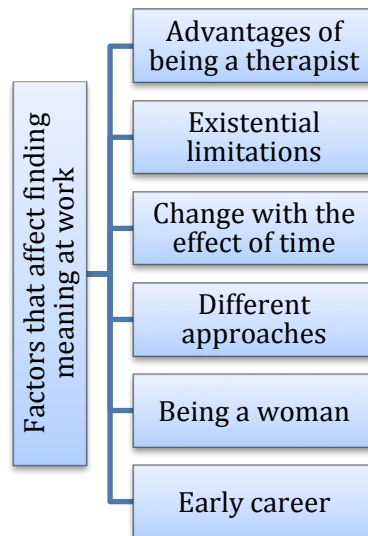
All the participants refer to the unique experience of bonding with their clients and its effects on themselves and the clients. Different perspectives rose regarding this unique relationship therapists experience with their clients. P1 talked about how exciting it is for her to learn and be a part of someone else's life and story. P2

focused on how the relationship the therapist and the client create is where the magic of the therapy happens. For P3, this experience was also about getting emotionally attached to someone, although some schools of psychotherapy such as dynamic therapists would not approve of this type of involvement. P6 mainly focuses on how much she enjoys focusing on one individual in a given time; and how she creates a bond during that set time.

4.3. FACTORS THAT AFFECT FINDING MEANING AT WORK

In this section, factors that affect finding meaning at work for therapists were gathered. Collected data suggests that the participants find meaning in their jobs regardless of the issues; they feel committed and believe in the outcome of therapy. When the affecting factors were asked, they shared issues that have a positive effect on their jobs and some problems they experience as a therapist but overall, none of the participants directly said that any of the problems decrease the amount of meaning they find in their jobs. On the other hand, when they were talking about the positive effects of their jobs (when they were asked about any factors that may increase the meaning they find in their jobs) most participants talked about these aspects passionately and in a way validated their choice of becoming a therapist. In other words, the negative factors do not actually increase or decrease the meaning that the participants find in their profession quantitatively. The positive aspects of their profession facilitate their professional life and contribute to their personal development, or sometimes the negative aspects prevent them from continuing their professional life with their usual motivation. Factors that affect the finding of meaning at work were categorized into six subthemes that can be found in Figure 7.

Figure 4.3.1. Factors that affect finding meaning at work

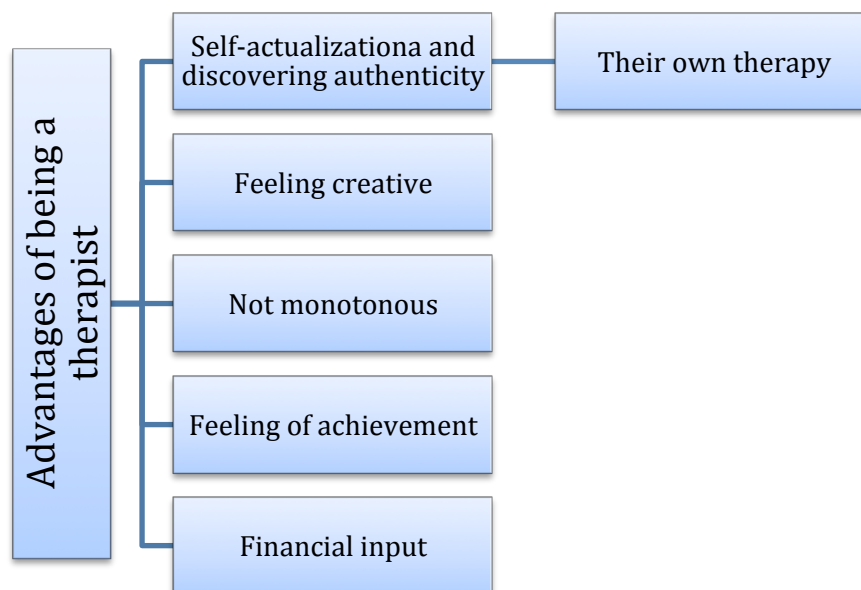


Since the study was analyzed from an existentialist perspective, questions regarding existential limitations and how they affect one finding meaning in their job were asked. In this section, the research group's specific qualities (being early-career therapists, their gender, the method they use in therapy, etc.) were also focused on. The participants stated that meaning is always found in their profession. The challenges they experience do not make their occupation "less meaningful", only it may cause them to lose their motivation from time to time. The same is the case for the positive aspects as well; none of the factors fluctuate the amount or density of the meaning therapists find at their jobs.

4. 3.1 Advantages of being a therapist

Therapists shared both the concrete and abstract advantages of their occupation. According to all the participants, being a therapist creates a way for self-discovery. Therefore one of the advantages of being a therapist is self-realization and discovering one's authenticity. Apart from this, sub-themes of not being monotonous, financial input, feeling creative, and a sense of achievement were found under this theme.

Figure 4.3.1.1. Advantages of being a therapist



4.3.1.1 Self actualization and discovering authenticity

Participants state that during their sessions, they not only witnessed the inner journeys of their clients but also discover quite a bit about their inner worlds. Multiple participants mentioned how their occupation leads them to self-realization; thus they find their occupation quite meaningful. P1 particularly suggests because of the nature of being a therapist, she gets to learn more about herself each time she interacts with her clients, each time she has a new emotion raised regarding the story their clients share.

“It's yours, it's about your own fears, your feelings, your anger. Because while you are listening to the client there, the emotions I feel can be my own feelings, for example, anger, what triggered you at that moment? Because there is always something going on that touches you. Because you are in a relationship, you are also in a relationship with the client. In the story told by the client, you can also have a feeling about the person they talk about. That feeling also tells something about your past... It's the therapist's choice whether to look here or not.” “Exactly to getting to know myself, your journey with yourself. A journey based on self-knowledge, understanding,

and discovery... you are ninety years old and still a therapist... There is still a lot to discover during your time in this profession, and the best part is, I think this is a profession that also serves to discover yourself. Because, as a therapist, you realize a lot of things about yourself as you see your clients. On the other hand, that's why getting close to one's core, finding one's core, knowing oneself, the profession does that, I think, perfect, no one who doesn't want to be known doesn't want to face themselves, doesn't want to get close to themselves can be a therapist... I would say, but it happens..."

[P 1; Position: 65 - 67]

The participants, who stated that they get closer to themselves in each session in which they discovered a new emotion or thought, stated that therapy was a journey for both their clients and themselves. Trying to discover the emotions they experienced during the session, therapists are always on a way to self-discovery. P5 also shared a similar perspective to P1, suggesting that being a therapist feeds into finding her authentic self.

"Recognizing my authentic side. At that time, I didn't know that it was called authenticity, it's just an attraction and orientation to it, an orientation to it. I think I chose this profession to live my life more authentically, to see myself from a more authentic place. And definitely only like that, by doing this profession. makes sense, others make no sense to me." [P 5; Position: 81 - 81]

While some of the participants (P1 and P5 particularly) suggested a strong link between self-realization, self-actualization, and being a therapist some participants (particularly P3 and P6) shared an opposite approach to the link P1 and P5 claimed. According to P3, the concept of self-actualization was quite vague and in ways, even utopic.

"It seems a little utopian to me. Who actualizes themselves? Who so, if there is such a person, it's very good... So I don't know how I can get there, is it with this profession, how can it be, when do I say 'yes, I actualized myself? I'll say, 'What does it mean for example? Do I have to be the best therapist in the world? How's it going to be? No one knows." [P 3; Position: 81 - 81]

P6 also disassociated self-actualization and her occupation; suggesting that self-actualization is not about one's occupation. She argued that if that was the case, only a certain group of people under one occupation could actualize themselves and the rest could not and that is an irrational approach.

"It is something about oneself in general. I don't think the profession would be that effective because then it would be something like: a certain group could only be self-actualized, it would be something like a certain group could never realize itself." [P 6; Position: 52 - 52]

Although almost all the participants mentioned how being a therapist helps them realize new things about themselves only some of the interviews suggested a link between being a therapist and self-actualization whereas the others suggested that self-actualization is not directly linked to their occupations but is a different sphere in their lives.

4.3.1.1.1 Their own therapy

When asked about self-realization, authenticity, and self-actualization and these concepts' relation to being a therapist; all the participants referred to the significance of going to their own therapy. In other words, the way to self-actualization is not by becoming a therapist but being going to therapy as a client. For instance when asked about self-actualization P3 directly said:

"I think you should go to your own therapy for that" [P 3; Position: 84 - 84]

Similarly, P5 said that due to the nature of the job; different personal feelings are triggered in the therapy sessions yet going to their own therapy, as a client is also required for self-actualization and a true journey to self-realization.

"It gives this opportunity a lot, but it doesn't allow it from a place like this; ... but not by accompanying someone else's transformation, but by making your own transformation on the one hand and accompanying others' in this way, not only as a therapist but also as a client." [P 5; Position: 79 - 79]

P2 also mentioned the link between how one needs to go to therapy for self-realization to their journey to self-actualization. And to be a therapist (in many schools of psychotherapy) the therapists need to go through their own therapy process. For that reason being a therapist feeds into self-actualization but it is not because of the occupation itself but the prerequisite of this occupation (which is going through your own therapy). When asked if her occupation feeds into her self-actualization she said:

"Yeah, it affects. But not being a therapist but going to therapy is affecting me. Going to therapy is affecting me, I say this because I need to go to therapy to become a therapist. Being a therapist doesn't work, going to therapy does." [P 2; Position: 99 - 99]

Also, a couple of the participants (P1, P2, P5) mentioned that they wanted to become a therapist because first, they experienced the benefits of therapy as a client themselves. (This theme was also analyzed under 2.2.2.2 Being in the client's shoes.)

"Because I realized that it could change my life. That's why I experienced the effect of therapy at first on the other side, I mean, as a client, I am also suffering from life. You know, there are a lot of issues that I can't solve, then with therapy, I realize that they are more solvable, more thinkable so I realize that therapy is functional. It's totally empowering to feel that you're there, that you have the power to change things. So it's meaningful because it really changes things and you realize that you can be in a good way." [P 2; Position: 10 - 10]

Half of the participants talked about how their own therapy process lead them to choose this occupation and shared how their experience as a client made this occupation meaningful for them. The fact that the participants went through their own therapy processes before becoming a therapist is one of the reasons they chose this occupation. These three participants also emphasized that after becoming a therapist, it is still very important for them to continue their own therapy processes

both for personal self-actualization and also for their professional lives. In this session, they mentioned how getting supervision and also going to their own therapy feeds their therapist identity.

4.3.1.2 Feeling creative

According to the participants, one of the positive aspects of being a therapist is that they feel creative because each client has a different story and they need to think creatively to solve or digest each story.

“Actually, my job is to produce, to contribute to life... It is such a field because people feel alive when they produce.” [P 1; Position: 5 - 5]

This comment of P1 also suggests that being a therapist (or creating due to her job) makes her feel productive and thus makes her feel lively. Feeling lively can be analyzed in further studies to uncover a possible bond between a job making one feel lively and how it affects their existential crises. Similar to P1, P2 and P5 also mentioned how their jobs require them to be creative and how creativity is ingrained in the nature of being a therapist.

"You know, it is about experiencing more creativity. In other words, our profession, I think is a profession that depends on creativity, in that sense, because there is only you. So it is just you and your mind. Whatever you think, whatever comes to your mind, how do you use it? I can transfer it to the other person, how can I relate to it? By thinking about it... I mean, you are generating ideas there, you are constantly trying to understand the opposite side. You are conducting therapy through this, and you know that it also works. I mean, it really helps you understand what you think in your mind, as you see that the associations carry you somewhere... You are also aware of how creative your mind is. It is really a field where you can use the creativity of your mind." [P 2; Position: 2 - 2]

P5 described the level of creativity she experiences as a therapist by comparing her occupation with other occupations such as economics or finance; suggesting that she would not feel creative, interested, active, or competent if she was working in another occupation.

"Well, my mind is clearer, I can do it with a different self. I don't know about the economy, that's how it's financial, for example. No, it doesn't make sense to me. Somehow my mind doesn't work that way. Well, in therapy though, I can generate so many things by myself. I can visualize in my head, and I can see a lot of things. I feel very active and competent, with such creativity. This is reflected in the sessions." [P 5; Position: 29 - 29]

The words “creativity” and “productivity” were used while describing their experience as a therapist. They should always look for new ways to help their clients and apply these ways to each client's unique process. To do this, they have to think creatively.

4.3.1.3 Not monotonous

Another positive aspect of their occupation was that according to the participants, being a therapist wasn't a monotonous job. Since each client has a unique story and personality, the participants think that they have a non-monotonic profession. Each client and each session contains an innovation, which prevents the profession from becoming monotonous at any point.

"I guess it is about not doing the same thing all the time, feeling that you are producing something new every day. If every day is like the other day... so it is not the same, so you constantly apply something new, put something new into practice and you include yourself here in the process. " [P 2; Position: 2 - 2]

"I mean, I think I'm doing a meaningful job and it gives me a lot of things. In fact, staying in life and different perspectives at the same time. It's like every

person helps me develop myself. So, how can I renew myself and describe it? New people come all the time like this, actually. I don't do a robotic job."
[P 4; Position: 10 - 10]

All six participants mentioned how much they enjoyed not having a job, which is not monotonous. All the participants other than P3 particularly emphasized how meeting different people and being involved with different lives and stories keep their day-to-day experience refreshing. A couple of the participants (P1 and P4) also referred to how this type of creative experience supports their self development and aid them to learn new aspects of life.

4.3.1.4 Financial Input

As in every profession, one of the sources of motivation of being a therapist is its financial return. Participants support their lives with the income they earn from their profession and contribute to their personal and professional development. Therefore, some participants mention that financial gain is important.

"Income is more of a tangible return on it... I can say, yes as a result of my hard work, I have accumulated such a thing, won such a thing, I deserved it..." [P 6; Position: 28 - 28]

Some participants stated that money is not an important source of motivation and this is not a job that one can emotionally afford to do considering the emotional burden of it. Five out of six participants particularly said that the emotional burden of the profession cannot be removed in order to earn money. The emotional challenges of being a therapist cannot be correspond with the amount of money they make, a more selfless motivation is the reason for them to continue their profession.

"I mean, it's not a job one can do to make a lot money, definitely. It's not something to be done by planing to get rich or something like that. It can't be done when you enter like that. It's not a job to do that way ..." [P 3; Position: 18 - 18]

"Because I think you must be doing something selfless there, I can't do this job for my own purposes. You can't afford it, 'ok, I'll make that much money

from this client, let him come' or something like that, you can't endure that session, or that thing. It doesn't make much sense to me so;" [P 3; Position: 31 - 31]

Similar to P3, P5 also empathized how she never considered the financial aspect of the job when choosing to be a therapist. According to her, income is just the return of doing a job she is keen on.

"Do what you love, money comes in'. You know, money is the result of that work. I can do my job from a very creative place that I find it meaningful, thus money comes as a reward." [P 5; Position: 42 - 42]

None of the participants said that they wanted to become a therapist due to the financial return of this profession. Majority of the participants focused on how the emotional burnout cannot be compensated with the amount of money they make. They also suggested that this is not a job that one can do with a financial motivation due to its emotional aspects.

4.3.1.5 Feeling of achievement

Participants suggested that the positive aspects of being helpful to their clients are not only about how they guide or support their clients to a potentially better and more fulfilling life but also the sense of achievement that therapists feel when they see their clients making progress. For instance, P2 approaches success as a means of helping her clients reach a more satisfying life.

"Well, what we do makes it feel more meaningful after all. Because really therapy can improve a person's quality of life, and increase life satisfaction, well, it helps them to know themselves better and with the most challenging clients. This indicates that it is meaningful." [P 2; Position: 27 - 27]

On the other hand, P1 describes success as seeing how much she can change a challenging client. She states that when she encountered a difficult client, her sense of achievement increased after the progress she makes with the client.

"Well, I mean for instance exam anxiety doesn't appeal to me, it doesn't feel challenging enough. I know that it is about me... I want challenging clients;

it's harder, harder, harder... I feel like I've accomplished something more, then. I want to work with a client that other therapists don't want and direct to another therapist. Because it is a more difficult operation as if the other is an easier operation... I feel like everyone can accomplish the easier one, the important thing for me is to be successful there. That's why I want to work with people with developmental problems, more complex trauma, more personality disorders, but clients that no one would want to take, you know, who are left out, but I want them to be directed to me. Working with clients that the therapists want to direct makes my profession more meaningful to me because they are already deeply traumatized. ... It's not as if they need more, but I feel like I put more effort there and say..." [P 1; Position: 46 - 46]

Another approach that rose regarding achievement was how some of the participants questioned what being successful as a therapist would mean.

"I think there is a desire to get well, basically. Of course, this means success as well as being successful as a therapist, for yourself, but I guess to be reliable. I mean, we delivered a client to [her name], who is trusted by therapists working both in the field and elsewhere. Do we know that he is in safe hands, he does not harm.' You know, that person does not manipulate, you know, his own emotional world is to prevent him from seeing it, so in this sense, the idea of being a reliable therapist is good for me... because success doesn't quite sound like an adjective to use for therapists." [P 2; Position: 85 - 85]

Similar to P2's inquiry over what being successful as a therapist would mean, P3 also struggled with thinking about success as a therapist.

"You have to put aside your own personal goals; it happens, it's a must. If you want to do this job a lot, you will be successful. I don't know how to be, but... At the end of the year, you will be, if you don't, you won't be. There is nothing you can do." [P 3; Position: 31 - 31]

In this section, participants had different approaches to achievement. For some being a successful therapist was mainly about seeing the progress in challenging clients. For them, having a target and reaching out to there was how they felt successful and were satisfied. For others, being a successful therapist was a vague concept; thus they wanted to clarify what 'a successful therapist' would look like. For others, this was a job that would not focus on an end goal but is about putting yourself out there selflessly, without expecting an achievement in return.

4.3.2 Existential Limitations

Participants were asked how existential constraints affect the meaning they find in their profession. Most participants needed some type of explanation for this question thus the researcher gave mortality as an example of one of the human being's existential limitations. When the participants thought about being mortal, they stated that it did not affect the meaning they find in their profession negatively. On the contrary, some stated that they perform their jobs more passionately knowing that their lives will come to an end one day.

"If I died, I would not look back, so I wouldn't ask why I did this job. Because at the same time, the work I do makes me realize myself, in other words, it is something that makes me more alive..." [P 4; Position: 27 - 27]

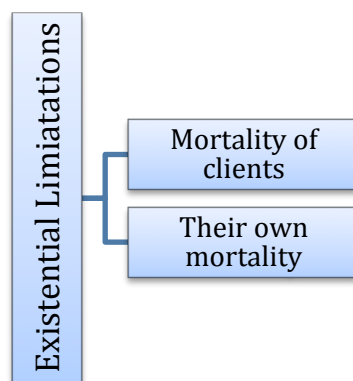
Just like P4, couple more participants talked about how being a therapist makes them perform their jobs more enthusiastically, especially when they think about the fact that they have a limited time on this earth. Participants talked about how being a therapist makes them learn more about themselves and thus make their lives more meaningful; which is maybe the best way to make peace with one's mortality (living a satisfying life may make it easier to accept the fact that our lives will end one day). Considering the relationship between having an authentic life and their mortality; a couple of participants talked about how their decision to be a therapist or go to their therapy made sense to them more.

"Facing death and thinking about our mortality, on the contrary, makes it even more meaningful for me. Because I think death makes life meaningful;

I don't know if it would be as meaningful if death was out of the picture. And you have a life; will you pass this life as a stranger to yourself, away from yourself? Because you will die; you will die anyway. Would you prefer to die like that, in a life given to you once, would you prefer not to do something that only you can do -which I think is meaningless anyway, it is emptiness, it is alienation. Or on the contrary, with this way, with this transformation, do you prefer to create a life out of yourself by really knowing yourself, facing yourself? So the idea of death, all the existential restrictions, all the striking truths we swallowed, on the contrary, makes more sense for my work, it makes me cling to my work like this. Not with my identity as a psychologist, but also with my client identity. I think these two confirm each other a lot, for psychotherapy in general. I think existential difficulties make psychotherapy much more powerful." [P 5; Position: 17 - 17]

Participants approached the concept of mortality from two aspects: their own mortality and the mortality of their clients. For both approaches, they suggested that acknowledging human's existential limitations makes their decisions in life more questionable; thus determining what is meaningful and what is not.

Figure 4.3.2.1. Existential limitations



For some participants being a therapist was important for them (considering their life in this world is limited) because as a therapist they are devoted to a career, which makes others' lives possibly better, and more satisfying and support them to

get closer to their authentic selves. Thus, they feel like adopting a profession that they are satisfied with is a meaningful way to live their lives. The participants who approached mortality focusing on their own death mentioned the relationship between satisfaction they get from being a therapist or going to therapy and their mortality.

4.3.2.1 Mortality of Clients

Participants stated that when they think about their clients mortality; the fact that they only have one limited lifetime to do all they can for a satisfying, authentic life, the participants willingness to help their clients increased. They stated that their clients make more efforts to spend their limited time in the world happier and better; and supporting them on this path is a very meaningful experience for the therapists.

"Of course, what I do, that is, I want people to live well in their limited life, so their mortality is always at the forefront for me. I mean, we don't live forever. That's why there is the fact that the present is precious... That's why we want to be good once and for all. That's why we also have a desire to be better. Because we don't live forever. Time is important to us. So how you live your current age is important. People come to fix it, because I want to live better at this age. The truth is very important to me. " [P 2; Position: 4 - 4]

P2 particularly mentioned how her clients' mortality is highly significant and visible for her. Acknowledging the mortality of her clients make her attempts to guide them in a path to a more satisfying life more meaningful and significant.

4.3.2.2 Their own mortality

When the participants thought about their own mortality, they stated that knowing their limitations increase the importance they put into their decisions and choices thus it makes them feel more passionate about their profession.

"Exactly, because thinking that you are mortal and actually keeping it alive somewhere on your mind confronts this idea with this: "One day I will die, this life is given to me once. So it's up to me how I use this place. How will I

make use of this time, this limited time? it becomes very precious because this is a limited time, not unlimited. That idea of death, I think, because it confronts the reality of the limitedness of the place... So you say, "If this place is limited then let me make good use of it. How I evaluate this place is my responsibility and it's my choice. Then I I choose." [P 1; Position: 10 - 10]

Apart from this, the participants state that the idea that they will die one day does not worry them when they specifically think in terms of their profession, as they think that they have made the right choice for themselves and are doing their best to be good in their profession. Even though they suggest that thinking about death and their own mortality is a challenging topic to think about and may make them uncomfortable, they feel at peace when they focus their career choice when acknowledging their mortality.

"I think about death a lot, but it's not something I like to think about, in general. It's unpleasant. That's why I need to make progress on that, so if I die right now, it wouldn't be a problem for me, you know, work-related." [P 3; Position: 39 - 39]

None of the participants suggested that their existential limitations make them question their career choices. On the contrary, they all shared that being mortal make them question their choices and how they spend their limited time; and they all are happy with devoting their energy into being a therapist and getting to know themselves better through therapy.

4.3.3 Change with the effect of time

Since the research was focused on early career therapist, the affect of time (in terms of burnout and specialization) on how they find meaning at their jobs was interrogated during the interviews. Participants were asked how they think that time may affect their approach to finding meaning at their jobs. In response, some participants stated that as everything changes, their perspectives on themselves, their lives and their profession may also change due to various factors and they cannot

quite project into how their relationship with meaning at their jobs would change in the future.

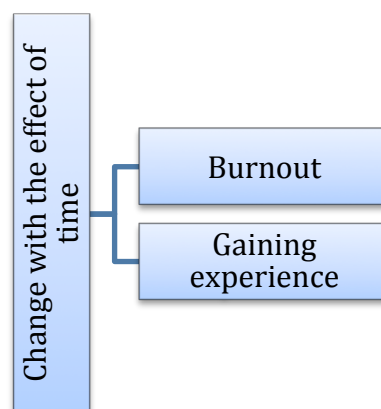
"Will this meaning change, I think it will change. I think it will change because I will change so the meaning will also change." [P 1; Position: 48 - 48]

"I always look at my experience as something, frankly, I evaluate being a therapist in a temporality. Right now, I draw a time from my age until I die. There is always something there, the idea that my therapist identity will change, I am looking forward to experience how it will change." [P 2; Position: 4 - 4]

"Well, again, from an existential perspective, meanings are constantly changing;" [P 5; Position: 33 - 33]

Some participants foresee that the meaning they find at their jobs or how they approach to meaning would change because everything changes; they will also change themselves. Thus they did not predict how the meaning they find may change with time.

Figure 4.3.3.1. Change with the effect of time



In this context, two themes emerged from the answers, namely burnout and gaining experience.

4.3.3.1 Burnout

Some participants stated that being exposed to traumas and difficulties in others' lives can be exhausting. They specified that at times, in certain situations or with certain clients they may feel burned out.

"I don't know in the future, depending on how it will change, but I don't know if I can find more meaning. Can I find less meaning? I think it can be."

[P 3; Position: 49 - 49]

P3 suggested that with emotional exhaustion and burnout, it is possible that she may find less meaning at her job one day in the future, yet she does not have a vivid projection of how her relationship with meaning and her job may change with time. According to some other participants, therapist is a selfless profession and some participants stated that they would like to be more interested in their personal lives in the future; especially the if their current life-styles were to change (for instance if they have a family and have different responsibilities in their lives).

"I mean, it's too early to get exhausted, but I think that if the family and child factor comes into play in the future in my life, I feel that it will get harder and I will be exhausting. With both age and patience..." [P 4; Position: 38 - 38]

Participants suggested that with the changes that may happen in their lives with time their priorities may change thus where and how they find meaning may also differ.

4.3.3.2 Gaining Experience

Another theme regarding times affect on how much meaning is found was regarding gaining experience as a therapist. Participants stated that as they expanded their experience and knowledge, they started to become better in their profession and they noticed any problem in their clients in a shorter time.

"Their meanings will change, I think, by the way, it may even increase. I mean, as I get more experienced, the meaning of my point of view towards therapists... as I become more expert, it's just like I maybe able to get something I understand in three sessions at the first session. So my curiosity

and excitement to listen to my clients may increase even" [P 1; Position: 48 - 49]

They stated that they may feel more successful in this way and that their profession would become more meaningful as their experience increased and they could help clients more effectively.

4.3.4 Different Approaches

In this study participation was voluntary and the school of thought the therapists adopted was not asked before the interviews. At the beginning of the interviews, all the participants were asked about the school of psychotherapy they adapted. Generally, there were four different types of methodology the participants mentioned. Each participant mentioned that they choose the methodology that they find closest to themselves and made the most sense of. Almost all the participants suggested that they might not feel the same level of harmonization if they had chosen a different approach. During this conversation, while sharing why their methodology fits best with how they work, they also mentioned why other schools of psychotherapy would not work with them; and how they disagree with the fundamentals of some of the other schools of thought.

"Well, the method I choose is already about me. I choose the method that will deepen my work because I find meaning as I get deeper, it goes very parallel there. I cannot use methods that do not deepen, because it makes it meaningless for me, they remain on the surface, they remain is shallow for me..."[P 1; Position: 51 - 52]

"Yes, I mean, I think it would change. If I was a therapist of such a psychoanalytic, dynamic origin, ... It's a bit like I would get lost there. I would get confused and question what I was doing more like that. Because it's less concrete, I think I would have gotten lost in that concept of therapy... For example... You see someone who has a panic attack. You talk about it. Then you say ok, let's work on fixing it together. Concrete it is..." [P 3; Position: 52 - 52]

"I mean, the school I chose is related to the meaning I gave it. And that's why we always said these things that pushed me to that meaning, that's why we looked at every methodology, that's why I chose the school that made sense to me." [P 5; Position: 38 - 38]

"I decided to become a couple-family therapist, thinking that I wouldn't be able to find that meaning in a different school of thought as a therapist. If I had been a clinical psychologist, I would have found that meaning more difficult... If my school had changed, my way of finding meaning also would have changed." [P 6; Position: 34 - 34]

When asked about the school of thought (CBT, dynamic, EMDR, etc) the therapists adapted to their profession and how it affects the meaning they find in their jobs; all the participants replied similarly. All the participants think that the method they use is reflecting what they trust, and what is aligned with their character. Thus if we method was different, the meaning they find as a therapist probably would change was the common answer all the participants suggested.

4.3.5 Being a woman/sexism

Due to the researcher's specialization in gender studies; gender roles, possible sexism the therapists may experience, and possible effect their gender may have on the meaning they find at their jobs (or how they may feel belonging to the field) were examined. According to all the participants, how they find meaning in their jobs does not have anything to do with being a woman. The participants do not consider themselves more or less suitable to be therapists because they of being a woman, nor do they think that it has any effect on their professionalism.

"I don't think gender is a very important factor in therapists. Well, if women are compassionate, women are more emotional... I don't think there are things like 'some traits are better suited with therapy' or something." [P 2; Position: 76 - 76]

They stated that the reason for choosing to be a therapist is independent of the gender roles assigned to them. During the interviews, all the participants almost gave the same answer suggesting that being a therapist suits and fits them but it is

not because they are women who are raised in a certain way due to gender roles; it is about their character.

"It's something regardless of my gender. It's a matter of personality. It's more than just being a woman." [P 5; Position: 49 - 49]

"I am related to my character/temperament rather than being a woman." [P 6; Position: 36 - 36]

P1 and P4 specially mentioned that their gender does not have any effect on becoming a therapist or how they find meaning in their profession but how they were raised, the mission that was adopted to them by their families, and their role in the family are directly correlated with their personality and becoming a a therapist.

"I mean, my listening skill developed rather than my role as a girl, but rather because of my role in my family, that is, because of the dynamics in my family. That's why I became a therapist. Because I am a woman, I don't think there is any extra compassion in this story. There is the compassion of course, yes, but Your ability to listen, understand and observe rather than compassion also comes into the story. I don't think it's because I'm a woman..." [P 1; Position: 55 - 55]

When asked about gender roles' effect on how they find meaning in their profession none of the participants suggested a correlation between these variables. With some of the participants, the gender conversation leads to a conversation about sexism therapists' experience in the field. Some of the participants mentioned that their gender roles do not mean much to them or their decision to become a therapist but because of being a woman, they experience discrimination in society. Some reported that men are considered more professional by the clients and their knowledge or experience is valued more.

"Yes, it's annoying and I can detect that male therapists are subject to positive discrimination, for example. When a therapist is a male, he has a more pronounced vibe in people's eyes, so I've seen it with my own eyes. In the eyes of other experienced psychologists, therapists, or psychiatrists, I and

a man; a man with the same experience is understood and respected as if he knows more, and you know more like 'we want a male therapist'... okay, that can be it. I can also ask for a female therapist. There is no problem with that, but it is as if there is authority there, for example, am I a mother or am I married - these are often asked. But it is not something that men are asked a lot. Like a child psychologist or something. You know, such a shock. Whatever it is. Things like that happen, for example, it happens very often. It's just because there are too many female therapists. The two are not very noticeable. But if there was a more homogeneous distribution, I think it would stand out too much. I mean, no one is asking a male therapist if I have a child, so I'm pretty sure of that." [P 3; Position: 57 - 57]

Especially when it comes to questioning the therapists' abilities, a couple of the participants (especially P3 and P6) mentioned that clients question female therapists' capabilities but they do not have the same questioning, hesitation, or standards for male therapists. For instance, two of the participants said that when they see children, their parents often question their lack of experience as a mother. Neither of the participants had children and they suggested that not being a mother was a problem for some of the clients but there was no such expectation for male therapists.

"For example, am I a mother or am I married - these are asked a lot. But it is not something that men are asked a lot. Of course, you don't have a child or something. How come they are not asked like a child psychologist or something" [P 3; Position: 57 - 57]

During the interviews, none of the participants other than P 5 approached the question from a gender studies perspective specifically. In other words, the possible integrated gender norms that may have formed the therapist's character and thus may have led them to become therapists were not discussed. Only P5 got slightly deeper with the question and suggested that the ingrained gender roles may be affecting why she chose this career and how she finds meaning in it, but she did not see a direct link right away.

"Growing up as a woman, growing up with those social roles and social roles attributed to me probably makes it easier for me to do this job today. I am a more modest, sweet, well-behaved daughter. I don't know, I listen well and show affection. Well, I have likely digested these things at an early age. Probably they are useful for me to do my job today." [P 5; Position: 46 - 46]

This question was asked to uncover any potential gender roles that may have led to these participants' decision to become a therapist and how they find meaning at work but the answers suggested that for the therapists being a woman did not affect their profession, how they find meaning as a therapist or why they chose to become a therapist. The only way they encountered being a women's effect on their profession was regarding the sexism they experienced while being compared to male therapists.

4.3.6 Early career

Other than being women, other criteria for the sample group was that the participants were expected to be early career therapists, who had 2 to 6 years of experience seeing clients. When asked about the effect of being in the early stages of their career and how it affects the way they find meaning in their profession, participants suggested that since they only had a limited time of experience and are still learning new concepts on daily bases; how they approach their occupation is shaped by being in early stages of their careers.

"When I get more experienced/senior. I mean, there is no client I have ever completed the process with. There is no client for that I have said goodbye. I also wonder when that process comes, with whom and how? And as we went through this, we started and finished with someone, I mean, as we say goodbye to them when we can leave them to their own lives, as long as we can leave them, I think something... I feel that I need to see these, I'm really at the beginning so as you said." [P 2; Pozisyon: 81 - 81]

P4 on the other hand, approach this question from a different perspective and suggested that rather than her gender, what clients are more focused on is their experience and age. Thus, being an early career therapist impacts how her clients approach her professionalism.

"But here they want someone older, experienced. So it's more about age rather than my sex. It's something we come across very often. I don't know what other therapists are going through about it. I look a little younger, thank god there are masks so far. It wasn't as obvious because of the masks; they couldn't see my face. Well, some people think I'm older just because of how I talk." [P 4; Position: 57 - 57]

A couple of participants (P4 and P6) shared that because they are in the early stages of their careers they still have a lot to learn and thus they may often question their abilities. From the clients' perspective, their age can also be an issue; because social expectations from a therapist are heavily based on their age and experience thus is about their seniority.

4.3.7 Work Environment

According to some participants, being a therapist has specific advantages in terms of the work environment. The therapists who have private practice suggested that they feel freer and have more autonomy at work due to their profession and having a clinic. Some participants who work with others mentioned the advantages of not being alone and being able to socialize. Some participants compared different work environments they have experienced and shared how much their work environment affects how they approach their jobs.

"So where and the way you work (are you alone, with someone, do you have someone above you, a team) I've never been alone; being alone seems a bit scary and boring to me. So in an office alone maybe I can find meaning? or Do I go somewhere else with that meaning, that is, do I find meaning 'too much, when I am alone, I do not know it either... So, for example, when you are with someone, you have the opportunity to compare it. Are there people who feel like me or something? After all, their clients listen when something happens to supervision. I think a lot can be learned from there, in a way. Being single seems like a barren to me, frankly, it's important. Burnout can be easier, I think. When you're alone. Other than that..."[P 3; Position: 47 - 48]

P3 mentioned the advantages of working with a group of therapists. She suggested that if she was working by herself she may be dived into her profession fully and maybe would find “too much” meaning in what she does but that is not something appealing to hear. She appreciates having a group of coworkers with whom she can have peer supervision and socialize at the same time.

When P2 mentioned her work environment in which she works by herself and has her private practice, she suggested that the amount of loneliness and isolation would not be ideal for many people. She described being a therapist as a lonely profession.

"Because when you are shutting down all day, by playing therapist, by shutting yourself down, for example, if you have a bubbly side, for example, it is by covering your character and bringing your therapist to the forefront. And it's just a profession. You know, no matter how much you share the office with someone, I mean you see someone else only for fifteen minutes. It is lonely." [P 2; Position: 106 - 106]

Particularly, the P4 emphasized the importance of the work environment for her, especially due to her previous negative work experience. According to her, the place where she works should be multidisciplinary, should not create a competitive environment, and should be satisfying financially.

"Well, when I first started to work, I was in the counseling center. Actually, it's such a beautiful place in Izmir, in a beautiful plaza, in a nice plaza. Even though it seems like a pleasant environment, the working conditions there, that is, the administrative working conditions, were not very satisfying for me. I mean, we had such mobbing-like situations. How many sessions did you do or there was such a package system, the first session had a different configuration system, it didn't appeal to me much, actually I had a restricted area. There should be an area where you can make yourself feel comfortable. But when I was always under pressure, it was a process that I started to question a lot, so in my first job. Then when I went to the hospital, I am very satisfied with the current work environment. Because they leave everything to me, actually, they take your opinion. That area belongs to you and is an

area that you know, so you know how you can handle the design of the room, the duration of the session, or the cost of the session at work. especially because they always act by taking such an opinion and giving it a space of its own. Well, I'm really on good terms with my manager. Well, it was a great advantage for me to have worked with him in the field of mental health for such many years." [P 4; Position: 3 - 3]

Similarly, P6 also mentioned how she liked feeling independent and having autonomy is highly important for her. For that reason, having her private practice was the best way to conduct her occupation, increasing her freedom and autonomy in her work environment.

"Being free; well, being a therapist brings a variety of freedoms. For example, you don't have a superior. There is no possibility of being judged by someone - of course we can have a supervisor, we can consult each other academically or we can pass each other on to other clients, but I guess my position there is important to me. So, of course, the more superficial part of this is arranging the working hours and deciding how to wear it..." [P 6; Position: 6 - 6]

P 6 talked about the advantages of being a therapist; suggesting that as a therapist one can have more freedom, space to themselves, creativity, and autonomy at work. These characteristics were due to the nature of her occupation. She added that she enjoys these qualities and thus wanted to have her private practice to minimize work environment-related conflicts.

4.4 comments on questions

The researcher collected the themes under their titles but also wanted to have the fourth section to gather comments regarding the interviews. This part was signified by the researcher because the critiques or insights would reveal the limitation of this research and would shape the further studies' content.

During the interviews, the participants had difficulty answering some questions and made comments about the content. The participants had difficulties both in understanding and answering a couple of the questions since the questions also covered philosophically comprehensive topics and were open to personal interpretation.

"Because your questions are very thought-provoking, by the way. I think if it is ok to do so, maybe you can share the questions with the participants in advance. So that you don't waste time and they have time to think about them. So I'm thinking here right now. It's better ... beforehand. These are not the type of questions that you answer so quickly. They are thought-provoking questions. So many segments popped up in my head. So I don't know meaningful this interview is for you." [P 1; Position: 42 - 42]

"The questions were a little too abstract..." [P 2; Position: 50 - 50]

"Hard questions, so I think it's not easy." [P 2; Position: 93 - 93]

Participants suggested that answering some of the questions was challenging for two reasons: the first one is that some of the questions were abstract and could be interpreted in different ways and secondly, they were deep, dense, personal questions which required some time to digest and contemplate on. However, one of the positive aspects of this possible limitation was that the mental flow of the participant was uncovered during the interviews.

5. DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to uncover the lived experiences of early-career female therapists and analyze how they find meaning in their jobs. To approach finding meaning at work from an existentialist perspective lead this research into questioning the link between self-actualization and authenticity and finding meaning at work. The study explored the impact of finding meaning at work and how it affects a therapist's personal life and authenticity. I was interested in hearing how they define their choice (of becoming a therapist and choosing to find meaning at work) and approach the responsibility of their choice. During the interviews, different approaches to these concepts emerged yet overall most participants claimed that they have chosen this occupation authentically and claimed to take responsibility for the outcomes of their jobs.

The data found to support the existing research regarding the positive correlation between finding meaning at work and in life (Dik et al., 2009; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016; Maslow, 1971). To analyze why some types of work generate happiness and positive emotions, while others cause stress and similar negative sentiments, it is important to understand the varying factors. For that reason, considering the meaning-creating's role and how much work contributes to self-actualization was noteworthy. In that regard, this research contributes to the literature by understanding how ECT therapists define meaning, how they find meaning in their profession, and how this feeling of finding their jobs meaningful affects their overall lives.

Future studies with ECF therapists can depend on different factors, which affect meaning creation at work for therapists. Moreover, a similar question can be researched with different professions and different occupations' approaches to meaning can be compared.

5.1. HOW DO THEY DEFINE FINDING MEANING AT WORK?

The results of the study show that all the participants define meaning as they experience it at their own jobs. In other words, the participants define their understanding of the meaning and then enhanced that they feel that way (in the way they described meaning) at work. They said that one finds meaning at work when their values and desires are aligned with what they get back in return at work. They also described the way one feels when they find meaning at work as feeling alive. While describing the definition of meaning, most participants compared their occupation with other professions and all the participants claimed that they couldn't see themselves devoting themselves to another profession as they do, being therapists.

Psychologists defined finding meaning at work as feeling self-fulfillment, satisfaction, purpose, and getting closer to self-actualization (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016; Maslow, 1971). Lips-Wiersma and his colleagues argue that the purpose one experiences at work are beyond the financial input, it is about an ideological aim (2016). The findings in the study also align with the literature review. Participant three explicitly said that being a therapist can be her purpose in life. Similarly, all the other participants emphasized that they could not see themselves working in another profession because of the satisfaction and self-fulfillment they experience as a therapist. Although four out of six participants described being a therapist as a very challenging job due to the feeling of adequacy, all the participants agreed that they find meaning in this job thus they want to commit their careers to this profession. Participants one, two, three, and five all emphasized that they did not think about the financial return of their job while choosing this occupation; nor do they think that how they find meaning at work is related to their financial income at all. As Lips-Wiersma and his colleagues suggest, the participants also think that the purpose they experience as a therapist is beyond their financial income (2016). Participant three not only suggests that being a therapist is an altruistic job but also suggests that being a therapist is way too challenging to be just for the financial benefits of it. Multiple participants also stated that they are underpaid considering how burdening their profession is. Besides the financial disadvantages, the

participants agree that they find meaning in their jobs and the purpose they experience as a therapist is beyond the materialistic returns of the occupation.

The participants did not claim that being a therapist holds different status; they did not consciously put their occupation on a pedestal, however, when they described the meaning they experience as a therapist, the majority of the participants stated that they could not do any other profession because they find so much meaning in being a therapist; they would doubt that they can find a similar meaning with a different occupation. In a sense, the way participants talked about the meaning and the sense of purpose they experience at work is similar to Dik and Duffy's definition of calling (2009). Dik and Duffy define calling as the feeling that one's career provides purpose and meaning to them and serves a greater purpose (2009). Since the participants described their job being more than a job one can do for the money, as an altruistic giving, and their purpose; there is a link between calling and the way participants describe finding meaning at work. Baumeister also proposed that calling can provide finding meaning in one's career and that satisfaction can lead to finding meaning in life overall (1991). When participants talked about the positive correlation between finding meaning in life and at work, they also affirm Baumeister's theory. In this study, participants were not asked if they define their careers as calling but the way they described meaning was aligned with calling. In future studies, participants can be asked about calling which can discuss meaning with a focus on calling experience.

5.2. HOW DO THEY FIND MEANING?

In the results of this study, the participants suggested that how they find meaning at work is closely related to taking responsibility for their choices, factors of the flow state, and the relationship they build with their clients. According to Steger and Dik (2009), people can find meaning due to what they create and how they contribute to others, for example, a doctor may feel satisfied by healing someone's health, and a teacher can feel accomplished by seeing the development and success their students show over time or a volunteer may feel happier after supporting others to get better. The meaning these people find from what they are accomplishing can

lead to finding meaning in their lives as a whole. Krause suggests that factors that impact these sources of meaning are significant for people's judgments of the meaning they experience in their lives (2004). In this research, factors that affect how the participants find meaning at work were collected under three themes: the responsibility of choice, flow, and relationship with the clients.

According to the outcomes of the research one of the factors that determine finding meaning at work is making an authentic choice by deciding to be a therapist of their free will. A couple of the participants (Participants one and five) emphasized that what makes them find authentic meaning in their occupations is regarding choosing this career path voluntarily and taking the responsibility for all the challenges and the positive aspects of this journey. This approach is directly aligning with the Sartrean approach to responsibility; that people are obligated to choose and take responsibility for their decisions (Sartre, 2007). During the interviews, none of the participants directly claim that they create meaning themselves as a therapist; thus no one reinforced Victor Frankl's approach to meaning, suggesting that they choose to find meaning at their jobs and thus find meaning being a therapist (Frankl, 2010). On the other hand, a couple of participants focused on the importance of finding meaning in their job to survive the challenges of their occupations. This approach regarding the relationship between suffering and meaning is closely related to Frankl's approach. Frankl argues that meaning is mandatory for humans to survive or drive in life (Frankl, 2010). While describing the challenges of the occupation, especially the feelings of inadequacy and self-questioning, Participant two suggested that she could not have the willpower to continue this profession if she did not find meaning in it. Ali and his colleagues' study demonstrates that what makes work meaningful is individual attitudes, affect, and behavior (2013). When the participants talk about choosing to create meaning at work and taking responsibility for their choices, their approach aligns with Ali their colleagues' study. The participants claim to make a conscious decision to become therapists, believe that this occupation is meaningful and they choose to find purpose in what they do. The participants talked about the difficulties of being a

therapist, but they explained how these difficulties occur as a result of their own choices and how it is effective for clients to find meaning in seeing that they can benefit despite these difficulties. In addition, the participants stated that why they chose their profession was also effective in finding meaning, and they explained why they chose to be a therapist.

While describing how participants find meaning in their jobs as a therapist, multiple participants described the flow state. There were no leading questions regarding flow yet the way participants talked about losing track of time, feeling very creative, and enjoying their occupation (getting lost in the activity) was aligned with the findings of flow state. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi defines flow as the experience of total involvement with an act (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; cited in Donaldson et al., 2011). Getting deeply involved in what one is doing, that thinking about one's self as separate from the immediate activity. "You're no longer a participant observer, only a participant. You're moving in harmony with something else you're part of" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). This definition of flow emphasizes intrinsic motivation, natural desire to commit, and full absorption in the work or activity being pursued. To explain this characteristic of flow, Csikszentmihalyi gives an example of a surgeon. When a surgeon is operating he or she only focuses on their hands. The rest of their body wouldn't matter at that moment. All their focus would be concentrated on their hand movements. Even if they had a horrible foot ache or something very important happening in their personal lives, they would only focus on their hands during surgery if they are experiencing flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). While describing meaning at work, multiple participants focused on how creative and lively they felt during the therapy sessions. The way therapists described the concentration they have focusing on the client, the creativity they discover during the conversations, and forgetting about the rest of the world is closely related to how Csikszentmihalyi describes the flow state. Especially when Participant two talks about the creativity she experiences remind the flow state; she says that in the therapy room there are only the inputs of the client and her mind. This level of concentration and isolation

from the physical world is quite rare and therefore, shows the significance of experiencing flow at work.

Another dimension of the flow state Csikszentmihalyi mentions is that the sense of time becomes distorted; time perception gets inaccurate. Csikszentmihalyi gives an example from his interview with a social dancer. The dancer, who is experiencing flow while dancing, states that "... after it's passed, [time] seems to have passed really fast. I see that it's one o'clock in the morning and I say, "ah-ha, just a few minutes ago it was eight o'clock." But then while I'm dancing... it seems like it's been much longer than it really was" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Similarly, when describing how meaningful they find their jobs, a couple of participants suggested that they forget about the time, and during their sessions, they do not focus on the clock ticking. Participant six described the experience of finding meaning at work stating that it is when not realizing how time passes. When one is experiencing flow they are lost in the activity itself, and they lose track of time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Some dimensions of flow were detected while the participants mentioned finding meaning at work and how they enjoy their time at work. Further research can be conducted focusing on the flow state for therapists more in-depth.

Lastly, the relationship therapists have with their clients was a factor that affected how they found meaning in their jobs. Participant three claimed that some therapists who come from different schools of psychoanalysis (such as dynamic or psychoanalyst therapists) force a boundary between themselves and their clients yet because therapists are also human beings with emotions and a need for attachment, thus form a relationship with their clients and want them to feel better. Knowing that their clients can benefit from this relationship makes therapy significantly more meaningful for the participants. Malloy and their colleagues' international study regarding finding meaning at work for nurses also found that the relationship aspect of the job (both by supervision and leadership by their colleagues and their clients) makes the job more meaningful (2015). The research with a therapist has a similar finding, suggesting that the relationship with the clients can make the job more satisfying and meaningful. In future studies, having two groups of therapists from

different schools of psychoanalysis (one using a method that enables therapists to build a more intimate relationship with their clients, and the other focusing on the boundary in the relationship; such as psychoanalytical therapists) can be compared to focus more on the relationship's effect on finding meaning.

5.3. Factors that affect finding meaning

The last theme of the results had the highest number of sub-themes as listed: Advantages of Being a Therapist, Existential Limitations, Change with the Effect of Time, Different Approaches, Being a Woman/Sexism, Early Career, and Work Environment. Overall, although in the previous sections the participants highlighted the challenges of their occupation, they also shared a variety of factors that increase the meaning they find at work. None of the participants hesitated to share their work engagement and commitment while talking about how meaningful they find what they do. The majority of the participants suggested that they can see themselves committing to this career for the unseeable future. These discussions regarding how the participants felt engaged with what they do at work and how they find meaning support Kahn's study which demonstrated a positive correlation between meaningful work and work engagement (1990).

While discussing the advantages of being a therapist, the participants mentioned both the internal factors (such as self-actualization, discovering authenticity, and feeling creative) and the external factors (such as financial input, not doing monotonous tasks, and gaining experience). Although the participants talk about the challenges of their occupation, some of the burdening factors of being a therapist were not highlighted in this research. In the literature, much research focused on the challenges of being a therapist and studied distress, depression, and burnout in therapists (Charlemagne-Odle et al, 2012; Gilroy, Lynne, & Murra, 2002; Farber, 1983). Due to the burdening and emotionally challenging aspects of the occupation burnout is expected to be high for therapists. According to research, clinical psychologists even have a higher risk of depression (Gilroy, Lynne, & Murra, 2002). However, in this research, these concepts were not brought up as much as the literature review would have suggested. None of the participants

complained about burnout. Participant four said she felt exhausted only once, and that was a temporary feeling. Most of the participants mentioned feeling inadequate and dealing with that feeling, being the most challenging part of the occupation. The participants in the research did not bring up being exposed to secondary trauma, or emotional labor.

One of the unique aspects of this research was the interdisciplinary aspect of it. Having philosophical and gender studies perspectives supporting a psychological phenomenon by adding existential perspective and gender roles impact on finding meaning at work. In this study, the researcher wanted to uncover the gender roles' potential effect on finding meaning as a therapist. Moreover, any other gender-related issue such as sexism and discrimination FT may experience was a topic that was aimed to be discovered. Existing research on FT finding meaning at work was scarce. Williamson's dissertation focuses on the gender component regarding finding meaning at work and in life but does not focus on therapists as the research's sample group (2011). The research demonstrated the positive correlation between life satisfaction, work engagement, and psychological meaningfulness. The findings of the study were mostly aligned with the current research results; both stated that psychological meaningfulness is a predictor of work engagement. However, Williamson's study found that gender significantly moderates meaningfulness in work engagement (2011). None of the participants suggested a positive correlation between their gender and finding meaning in their jobs in the current research. Only Participant 5 proposed that the gender roles that were implemented on her when she was a child may have an effect on her choosing psychology but the majority of the participants said that their gender does not play a role in choosing psychology or being a therapist. They all suggested that what got them interested in being a therapist was their character, and being a woman didn't have a significant effect on their personalities. Martin's dissertation focuses on ECF psychologists yet the research focuses on wellness and self-care rather than specifically analyzing finding meaning for therapists (2009). The study highlights the significance of self-care for therapists. A couple of the participants brought up the importance of self-care while focusing on the challenges of their occupation yet it was not one of the main themes

of the interviews. In Turkey, Boyacioglu and Hünler's article named "A Study on Women Studies in Psychology and Working Conditions of Women in Academia" also brings upon the gender component and mentions the sexism and discrimination female academicians experience at work (Boyacioglu and Hunler, 2018). Aligning with Boyacioglu and Hunler, this study also exposed discrimination and sexism FT experienced. Participant three particularly suggested that although she is more capable or at least on a similar level to a male therapist, he is respected more while more clients or colleagues question her abilities as a therapist (for instance female therapists' abilities were questioned if they weren't a mother by the parenting clients, yet a similar judgment wasn't held towards male therapists.) In the future studies, instead of focusing on the discrimination female therapists experience; more concentration can be centered to the gender roles' effect on choosing an occupation.

5.4. Limitations

This research contributes to the literature in the meaningful work area, although certain limitations should be measured. The first limitation is self-reporting in the interviews. Even though the interviewees answered the questions to their best knowledge of themselves, it is impossible to eliminate being self-biased in these types of data collection. Most of the participants were seeing a therapist and since they are reading and learning about psychology; this group's self-awareness may likely be higher than many possible groups in other occupations. That being said, it is still uncontrollable to target self-biases. The second limitation is stemmed from the collected data from a small group. Although the data was collected from a homogeneous group of the therapist in regards to coming from backgrounds and having different cultural and social identities (who studied and work in different cities) they may all represent a similar perspective, and other therapists from different parts of the country may have different perspectives to offer to the research. The third limitation is the challenging content of the research and the questions. During the interviews, a couple of the participants claimed that the questions were very interesting and exciting to contemplate however; some of the interviewees also mentioned the challenging nature of the questions. Participant 2

said:

"These are tough questions, not easy. That's why I'm contemplating on them." [P 2; Position: 93 - 93]

Especially the questions regarding finding or creating meaning at their jobs and asking about existential limitations affects meaning creating invite participants to tackle with deep philosophical questions while requesting them to take an introspective look. Also, participant 2 suggested that the questions were quite abstract, thus somewhat vague.

"Because your questions are very thought-provoking, by the way. I think if it is ok to do so, maybe you can share the questions with the participants in advance. So that you don't waste time and they have time to think about them. ... These are not the type of questions that you answer so quickly. They are thought-provoking questions. So many segments popped up in my head. So I don't know meaningful this interview is for you." [P 1; Position: 42 - 42]

To minimize any misunderstandings regarding the intellectually stimulating philosophical questions having a group that already is knowledgeable on existentialism and gender studies would have made it easier to tackle some of the questions, which serve the philosophical and gender studies components of the research. In further studies, a group who is well-read about existentialism may be a better sample group or before the interviews, a short explanation regarding what these concepts are may be explained.

5.5. Further study

Due to the limitations mentioned above relevant suggestions for future researchers will be shared in this section. To reach a more wholesome and holistic picture of how therapists find meaning at work in Turkey this research can be repeated with different therapists from different parts of the country. As a matter of fact, after extending this research's scale to turkey, the study can be implemented in a different culture to see the cultural differences Turkish therapists may have.

Secondly, this study discusses finding meaning at work for therapists particularly, yet also tackles existential limitations impact on how one finds meaning at work, the input of career in self-actualization, and gender roles impact on finding meaning as a therapist for women. All these subjects can be research questions on their own and can lead to a more in-depth analysis of each topic. Furthermore, being a therapist in Turkey can be a research question on its own. During the interviews, there were no questions regarding being a therapist in Turkey yet while talking about challenges of being a therapist, the majority of the interviewees mentioned country or culture-specific issues they face, and multiple of them suggested that if they were working in a more developed country where the commercial code for psychologists was set legally or where the community was accustomed to what psychologists do they may have a different perspective on their job. These inputs suggested that researching the experience of Turkish therapists might contribute to the field. Lastly, another unexpected theme emerged during the interviews: The lack of work-life balance among therapists. When asked about the relationship between finding meaning in life and work, most of the participants had a very similar answer; stating that work is taking a majority of their time and there is no set distinction between work and social life. Some even said that those two spheres (being work life and social life) are “emerged together”. The reasoning behind this statement was how being a therapist was a mentally and emotionally consuming job and that it was not always possible to get out of the workplace and switch to a non-therapist mode of them. For that reason, focusing on the work-life balance and emergence of these two spheres may be another further research topic.

CONCLUSION

The current study explored the meaning therapists find at work in Turkey, providing a voice to early career, female therapists. The findings demonstrate the impact of finding meaning at work. One of the main results of the research is based on discussing the link between finding meaning in life and having a more satisfying lifespan and having a satisfying work-life. The significance of understanding how meaning is found, lost, or created is a tool that would support meaning creation for therapists and would also clarify how they perceive their careers.

This research found how early-career female therapists found meaning at work. It also uncovered what kind of challenges they experienced as a therapist in Turkey. Since the data was collected qualitatively, personalized and deep insights were shared. The results suggest that therapists believe that they need to find meaning in their jobs to sustain working in the field. Multiple participants emphasized the challenges of this profession and suggested that nothing could have compromised the emotional burden they experience at work if they did not find meaning in their jobs. A couple of participants even said that one cannot be a therapist just for the financial return; one of the participants (P3) referred to being a therapist as a “nutcase” even. The interesting finding was that although the therapists emphasized the unique challenges of their occupation and suggested that the emotional burden they experience is unbearable, they all claim to be satisfied with their career choices. All the participants underlined that they feel like they have to find the right occupation for themselves, and the majority of the participants stated that they could not have been able to any other occupation. Some visible challenges of the profession such as being a therapist in Turkey, where the occupational laws are vague and not protective were mentioned. Moreover, the emotional challenges of being a therapist were brought up by all the participants. Some of the participants focused on how challenging it is to be exposed to secondary trauma and witness their clients’ upsetting stories. On the other hand, most of the participants (four out of six participants) focused on the emotions being a therapist triggers for them as the most challenging part of their jobs. The feeling of inadequacy was one of the highlights majority of the participants mentioned. Due to

the requirements of the job (such as the competitive nature of the field and feeling the need to take more education endlessly) and the nature of the profession (working with their own and others' emotions constantly), being a therapist was shared to be a challenging occupation which they all found meaning at. Participants all specifically highlighted how much meaning they find in what they do and how this positivity makes it possible for them to sustain their careers. Overall all the participants talked about how they found or create meaning at work. Besides the challenges, they experience they were happy about their choice of becoming a therapist and approached this decision as an authentic one.

The research contributes to literature particularly due to how it approaches finding meaning at work from an existentialist perspective. Many researchers have focused on finding meaning at work to increase productivity, employee satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Likewise, having satisfying occupations affect one's overall life satisfaction was analyzed by many psychologists. Lastly, philosophers have always been focusing on how to live one's life in the best, most meaningful, and most fruitful way. Since the research approached finding meaning at work from an existential perspective including concepts such as self-realization, self-actualization, and authenticity, it combined organizational psychology with positive psychology and philosophy.

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APPENDICES

A. Informed Consent Form (in English)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Dear participant,

These questionnaires are conducted by the Industrial / Organizational Psychology Graduate Program of the Institute of Social Sciences of Istanbul Bilgi University. The questionnaires are prepared to collect data for the application part of the thesis, which is called 'Finding Authentic Meaning at Work and Self-Actualization from an Existentialist Perspective: A Qualitative Study for Early Career, Female Therapists'. All information you provide will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone and / or organization. Listening to the questions carefully, reflecting your objective, sincere, true feelings and thoughts are important for the purpose of the research. Before the meeting time, please find a private environment where you will feel comfortable. The questions in the study are not expected to have negative effects for the participants. Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary. If you participate in the research, the section in which below 'I have read, understood and agree to participate in the research' will open. You can start by saying 'Yes'. If you wish to end the interview during the interview, please share this wish with the researcher. The data obtained from the questionnaire will be kept confidential and used for scientific research. Thank you in advance for your time and attention.

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B. Informed Consent Form (in Turkish)

BİLGİLENDİRİLMİŞ VE GÖNÜLLÜ ONAM FORMU

Değerli katılımcı,

Bu anket formları İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Endüstriyel/Örgütsel Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans Programı tarafından yürütülmekte ve tez çalışması adına yapılacak olan ‘Varoluşçu Perspektiften İş Yerinde Otantik Anlam Bulma ve Kendini Gerçekleştirme: Erken Kariyer, Kadın Terapistler İçin Niteliksel Bir Araştırma’ adlı araştırmanın uygulama kısmına veri toplamak amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Vereceğiniz tüm bilgiler gizli tutulacak, hiçbir kimse ve/veya kuruluşa verilmeyecektir. Soruları dikkatli okuyarak objektif, samimi, gerçek duygu ve düşüncelerinizi yansıtmamız araştırmanın amacına ulaşması için önemlidir. Görüşme saatinden önce lütfen kendinizi rahat hissedeceğiniz ve başkalarının size duyamayacağı bir ortam oluşturunuz. Araştırmada yer alan soruların katılımcılar açısından olumsuz etkileri olması beklenmemektedir. Araştırmaya katılımınız tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Araştırmaya katılmanız halinde aşağıda yer alan ‘Yukarıdaki çalışmanın amacını ve içeriğini belirten bildiriye okudum, anladım ve araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.’ kısmı açılacaktır. O kısma ‘Evet’ diyerek çalışmaya başlayabilirsiniz. Görüşme esnasında görüşmeyi sonlandırmak isterseniz, bu arzunuzu lütfen araştırmacı ile paylaşınız. Mülakatlarda elde edilen veriler gizli tutulacak ve bilimsel araştırma için kullanılacaktır. Mülakatlarda ayıracağınız zaman ve göstereceğiniz özenden dolayı şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

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C. Sociodemographic Data Form (in English)

Demographic Information

Date:

Name & Last name:.....

How long have you been working as a
therapist?.....

Do you work at an
Organization?

What approach do you
practice?

D. Sociodemographic Data Form (in Turkish)

Demografik Bilgiler

Tarih:

İsim & Soy isim:.....

Kaç senedir terapist olarak
çalışıyorsunuz?.....

Bir kuruma bağlı olarak mı
çalışıyorsunuz?

Hangi terapi yöntemini
kullanıyorsunuz?

E. Interview Questionnaire (in English)

Interview Questions

1. How do you define finding meaning at work?
2. Can you find meaning at work? How?
 - Do you like your job (or want to continue your profession) mainly because you find meaning at work?
3. What is the most challenging part of being a therapist? Does it make it hard to find meaning at work?
4. What is the link between being a good therapist and finding meaning at work? What may be the reason for it?
5. As a psychotherapist, do you think about your existential restrictions (such as being mortal, suffering, condemnation to freedom etc.)? How may these thoughts affect the way you find meaning at work?
6. Do you think that you create meaning at work yourself or being a therapist is inherently a meaningful job? How so?
 - Do you think other occupations (teachers, doctors, social workers, psychiatrists, etc.) have similar meaning to being a therapist? What may be the differences?
 - Did you choose to find meaning at work? (See: Sartre's responsibility theory)
7. What may be the factors that determine how much meaning you find at work?
 - Currently, you are in the early stages of your career, do you think that how much meaning you find at work might change over the years? What may the cause be? (See: burnout, seniority, etc.)
 - If you were practicing a different therapy approach (for instance instead of psychoanalytical, existentialist therapy tools) do you think your job would have different amount of meaningful?
 - Does income factor into how much meaning you find at work? How so?

8. How does being a woman affect your occupation? How does it affect the way you find meaning at work? (Girls are raised to listen, to be compassionate, etc.; do you think choosing a profession where you can display these taught characteristics and gender norms changes the meaning you find in your job?)
9. What other feelings/motives are tied to finding meaning at work? (empathy, helping someone, success, making a difference, etc.)
 - Can you tell me more about a potential link between feeling helpful/beneficial and finding meaning at work? (In other words, if the client doesn't show any symptoms of change/development, do you still find what you do meaningful?)
10. Can you tell me more about the possible positive correlation between finding meaning in work and life?
 - Does finding meaning at work help you find meaning in your overall life?
11. What may be the relationship between being a therapist and defining yourself (your essence)?
12. Do you think your job supports you to actualize yourself? How may your job affect actualizing your authentic self?
13. Why did you choose to be a therapist? What effect might finding meaning in this profession have had on this choice? Would you consider this career choice an authentic one?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

F. Interview Questionnaire (in Turkish)

Mülakat Soruları

1. İşte anlam bulmayı nasıl tanımlarsınız?
2. İşinizde anlam bulabiliyor musunuz? Nasıl?
 - İşinizi sevme nedeniniz (veya işinize devam etme isteğiniz) işinizde anlam bulmanızdan mı kaynaklanıyor?
3. Psikolog olmanın en zor kısmı nedir? Bu zorluk, işte anlam bulmamızı zorlaştırıyor mu?
4. İyi bir terapist olarak kariyerinizi sürdürmek ile işte anlam bulmak arasında nasıl bir bağlantı olabilir? Sebebi ne olabilir?
5. Psikoterapist olarak, varoluşsal kısıtlamalar (ölümlü olmak, acı çekmek, özgürlüğe mahkum olmak vb.) hakkında düşündüğünüz olur mu? Peki bunlar hakkında düşünmenizin işte anlam bulma şeklinize nasıl bir etkisi olabilir?
6. İşinizdeki anlamı siz mi yaratıyorsunuz, yoksa terapist olmanın kendisi mi anlamlı? Nasıl?
 - Diğer meslek gruplarının (öğretmenler, doktorlar, sosyal hizmet uzmanları, psikiyatristler vb.) işte buldukları anlam sizinkine benziyor mudur? Farklar neler olabilir?
 - İş yerinde anlam bulmak sizin için bir seçim mi? (bkz: Sartre'in sorumluluk kavramı)
7. İşinizde ne kadar anlam bulduğunuzu belirleyen faktörler neler olabilir?
 - Şuan kariyeriniz başlarındasınız, sizce ilerleyen zamanlarda işinizde bulduğunuz anlam değişebilir mi? Sizce bunun sebebi ne olabilir? (bkz: tükenmişlik, uzmanlaşma, vb.)
 - Farklı bir yaklaşımla çalışsaydınız (örneğin psikaanalitik yöntemle çalışma yerine varoluşçu psikoterapi tekniklerini uygulaysaydınız) işinizi ne kadar anlamlı bulduğunuz değişir miydi?

- Maddi kazanç işinizi ne kadar anlam bulduğunuzu belirleyen faktörlerden midir? Nasıl?
8. Kadın olmanız terapistliğinizi nasıl etkiliyor? İşte anlam bulmanızı nasıl etkiliyor? (Örneğin kadın olarak dinlemek, şefkatli olmak, vb. davranış biçimleri öğretilerek büyüdünüz; sizce bu özellikleri sergileyebileceğiniz bir meslek seçmiş olmanız, işinizde bulduğunuz anlamı değiştiriyor mu?)
 9. İşinizde anlam bulmakla ilişkili başka hangi duygu/güdüler hissediyorsunuz? (empati, birine yardım etme, başarılı olma, fark yaratma vb.)
 - Yararlı/faydalı hissetmek ile işte anlam bulmak arasında nasıl bir ilişki olabilir? (Danışan herhangi bir değişim/gelişme belirtisi göstermiyorsa; yaptığınız şeyi hala anlamlı buluyor musunuz?)
 10. İş ve yaşamda anlam bulmak arasındaki olası pozitif ilişkiden bahseder misiniz?
 - İşte anlam bulmak, hayatınızın genelinde anlam bulmanıza yardımcı olur mu?
 11. Terapist olmanın, kendinizi (özünüzü) tanımlamanızla nasıl bir ilişkisi olabilir?
 12. İşinizin kendinizi gerçekleştirmenizi desteklediğini düşünüyor musunuz? İşinizin (otantik) kendinizi gerçekleştirmenize nasıl bir etkisi olabilir?
 13. Terapist olmayı seçmenizin sebebi neydi? Bu seçimde bu meslek dalında anlam bulmanın nasıl bir etkisi olmuş olabilir? Bu kariyer seçimini otantik bir seçim olarak değerlendirir misiniz?
 14. Eklemek istediğiniz başka bir şey var mıdır?

ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

Ethics Board Approval is available in the printed version of this dissertation.