Article

Examining the Influence of Meaning in Life and Religion/Spirituality on Student Engagement and Learning Satisfaction: A Comprehensive Analysis

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Abstract: In this empirical study, the relationships between religiosity, spirituality, a sense of life, searching for meaning, and a crisis of meaning are explored in relation to engagement and satisfaction with learning among university students. The results of the study, conducted with Spanish university students, revealed a committed sample to learning, not very satisfied with it, whose life has meaning and/or is in the process of seeking it, with a much lower incidence of a crisis of meaning. The presence of meaning in life and the crisis of meaning were shown to be related to vigor, dedication, and absorption in learning, all of which are expressions of commitment to it. Engagement with learning was also found to be linearly and positively related to a sense of life. Extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientations exhibited a similar pattern of relationships, positively correlating with vigor, absorption, and learning engagement, and remaining independent of dedication to learning and satisfaction with it. The results suggest that education should focus on aspects and spiritual practices that have personal meaning for students. The text emphasizes the importance of fostering an active and attentive disposition in students to engage in activities that provide meaning. It also suggests that curriculum content should relate to students' interests and concerns, irrespective of their religious or spiritual dimensions.

Keywords: religion; spirituality; meaning of live; student engagement; satisfaction with learning

1. Introduction

The study of the effects of religion and spirituality on individuals and society has demonstrated the impact of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices on various social and individual aspects, including those related to health, care, and concern for the environment (Oman and Morello-Frosch 2018; Pargament et al. 2013; Muñoz-García and Villena-Martínez 2020). This research aims to expand our understanding of the influence of religion and spirituality, particularly concerning the meaning of life, and its significance in academic aspects such as student engagement and satisfaction with learning.

In this study, we will explore the relationships between dimensions of religion (e.g., religious orientation) and spirituality (e.g., the importance of spirituality, religious/spiritual experience/phenomenology, and paranormal beliefs), the meaning of life, student satisfaction, and their engagement to learning. We will now define these constructs and subsequently describe the relationships between them based on previous findings while proposing and justifying the current study.

Student learning engagement, as defined by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), is an affective–cognitive state characterized by positivity and satisfaction. It includes vigor, dedication, and absorption in relation to studying and learning, without emphasizing any specific aspect. Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) define these dimensions as follows: Vigor encompasses high levels of effort in academic tasks and the ability to persist in the face of challenges,

fostering a resilient attitude. Dedication, as a component of engagement, involves a student's engagement in academic tasks and the perception of meaning, enthusiasm, and inspiration in them. It includes feelings of pride and a sense of challenge. Absorption in academic tasks entails concentration and immersion to the extent that students may lose track of time while working on them or feel displeasure when they have to disengage.

Research on student engagement has demonstrated its positive effects on learning outcomes and processes, such as grades and the quality of performance (Connell et al. 1994; Fredricks et al. 2004; Zyngier 2008). It also influences efforts, positive emotions, and interest in learning (Fredricks et al. 2004; Connell et al. 1994), persistence in the face of difficulties (Kohls-Santos and Estrada 2021), learning patterns, or the interrelationship between students' cognitive abilities, affectiveness, beliefs about learning, learning motivations, and regulatory learning activities (Vermunt and Donche 2017). Moreover, it affects a sense of justice (Murray et al. 2014) and the establishment and maintenance of sustainable learning policies and actions (Murray et al. 2014).

The factors that influence and shape a student's engagement in their learning are highly diverse. These include (1) methodological aspects, such as the availability and active utilization of the university's ICT resources (Almarghani and Mijatovic 2017), web-based learning technologies (Chen et al. 2010), laptops (Islam and Grönlund 2016), and social networking (Doleck and Lajoie 2018), as well as mobile devices (Sundgren 2017), the use of games and simulations (Vlachopoulos and Makri 2017), and the importance of self-assessment (Panadero et al. 2016); (2) socio-institutional factors, such as the university's reputation (Almarghani and Mijatovic 2017); (3) teacher-related aspects, including the influence and beliefs of teachers on students (Margot and Kettler 2019), authentic emotional expression by the teacher (Wang et al. 2019), and teacher self-efficacy (Morris et al. 2017); (4) aspects related to the learning environment (Padgett et al. 2019), course and content characteristics (Margot and Kettler 2019), and learning models (as described by Buchanan et al. 2016); and (5) student characteristics, such as curiosity and interest (Ainley 2019; Shin and Kim 2019; Hidi and Renninger 2019; Peterson and Hidi 2019), personality (Bosselut et al. 2020), dimensions of meaning in life (Garrosa et al. 2017), and religion and spirituality.

Satisfaction with learning is defined as "the overall evaluation of one's thoughts and judgments regarding academic performance, taking into account academic outcomes, the time invested, and the level of contentment derived from that performance" (Muñoz-García and Villena-Martínez 2021, p. 4).

Previous studies have linked satisfaction with learning to various factors, including academic dishonesty (Muñoz-García and Aviles-Herrera 2014), the digital competencies of university professors (Mancha et al. 2022), altruistic and equitable behavior, and a general measure of sustainability (Muñoz-García and Villena-Martínez 2021). It has also been shown to be independent of austerity and proecological behavior (Muñoz-García and Villena-Martínez 2021).

Factors that influence and shape satisfaction with learning are associated with the teacher's performance, the availability of tutoring, the course planning, and the overall functioning of the educational institution (Salinas and Martínez 2007). Additionally, the teacher's ability to incorporate information and communication technologies into their teaching role is another influential factor (Mancha et al. 2022).

"Meaning in life" refers to an individual's perception of order and coherence in their existence, coupled with the belief that they have a purpose, a mission, or an ideal that guides their actions, resulting in a sense of existential fulfillment (Reker 2000; Steger 2009). It is also closely related to "the extent to which people understand, make sense of, or find significance in their lives, coupled with their perception of having a purpose, mission, or overarching goal in life" (Steger 2009; as cited in Garrosa et al. 2017, p. 19). This concept distinguishes between the "presence of" and the "search for" meaning in life (Steger et al. 2006), with the possibility that both presence and search for meaning may coexist (Steger et al. 2006).

However, challenging life situations that disrupt a sense of coherence and continuity, leading to feelings of threat, can trigger a crisis of meaning. Such a crisis becomes evident when an individual cannot find meaning in their life, experiencing a sense of emptiness and purposelessness (Janoff-Bulman 1992; Schmitz 2005; as cited in Schnell 2014). This crisis represents a period of profound suffering during which the person recognizes the absence of meaning (Schnell 2009; Schnell and Becker 2007). Existential emptiness, as described by Frankl (1990), occurs when an individual fails to attain expected existential fulfillment, leading to frustration and, along with hopelessness, questioning the purpose of their life. This absence of meaning is characterized by a lack of control over one's life, the absence of goals (Frankl 1990), and a state of apathy regarding the future due to the despair associated with existential frustration (Lukas 2001). The absence of meaning can prompt individuals to embark on a search for meaning, a pursuit inherent in the human condition (Frankl 1963).

Previous research on the meaning of life has demonstrated that individuals who report having a meaningful life tend to be less affected by traumatic situations (Steger et al. 2008). They also report greater overall well-being, lower levels of psychopathology, and a more enriching experience of spirituality (Steger 2012). Furthermore, meaning in life is closely related to various important aspects, including human relationships, empathy, altruism, personal growth, the pursuit of happiness and well-being, vocational guidance and career development, and religion (Keyes et al. 2002; Steger et al. 2008; Damiano et al. 2017; Hill et al. 2013; Hagedorn 2012; Ortiz and Morales 2013). It is also associated with well-being, positive emotions, effective coping, and overall happiness (Folkman and Moskowitz 2000; Adler and Fagley 2005; Peterson et al. 2005; Schnell and Becker 2006; Krok 2008; Pan et al. 2008; Greenglass and Fiksenbaum 2009; Vella-Brodrick et al. 2009; Ho et al. 2010). Moreover, it has connections with both physical and mental health, as well as psychological well-being (Aguiar and Aquino 2010). These relationships underscore its significance within individual and social dimensions.

Regarding the search for meaning, the results of studies are not conclusive. It has been positively associated with psychological distress and negatively linked to well-being indicators such as life satisfaction (Park et al. 2010; Steger et al. 2008). However, other studies have suggested a lack of a relationship between the search for meaning and distress or well-being in individuals with a low sense of meaning in life (Cohen and Cairns 2012; Park et al. 2010; Steger et al. 2011; Steger et al. 2008).

Individuals with a low sense of meaning in life or in a state of crisis often compromise their mental health. They tend to report lower life satisfaction, reduced happiness, heightened stress levels, a tendency to use drugs, and an increased risk of developing mood disorders, anxiety, and depression (Steger 2012; Steger et al. 2008). The relationship between depression and a low sense of meaning in life has received extensive research attention (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964; Debats 1990; Flannery and Flannery 1990; Pinquart 2002; Mascaro and Rosen 2005, 2008; Steger et al. 2006).

Regarding the sources of meaning, Lukas (1986) identified that most individuals draw meaning from multiple sources. Kaufman (1986) confirmed this by finding that the majority of people he interviewed had between four and six distinct main themes in their life stories. Regarding these sources, Devogler and Ebersole (1980) and Lukas (1986) conducted content analyses of personal meanings and identified some essential categories, including relationships, life work, service, beliefs, and materiality. Similarly, Emmons (2003) supported these findings through his research, highlighting that work, relationships, religion/spirituality, and contributions to society are primary sources of meaning.

In the context of religion and spirituality, it has been established that individuals often turn to their faith, beliefs, and practices, as well as to contemporary forms of spiritual expression (e.g., New Age spirituality, witchcraft, astrology, etc.), to cope with everyday situations and general stressors (see Tracey 2023). This activation of meaning-seeking systems is driven by a desire for coherence, mastery, control, certainty, identity, answers to existential questions, guidance for behavior, and setting goals (Park et al. 2013). This is even observed in emerging adults, as evidenced by the participants in this study, where their

religiosity tends to be individualized and detached from traditional forms of religiosity. In the face of these traditional forms, they exhibit skepticism and criticism (see Smith and Snell 2008).

According to Pargament (1997), religion plays a central role in the meaning systems of many people. It is observed across almost all cultures that individuals seek meaning through their relationships with the sacred, thereby fulfilling their need for meaning in life.

Although religion and spirituality share the pursuit of the sacred (Zinnbauer et al. 1999; Tracey 2023) and encompass thoughts, behaviors, and feelings (Emmons and Paloutzian 2003), the modern (Watts 2018) and postmodern (Sherwood 2016) conceptualization of spirituality tends to highlight the differences rather than similarities between these two concepts. From the perspective of young adults, religion comes to be considered even harmful, contrasting with the practical and beneficial view of spirituality (Sherwood 2016). Religion is "anchored in authoritative spiritual traditions that transcend the individual and point to vast realities in which the individual is situated" (Emmons and Paloutzian 2003). Conversely, the evolution of spirituality's conceptualization has yielded numerous definitions that extend the notions of transcendence and the sacred beyond the confines of traditional religions.

For instance, Pargament (1999) offers a definition of spirituality as "the capacity to infuse everyday experiences, goals, roles, and responsibilities with sacredness" (cited in Emmons and Paloutzian 2003, p. 382). The concept of the sacred, associated with "a divine being, divine object, ultimate reality, or Ultimate Truth as perceived by the individual" (Hill et al. 2000, p. 68), can be linked with both (traditional) religions and (modern) forms of spirituality, such as New Age movements, psychospiritual practices, and new religious movements. In this sense, spirituality represents a broader concept focused on the quest for meaning and purpose in life, as well as connections with oneself, others, the environment, and the sacred (González-Rivera 2017).

1.1. Religion, Spirituality, and Their Relationships with Student Engagement and Satisfaction with Learning

Although the literature review did not reveal previous studies on how religion and spirituality contribute to students' learning satisfaction, both are integral parts of the culture and the social and academic environment that influence academic success and holistic student development (Trautvetter 2007). While religion can have negative influences on individual, community, and societal well-being, it also has positive effects (Maton et al. 2005) and is considered a protective factor that can lead to emotionally healthy behaviors (Lazarus and Ellis 2014). This positive influence extends to spirituality (Lerner et al. 2008), resulting in positive outcomes, including environmentalism, risk behaviors, volunteerism, and self-rated overall health (Benson et al. 2012). Spirituality also has positive effects on prosocial personality (Furrow et al. 2004), character, and student success (Trautvetter 2007). Kessler (1998) argued that spiritual experiences "not only nourish students' spiritual development, they also help them transcend prejudice, increase academic motivation, improve focus and cooperation, foster creativity, and keep more kids in school" (p. 159).

From another perspective, given the fact that religion and spirituality can be influenced by positive events (Saroglou et al. 2008) and are both related to well-being (Van Cappellen et al. 2016), as well as to positive youth development (see Benson et al. 2012; King 2008), satisfaction with learning, which implies positive emotions, could be positively associated with expressions of religion and spirituality.

1.2. Meaning of Life and Crisis of Meaning, and Their Relationships with Student Engagement and Satisfaction with Learning

Meaning in life has been positively related to engagement because it has a positive influence on the intensity with which people invest in their lives (Ryff and Singer 1998). Its positive influence on learning has been related to the motivational goal-directed, cognitive, and affective components of this construct (Garrosa et al. 2017).

Although the literature review did not show any previous study linking this factor to student engagement, satisfaction with learning has been associated with a construct similar to that of student engagement. Engaged learning is defined in a very similar way to "student engagement": engaged learning is "a positive energy invested in one's own learning, evidenced by meaningful processing, attention to what is happening in the moment, and involvement in learning activities" (Schreiner and Louis 2011). In this context, satisfaction with learning was related to the psychological components (i.e., meaningful processing and focused attention) of engaged learning (Louis 2015). In this theoretical context, it seems appropriate to think that an engaged student will probably be satisfied with their learning.

On the other hand, *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Turnbull et al. 2010) defined satisfaction as the good feeling that you have when you have achieved something or when something you wanted to happen does happen; something that gives you a feeling to gain/derive satisfaction from something (in Elegba and Adagh 2015). Taken together, the definitions of the meaning of life and satisfaction may share the importance of achieving goals as a source of meaning and satisfaction. Although we did not find empirical studies connecting the meaning of life and satisfaction with learning, a sense of meaning in life was related to self-esteem, healthy social relationships, and good academic adjustment in Kiang and Fuligni (2010). In addition, Hagedorn (2012) concluded that academic life may contribute to happiness and purpose.

Another study involving 60 students who had attempted suicide (Frankl 1991) revealed that 85% of them reported having a life without meaning. Among these, 93% had good physical and mental health, were in stable economic situations and committed to their relationships, and could also be satisfied with their academic progress. More recently, the search for meaning has been associated with lower life satisfaction (Steger et al. 2011), less control over the environment, dissatisfaction with relationships, and lower psychological well-being (Steger et al. 2008). This was also negatively related to engagement and emotional exhaustion in students (Garrosa et al. 2017).

2. This Study

This study aims to investigate the relationships between religiousness, the meaning of life, the search for and crisis of meaning, learning engagement, and satisfaction with learning in university students. To accomplish this, the following three objectives were considered:

- To explore relationships between measures of religion/spirituality and the meaning of life, with measures of engagement and satisfaction with learning;
- To examine the influence of religiosity on learning engagement beyond the effect of the meaning of life;
- To study the influence of religiosity on satisfaction with learning beyond the effect of the meaning of life.

Although, to our knowledge, no previous studies have analyzed the relationships outlined in the first objective, given the fact that previous studies have indicated the positive contribution of measures of the presence and search for meaning (as mentioned above), we anticipate that this trend will be confirmed in our study: positive relationships between measures of the search and presence of meaning, and engagement and satisfaction with learning, as well as negative relationships between these and the crisis of meaning.

The rationale behind objectives two and three, as well as the hypotheses that will be tested, are based on previous studies that linked student engagement with dimensions of religion and the meaning of life but did not explore the distinct contributions of religion and the meaning of life to student engagement. This theoretical justification and the study's approach were detailed earlier: first, by examining the relationship between engagement and religiosity; second, by establishing the relationship between engagement and satisfaction with learning, and the meaning of life. While previous studies have demonstrated the impact of religion on the meaning of life, we expect that the results of our study will reveal

the distinct contributions of both variables to engagement and satisfaction with learning, as we will differentiate between various expressions of meaning (i.e., presence, search for, and the crisis of meaning), religion (i.e., religiosity comprising intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest religious motivation dimensions), and spirituality (cognitive orientation toward spirituality, religious experience/spiritual, and paranormal beliefs).

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Four hundred and fifty students from the University of Granada, enrolled in the field of Social and Legal Sciences, participated in this research. They ranged in age from 17 to 50 years (M = 20.82, s = 3.09), with a majority of women (89.1%) compared to men (10.9%).

3.2. Procedure

After being informed about the study's objectives, the students signed a Free and Informed Consent Form, following ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. They were also made aware of their option to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any penalties. Previously, the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Granada approved this study in its report No. 638/CEIH/2018, confirming that it respects the principles established in international and national legislation in the field of biomedicine, biotechnology, and bioethics, as well as the rights derived from the protection of personal data.

3.3. Instruments

Meaning of life: With the aim of measuring different expressions of meaning in life present in previous studies, two instruments were selected: The Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire—SoMe (Schnell 2004, 2009; Schnell and Becker 2006, 2007) and The Meaning in Life Questionnaire—MLQ (Steger et al. 2006).

The Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire—SoMe (Schnell 2004, 2009; Schnell and Becker 2006, 2007) consists of 151 items with a 5-point Likert-type response format (0 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). It assesses 26 different sources of meaning, categorized into four dimensions: self-transcendence, self-actualization, order, well-being, and relationships. Additionally, it measures levels of meaning in life and existential crises using two separate subscales.

The existential crisis of meaning, the only scale adopted from SoMe in this study, is defined in this questionnaire as one that assesses the degree of existential emptiness and frustrated will for meaning. It comprises 5 items (e.g., "my life seems empty"), and in its original version, it demonstrated a reliability of $\alpha = 0.92$. For this study, an adaptation process was undertaken, which included an examination of its psychometric properties. The translation of the SoMe questionnaire was performed from English to Spanish by a professional translator.

Structural validity and internal consistency: The evaluation process of the structural validity and internal consistency of SoMe in Spanish began by comparing its structure to the one proposed in the original questionnaire. This involved assessing the Meaning and Meaning Crisis scales, each consisting of 5 items, and the 26 subscales of sources of meaning, comprising the remaining 141 items in the questionnaire.

The confirmatory factor analysis of the fit of the structure of the two Meaning and Meaning Crisis scales to the original model showed a poor fit of the model defined by the original structure to the data (see Table 1). An exploratory analysis conducted on the set of 10 items that define these two scales revealed a structure similar to the original, composed of two factors but distinct from it in item #1 (i.e., "I lead a fulfilling life"), which displayed a negative saturation in the Meaning Crisis factor. This negative saturation was coherent, considering the similarity in content between that item and the rest of the items belonging to that factor, which had a strong similarity in vocabulary usage. This item was assigned to the Meaning factor in the original version. The factor loadings for

each of these two dimensions of meaning (i.e., Meaning and Meaning Crisis) ranged in absolute values between 0.52 and 0.88 for the Meaning Crisis factor and 0.42 and 0.79 for the Meaning factor. Although items 29 and 57 also showed negative saturation in the Meaning Crisis factor with factor loadings close to 0.40, the original structure was maintained as it was more theoretically appropriate and showed higher factor loadings in the Meaning factor, to which they belonged in the original questionnaire. The analysis using structural equations to assess the fit of this second theoretical model to the data displayed better goodness-of-fit indices than the original model to the data, although it still showed limited fit (see Table 1), with satisfactory values for the CFI and NFI indices (Bentler and Bonett 1980) and a reasonable (see Browne and Cudeck 1993) root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA). The lower value of the comparative fit index AIC for this third model also indicated it as the most suitable of the three evaluated.

Table 1. Confirmatory factor analysis of the Meaning and Meaning Crisis scales.

	χ^2	gl	FI	NFI	TLI	AIC	RMSEA
Original model [1]	557.51	34	0.90	0.89	0.84	619.96	0.10
Two factors (10 items) [2]	469.28	34	0.92	0.91	0.87	531.28	0.09
Two factors (8 items) [3]	213.82	19	0.96	0.96	0.92	263.38	0.08

[1] Two independent factors with an equal number of items: Meaning (items 1, 29, 57, 85, and 113) and Meaning Crisis (items 2, 30, 58, 86, and 114). [2] Two independent factors of Meaning and Meaning Crisis, composed of four items (29, 57, 85, and 113) and six items (1, 2, 30, 58, 86, and 114), respectively. [3] Two factors composed of four items each: Meaning (items 29, 57, 85, and 113) and Meaning Crisis (items 30, 58, 86, and 114).

The internal consistency of the factors in each model highlighted the appropriateness of subjecting a third model to evaluation, which would have superior internal consistency compared to the two models evaluated (see Table 2). This final model consisted of two factors, each with four items, bearing the same name and meaning as in the previous two models but with superior internal consistency, considered excellent by some studies in the case of the "Meaning Crisis" factor and sufficient or acceptable in the case of the Meaning factor but considered insufficient by others (see Table 2).

Table 2. Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the Meaning and Meaning Crisis factors in each of the evaluated models.

	Meaning	Meaning Crisis
Original model [1]	0.57	0.83
Two factors and 10 items [2]	0.56	0.70
Two factors of 4 items [3]	0.56	0.91

[1] Two independent factors with an equal number of items: Meaning (items 1, 29, 57, 85, and 113) and Meaning Crisis (items 2, 30, 58, 86, and 114). [2] Two independent factors of Meaning and Meaning Crisis, composed of four items (29, 57, 85, and 113) and six items (1, 2, 30, 58, 86, and 114), respectively. [3] Two factors composed of four items each: Meaning (items 29, 57, 85, and 113) and Meaning Crisis (items 30, 58, 86, and 114).

The confirmatory analysis contrasting the presence in the Spanish version of the questionnaire of a theoretical model based on a four-factor structure of sources of meaning, as proposed in the original questionnaire, showed limited fit (χ^2 = 2367.59, df = 285, GFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.29, RMSEA = 0.06, and AIC = 2499.59). The model with better-fit indices resulted from conducting an exploratory factor analysis on the collected data. This analysis revealed a five-factor structure, different from the original questionnaire but with theoretical meaning.

The factorial structure of the questionnaire displayed a first factor (α = 0.87) that grouped sources of meaning in which the individual's engagement with them, similar to the original questionnaire's horizontal self-transcendence factor, signified an orientation of the person beyond oneself toward society, nature, and others, and even the enhancement of one's own capabilities. This factor included sources of self-knowledge, unity with

nature, social engagement, knowledge, harmony, generativity, creativity, development, and freedom.

In contrast to the previous factor with a social and community orientation, a second factor ($\alpha = 0.87$) grouped sources of meaning with a more individual character, pointing to more individualized objectives oriented toward individual promotion and how to achieve it (e.g., challenge, individualism, power, achievement, and practicality), more related to the original factor called self-actualization.

The third factor ($\alpha = 0.72$) collected sources of meaning oriented toward pleasure and affect (e.g., comfort, community, fun, love, care, and attention), all of which were linked to the well-being and relationship factor in the original questionnaire.

The fourth factor ($\alpha = 0.72$) integrated sources of meaning related to religion and spirituality (explicit religiosity, spirituality, and tradition), linked to the dimension of vertical self-transcendence present in the original questionnaire.

Finally, a fifth factor ($\alpha = 0.59$) grouped three sources of meaning that engage the individual in self-care related to health, rational action (e.g., reason), and ethics (e.g., morality), close to the original Order factor but conceptually extended to include the individual's health dimension. These five factors explained 58.08% of the variance. The best-fit indices for the model were obtained after completing the initial model with modifications suggested by the modification indices provided in the AMOS 21 program ($\chi^2 = 1314.72$, df = 221, GFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.52, RMSEA = 0.05, and AIC = 1574.72). This resulted in a complex model due to the high number of interrelationships between factors and observed variables that indicated a high correlation between factors. In line with the principle of parsimony widely applied in statistics, which suggests a preference for simpler models over more complex ones, the simpler model, without interrelationships between elements, is more suitable due to its greater explanatory potential. This interrelation of elements is understandable due to the semantic similarity that exists in the Spanish cultural context between items from different factors of the original structure.

The Spanish version of The Meaning in Life Questionnaire—MLQ (Steger et al. 2006), developed by Steger and Zaccagnini and available on the original author's website (http://www.michaelfsteger.com/?page_id=13, accessed on 13 January 2022), was also used. It consists of 10 items assessing the meaning of life expressed in two subscales, each with 5 items: the presence of meaning (e.g., "I have discovered a satisfying life purpose") and the search for meaning (e.g., "I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful"). Each item is measured using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = absolutely false, 7 = absolutely true).

Engagement: The Spanish version of the Well-being Survey in the Academic Context—UWES-S (Schaufeli et al. 2002) was employed. It measures engagement through the dimensions of vigor (e.g., "I feel strong and vigorous when I am studying or attending classes"), dedication (e.g., "My studies inspire new things in me"), and absorption (e.g., "I forget everything around me when I am absorbed in my studies"). It consists of 17 items with a 6-point response format (0 = never, 6 = always). The reliability found was 0.78, 0.84, and 0.80, respectively. The complete scale is available on the author's website (https://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/publications/Schaufeli/Test%2520Manuals/Test_manual_UWES_Espanol.pdf, accessed on 13 January 2022).

Satisfaction with learning: The Muñoz-García and Aviles-Herrera (2014) satisfaction with learning questionnaire was employed. It consists of 5 items (e.g., "I am totally satisfied with what I get from my study and learning time") asking the respondent to rate their level of satisfaction with the tasks they perform, the time spent, and the results obtained in their study and learning processes. This instrument uses a 5-point Likert-type response scale with a score range from 1 (very low) to 5 (very much). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.84.

Religiosity: An adaptation in Spanish by Ramírez (2006) of Batson and Ventis' (1982) religious orientation scale was used. It measures 3 dimensions of religiousness: an intrinsic dimension with 8 items, an extrinsic dimension with 11 items, and a search dimension

with 12 items. The first dimension is characteristic of individuals for whom religion gives meaning to their lives, prioritizing it above other secondary aspects. They tend to internalize the beliefs and precepts of their professed religion. On the other hand, the extrinsic religious orientation is characteristic of individuals who use religion to achieve other ends, relegating religion to a secondary role, with their primary focus being what religion provides them (e.g., security, social relationships, distractions, etc.). The quest religious orientation describes a person who questions their beliefs, values doubt, uncertainty, and self-questioning about religious and spiritual matters. It employs a 9-point Likert-type response scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 9 = Strongly agree). The reliability of the scale for this sample, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.92, 0.84, and 0.87 for the intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest religious orientation scales, respectively.

Additionally, three subscales of the Expression of Spirituality Inventory by Douglas A. MacDonald (2000), adapted to Spanish by Muñoz-García (2013), were used. Each of these scales consists of 6 items using a 5-point response format (0–4). The scale of paranormal beliefs assesses the degree of belief in phenomena related to witchcraft and spiritualism (e.g., ghosts) and other psychological phenomena (e.g., psychokinesis). Six other items collect information on experiential expressions of spirituality, both of a religious and spiritual or transcendental nature (e.g., "I have had an experience in which all things seemed divine"). The scale of cognitive orientation toward spirituality assesses the relevance and importance of beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about spirituality to a person's functioning (e.g., "Spirituality is an essential part of human existence"). The reliability coefficient for these scales in this study was 0.80, 0.89, and 0.90 for the scales of paranormal beliefs, experiential/phenomenological dimension, and cognitive orientation toward spirituality, respectively.

3.4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical techniques were used to characterize the sample based on the study variables (n, mean, standard deviation, potential range, and observed responses). Since none of the variables exhibited a normal distribution, Spearman's Rho statistic was employed to analyze the correlations between the religion/spirituality and meaning-seeking variables and those related to satisfaction and learning engagement.

Due to the violation of the statistical assumption of a normal distribution of the dependent variable, which is necessary for the use of linear regression analysis, binary logistic regression was chosen. To this end, all dependent variables (e.g., vigor, dedication, absorption, engagement, and satisfaction with learning) were converted into dichotomous variables as dummy variables (1 = presence of the trait, 0 = limited presence of the trait in the variable). The criterion for assigning to the category had a score greater than the mean minus one standard deviation. In the regression analysis, the variables were introduced in three blocks to study the changes in the reference models at each step. The variables related to meaning in life, religiosity, and spirituality were introduced in blocks 1, 2, and 3, respectively, using the Enter technique, which includes all variables in an initial model and then evaluates which variable contributes the least to the prediction of the dependent variable. It constructs a new model, excluding the variable, and repeats the process until it is not possible to eliminate any more variables.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Analysis of the Study Variables

The average scores obtained by the participants in each of the study variables were above the potential mean value considering the range of potential scores. Furthermore, the scores exhibited a wide dispersion, covering the entire spectrum of possible minimum and maximum scores. When considering the potential mean values and the observed average scores, the sample as a whole showed higher scores in vigor and absorption, and lower scores in dedication to learning. The average score for learning engagement fell within the third tertile, based on the range of potential scores. The same trend was observed for

the dimensions of religion and spirituality, as well as meaning, with the exception of the meaning crisis, where the average score was in the first tertile. However, satisfaction with learning was lower, with an average value being only four units above the midpoint of the potential score range.

Overall, these results depict a sample that is generally committed to learning, not very satisfied with their learning, finding meaning in life and/or seeking it, and experiencing a much lower level of meaning crisis (see Table 3).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the variables related to religion/spirituality, meaning in life, and engagement and satisfaction with learning (n = 450).

	M	**s**	**Observed Range (Potential Range)**
Student Learning Dimensions			
Vigor	20.77	6.63	3–35(0–36)
Dedication	24.58	5.07	1–30(0–30)
Absorption	22.25	6.76	0–36(0–36)
Student engagement	67.60	16.38	6–101(0–102)
Satisfaction with learning	24.18	5.69	5–35 (5–35)
Meaning of life dimensions			
Meaning of life	24.72	5.79	5–35(5–35)
Search for meaning	23.63	6.72	5–35(5–35)
Crisis of meaning	7.48	5.14	0–25(0–25)
Religiousness			
Extrinsic religious orientation	35.97	16.92	11–86(11–99)
Intrinsic religious orientation	18.93	13.87	8–72 (8–72)
Quest religious orientation	46.73	21.79	12–105(12–118)
Cognitive orientation toward spirituality	10.64	6.49	0–24(0–24)
Experiential/phenomenological dimension	5.80	5.75	0–24(0–24)
Paranormal beliefs	8.95	5.49	0–24(0–24)

4.2. Correlation Analysis between Meaning of Life and Religion/Spirituality Variables and Factors of Engagement and Satisfaction with Learning

The presence of meaning in life and the crisis of meaning were related to all dimensions of learning engagement. However, while the former was positively related, the latter showed an inverse relationship (see Table 4). The same positive trend was observed concerning the search for meaning, except for dedication to learning, which appeared to be independent of it. Regarding satisfaction with learning, it was positively related to the sense of life, negatively related to the crisis of meaning, and appeared to be independent of the search for meaning.

Extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientations showed a similar pattern of relationships, positively correlating with vigor, absorption, and engagement in learning. They were independent of dedication to learning and satisfaction with it. The quest religious orientation exhibited limited connections to learning dimensions, with only one positive relationship observed, namely with absorption in learning. The significance of spirituality was positively related to all measures of engagement in learning, as well as satisfaction with it. A similar trend was observed in the experiential/phenomenological dimension, although it was more limited in this case as it appeared to be independent of dedication to learning. Finally, paranormal beliefs were positively related to learning engagement while remaining independent of satisfaction with it.

Table 4. Analysis of correlations between religion/spirituality and meaning of life variables with engagement and satisfaction with learning factors (n = 450).

	VI	DE	AB	LE	SL
Meaning of life dimensions					
Meaning of life	0.33 **	0.39 **	0.27 **	0.37 **	0.39 **
Search for meaning	0.13 **	0.07	0.10 *	0.12 *	0.06
Crisis of meaning	−0.16 **	−0.27 **	−0.14 *	−0.22 **	−0.35 **
Religiousness					
Extrinsic religious orientation	0.19 **	0.09	0.18 **	0.18 **	0.06
Intrinsic religious orientation	0.15 **	−0.02	0.12 **	0.11 *	0.00
Quest religious orientation	0.06	0.08	0.10 *	0.09	0.04
Cognitive orientation toward spirituality	0.17 **	0.19 **	0.17 **	0.19 **	0.10 *
Experiential/phenomenological dimension	0.17 **	0.07	0.15 **	0.15 **	0.11 *
Paranormal beliefs	0.16 **	0.12 *	0.15 **	0.16 **	0.05

Note: * $p = 0.05$ ** $p = 0.01$ Vi = vigor; De = dedication, Ab = absorption, LA = learning engagement, SL = satisfaction with learning.

4.3. Regression Analysis of Meaning of Life and Religion/Spirituality Variables on the Dimensions of Engagement and Satisfaction with Learning

　　The binary logistic regression analysis model, aimed at understanding the relevant features of the meaning of life and religiosity/spirituality in predicting the dimensions of engagement and satisfaction with learning, was appropriate, as the statistical significance of the Chi-Square in the omnibus test was observed for all variables and each of the three steps (see Table 5). Additionally, the percentage of cases predicted by the proposed models for each dependent variable was also appropriate.

Table 5. Omnibus tests of model coefficients for each of the dependent variables, with overall predicted percentage.

	Step	Chi-Square	DF	*p*	OPCP	−2LV	RCox	RNag
Vigor	1	24.91	3	<0.001	79.6	430.942	0.054	0.085
	2	35.19	6	<0.001	78.9	420.666	0.075	0.118
	3	42.03	9	<0.001	80.4	413.818	0.089	0.140
Dedication	1	49.46	3	<0.001	66.4	560.788	0.104	0.140
	2	56.92	6	<0.001	66.2	553.329	0.119	0.160
	3	63.67	9	<0.001	66.0	546.571	0.132	0.178
Absorption	1	24.79	3	<0.001	73.3	484.577	0.054	0.079
	2	35.86	6	<0.001	73.8	473.514	0.077	0.113
	3	50.99	9	<0.001	75.6	458.384	0.107	0.158
Learning engagement	1	37.09	3	<0.001	84.0	341.611	0.079	0.139
	2	53.97	6	<0.001	84.2	324.728	0.113	0.199
	3	60.07	9	<0.001	83.1	318.630	0.125	0.220
Satisfaction with Learning	1	49.71	3	<0.001	84.4	342.657	0.105	0.180
	2	54.56	6	<0.001	83.8	337.813	0.114	0.196
	3	71.76	9	<0.001	85.6	320.610	0.147	0.253

Note: OPCP = Overall percentage correctly predicted; −2LV = −2 log-likelihood, RCox = R-square and Snell, RNag = Nagelkerte R-square.

- Satisfaction with learning:

　　The regression analysis of the dimensions of the meaning of life on satisfaction with learning, introduced in the first step, showed the relevance of presence (B = 0.85, $p = 0.002$), search (B = 0.06, $p = 0.009$), and the crisis of meaning (B = −0.10, $p = 0.002$) in the changes that occur in this dependent variable. However, the crisis of meaning had a negative relationship: learning satisfaction decreased as the student's sense of meaning crisis increased.

The introduction of different types of religious orientation in the second step did not change the role of the meaning dimensions in predicting satisfaction with learning. Neither extrinsic religious orientation (B = 0.01, p = 0.347), nor intrinsic religious orientation (B = −0.02, p = 0.348) or quest religious orientation (B = −0.01, p = 0.084) were found to be significant in predicting learning satisfaction.

Finally, in the third block, only paranormal beliefs proved to be relevant as a predictor variable (B = 0.12, p = 0.001). This indicates that students with such beliefs tend to be more satisfied with their learning, and even when their life has meaning, they are in search of it and do not have a significant sense of meaning crisis or it is low. Religion, in the presence of the other variables, is not significant in predicting learning satisfaction, nor are phenomenological experience or the importance of spirituality. The results of the third step of this analysis, with all the variables introduced, are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Variables of the binary logistic regression model for satisfaction with learning.

	B	**Se**	**Wald**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**
Meaning of life	0.085	0.031	7.780	1	0.005	1.089
Search of meaning	0.054	0.024	4.962	1	0.026	1.056
Crisis of meaning	−0.126	0.036	12.281	1	<0.001	0.882
Extrinsic religious orientation	0.005	0.016	0.111	1	0.739	1.005
Intrinsic religious orientation	−0.025	0.018	1.947	1	0.163	0.975
Quest religious orientation	−0.015	0.009	2.625	1	0.105	0.985
Cognitive orientation toward spirituality	0.033	0.033	1.005	1	0.316	1.033
Experiential/phenomenological dimension	−0.015	0.037	0.166	1	0.683	0.985
Paranormal beliefs	0.120	0.037	10.541	1	0.001	1.128
Constant	−0.705	0.973	0.526	1	0.468	0.494

Considering the odds ratio values (Exp(B)), shown in the last column, we observed a similar influence on satisfaction with learning from the three variables that were found significant in the third step of the model, with paranormal beliefs slightly outweighing the presence and search for meaning in life.

- Vigor in learning:

Of the three dimensions of meaning in life introduced in the first step of the regression analysis, only presence (B = 0.55, p = 0.029) and search for meaning (B = 0.49, p = 0.009) proved to be significant in predicting vigor in learning. The crisis of meaning did not show a significant influence on this variable (B = −0.06, p = 0.058). In addition, intrinsic religiosity (B = −0.04, p = 0.011) and extrinsic religiosity (B = 0.04, p = 0.002) also proved to be relevant in predicting this variable, in contrast to the quest religious orientation (B = −0.01, p = 0.244). The influence of the dimensions of meaning persisted even in the presence of these two variables, as well as the importance of spirituality (B = −0.02, p = 0.488), the experiential dimension (B = −0.05, p = 0.118), and paranormal beliefs (B = −0.02, p = 0.551), whose influence on vigor in learning was not statistically significant (see Table 7).

The odds ratio values (Exp(B)) shown in the last column indicate that changes in the search for meaning and extrinsic religious orientation have slightly more influence on vigor in learning than the crisis of meaning and intrinsic religious orientation, although the difference is minimal.

- Dedication to learning:

Table 7. Variables in the binary logistic regression model of vigor in learning.

	B	Se	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Meaning of life	0.050	0.027	3.564	1	0.059	1.052
Search of meaning	0.043	0.020	4.676	1	0.031	1.044
Crisis of meaning	−0.068	0.031	4.791	1	0.029	0.935
Extrinsic religious orientation	0.040	0.013	9.004	1	0.003	1.041
Intrinsic religious orientation	−0.047	0.015	9.773	1	0.002	0.954
Quest religious orientation	−0.012	0.008	2.344	1	0.126	0.988
Cognitive orientation toward spirituality	0.019	0.027	0.481	1	0.488	1.019
Experiential/phenomenological dimension	0.047	0.030	2.445	1	0.118	1.048
Paranormal beliefs	0.017	0.029	0.355	1	0.551	1.017
Constant	−0.825	0.867	0.906	1	0.341	0.438

The regression analysis of the dimensions of the sense of life on dedication to learning, in this first step, showed a limited influence of these variables, with the effect of these variables being limited to the presence of a sense of life (B = 0.85, p = 0.002), and the search for meaning (B = 0.85, p = 0.002); the effect of the crisis of meaning (B = 0.85, p = 0.002) was not significant. Among the dimensions of religious orientation, only the influence of the extrinsic orientation was significant (B = 0.85, p = 0.002), in contrast to intrinsic (B = 0.85, p = 0.002) and quest (B = 0.85, p = 0.002) orientations. Neither the importance of spirituality (B = 0.01, p = 0.623) nor phenomenological experience (B = 0.02, p = 0.426) or paranormal beliefs (B = 0.04, p = 0.132) showed a significant influence on dedication to learning when introduced in the third step (see Table 8), in which only the presence of meaning was significant.

Table 8. Variables in the binary logistic regression model for dedication to learning.

	B	Se	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Meaning of life	0.114	0.025	20.849	1	<0.001	1.120
Search of meaning	0.026	0.016	2.613	1	0.106	1.027
Crisis of meaning	−0.013	0.027	0.225	1	0.636	0.987
Extrinsic religious orientation	0.021	0.011	3.742	1	0.053	1.021
Intrinsic religious orientation	−0.009	0.013	0.442	1	0.506	0.991
Quest religious orientation	−0.012	0.007	2.888	1	0.089	0.989
Cognitive orientation toward spirituality	0.011	0.023	0.242	1	0.623	1.011
Experiential/phenomenological dimension	0.020	0.025	0.633	1	0.426	1.020
Paranormal beliefs	0.036	0.024	2.265	1	0.132	1.037
Constant	−3.579	0.815	19.277	1	<0.001	0.028

The odds ratio values shown in the last column, and the loss of influence on the dedication to learning of the rest of the variables when the meaning of life was introduced in the third step of the model, indicated this last variable as the most important in relation to the dedication to learning.

- Learning Absorption:

The regression analysis of the dimensions of meaning in life on learning absorption showed the relevance of the presence of meaning in life (B = 0.07, p = 0.006) and its search (B = 0.04, p = 0.022) in predicting this variable. The influence of the dimensions of meaning did not extend to the crisis of meaning (B = −0.04, p = 0.189), which was not statistically significant. However, extrinsic (B = 0.04, p = 0.002) and intrinsic (B = −0.03, p = 0.023) religious orientations were found to be significant, while the religious orientation of searching (B = −0.00, p = 0.641) was not. The introduction of spirituality variables in

the third step highlighted the relevance of the experiential/phenomenological dimension on learning absorption (B = 0.09, $p = 0.003$) and the lack of significance of the importance of spirituality (B = −0.02, $p = 0.384$) and paranormal beliefs (B = 0.02, $p = 0.369$). The introduction of these variables in the third step had an additional effect on the variables introduced in previous steps: while the influence of the presence of meaning (B = 0.06, $p = 0.020$) and extrinsic (B = 0.04, $p = 0.004$) and intrinsic (B = −0.04, $p = 0.005$) religious orientations were maintained, the negative influence of the crisis of meaning (B = −0.06, $p = 0.047$) was also observed (see Table 9).

Table 9. Variables of the binary logistic regression model for learning absorption.

	B	Se	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Meaning of life	0.060	0.026	5.398	1	0.020	1.061
Search of meaning	0.029	0.018	2.449	1	0.118	1.029
Crisis of meaning	−0.059	0.030	3.954	1	0.047	0.942
Extrinsic religious orientation	0.036	0.012	8.479	1	0.004	1.037
Intrinsic religious orientation	−0.039	0.014	7.805	1	0.005	0.961
Quest religious orientation	−0.004	0.008	0.310	1	0.578	0.996
Cognitive orientation toward spirituality	−0.022	0.025	0.758	1	0.384	0.978
Experiential/phenomenological dimension	0.088	0.029	9.073	1	0.003	1.092
Paranormal beliefs	0.024	0.027	0.806	1	0.369	1.024
Constant	−1.339	0.830	2.600	1	0.107	0.262

When observing the odds ratio values (Exp(B)), shown in the last column, although there were no significant differences among the variables, it was the meaning of life and extrinsic religious orientation that most affected the learning engagement, increasing it tenfold for each unit of these independent variables.

- Learning engagement:

The regression analysis of the dimensions of the sense of life on the learning engagement showed the relevance of the presence of meaning in life (B = 0.12, $p < 0.001$), but not its search (B = 0.02, $p = 0.437$) or crisis (B = −0.03, $p = 0.346$), in predicting this variable in the first step of the model. In the second step of the model, extrinsic (B = 0.05, $p < 0.001$) and intrinsic (B = −0.06, $p < 0.001$) religious orientations were significant but not the quest religious orientation (B = −0.02, $p = 0.069$). The introduction of these variables in the model in the second step did not change the previously observed relationships between dimensions of the sense of life and learning engagement. There were no significant effects observed for the importance of spirituality (B = 0.03, $p = 0.346$), the experiential/phenomenological dimension (B = 0.03, $p = 0.412$), or paranormal beliefs (B = 0.036, $p = 0.291$) on learning engagement when introducing these variables in the third and final step of the model. These changes affected the influence of the religious orientation of seeking, whose effect on learning engagement was very slight, although negative (B = −0.02, $p = 0.041$) (see Table 10).

The odds ratio values (Exp(B)), shown in the last column, indicate that the meaning of life is the variable with the greatest impact on learning engagement. Although there were no significant differences, it was followed in relevance by the extrinsic, intrinsic, and quest religious orientations.

Table 10. Variables of the binary logistic regression model for learning engagement.

	B	Se	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Meaning of life	0.130	0.031	16.974	1	<0.001	1.139
Search of meaning	0.008	0.025	0.098	1	0.755	1.008
Crisis of meaning	−0.035	0.034	1.084	1	0.298	0.965
Extrinsic religious orientation	0.051	0.016	10.394	1	0.001	1.053
Intrinsic religious orientation	−0.071	0.018	15.711	1	<0.001	0.931
Quest religious orientation	−0.019	0.009	4.165	1	0.041	0.981
Cognitive orientation toward spirituality	0.031	0.033	0.890	1	0.346	1.031
Experiential/phenomenological dimension	0.029	0.035	0.672	1	0.412	1.029
Paranormal beliefs	0.036	0.034	1.115	1	0.291	1.037
Constant	−1.428	0.966	2.186	1	0.139	0.240

5. Discussion

5.1. Discussion of the Results Regarding the Relationships between Measures of Meaning in Life and Religion/Spirituality on Student Engagement and Satisfaction with Learning

The first aim of this study was to explore the relationships between expressions of meaning in life and religion, as well as those related to university student engagement and satisfaction with learning.

The descriptive analysis of the sample used to study these relationships revealed wide variations among individuals. However, it also highlighted that, overall, it is more common for individuals to have found meaning in life or be in the process of searching for it than to experience a crisis of meaning. From the perspective of identity theory developed by Marcia et al. (1993), we can consider this situation positively. Finding elements of support that give meaning to life or seeking them are adaptive situations indicative of well-functioning, whereas their absence is a sign of maladjustment, which could be compared to an identity crisis or identity diffusion.

In terms of religiosity, it tended to be below the mean, with the average values for extrinsic, intrinsic, and quest religious orientations falling within the second quartile, indicating limited religiosity. Spirituality is not highly valued, and experiences of transcendence are generally reduced. The significance of spirituality and the relevance of beliefs in paranormal phenomena coincide with the youth's landscape (see González-Anleo et al. 2020). They indicate that young people are less concerned about what is said in churches or religious centers and increasingly value spiritual beliefs over religious ones.

Regarding the factors related to learning, the scores tended to be high, indicating that the participants, in general, were committed to learning, particularly in terms of vigor and absorption, although somewhat less in dedication to learning. In other words, the study participants expressed a willingness to make an effort and persist in the face of difficulties and to focus on the learning and study processes. However, their enthusiasm and engagement are somewhat lower. These results are consistent with González-Anleo et al. (2020), which highlights the widespread value of education and the importance of educational institutions for young people as places where important things are discussed. The lack of enthusiasm and involvement may be attributed to a mismatch between the learning processes and resources used in education and the less traditional, technology-dependent methods observed in the young people of this generation (Zarra 2019).

Regarding engagement in learning, the relationship observed with the measures of meaning in life was as expected. Learning engagement tends to increase as individuals perceive that their life has a purpose, meaning, and coherence when they look at themselves and their lives (Steger 2009; cited in Garrosa et al. 2017). As this happens, students tend to become more engaged in their learning processes, showing higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption. This relationship may be related to the emotional and sensitive characteristics of the generation to which the young people in this study belong (Zarra 2019). The lack of relevance and connection of the curriculum contents with students' lives and

interests is associated with their lack of interest and engagement. Conversely, when educators understand how Generation Z learns, they can integrate technology, mobile phones, and social media into the learning processes, and connect with them; this makes education meaningful for students and facilitates their engagement.

The positive relationship observed in this study between meaning in life and engagement contrasts with the lack of a relationship between these variables observed by Garrosa et al. (2017). These researchers conducted a study with a similar sample but a different focus, aiming to determine the extent to which responses to academic demands experienced during the day could be related to the meaning of life in the afternoon. Perhaps the difference in the impact of meaning in life on these outcomes is due to the aspect taken as a reference in each study. Garrosa et al. (2017) started with a specific task or circumstance, while our approach is broader and more general. It is possible that there is less probability of affecting the individual's overall perception of having a purpose or mission in life, as included in Steger's (2009) definition of meaning in life when starting with a specific task or circumstance.

Moreover, the search for meaning showed a more limited influence on engagement. It was associated with persistence, effort, and attention, but it was not related to enthusiasm and excitement. This result is consistent with studies like that of Garrosa et al. (2017), which showed that emotional burdens during the learning process, such as having to find meaning, can negatively affect students' engagement despite their curiosity and interest in learning.

The crisis of meaning exhibited a relationship pattern similar to that of the presence of meaning but completely reversed regarding its relationships with engagement and satisfaction with learning. This relationship can be explained by the similarity in the way both constructs are defined, as they are seen as contrasting realities (Schmitz 2005; cited in Schnell 2014). Considering the fact that the crisis of meaning can result from a feeling of a threat to one's life (Janoff-Bulman 1992) or be experienced as an existential void, frustration, and hopelessness (Frankl 1990), this could account for the lack of enthusiasm and excitement shown in the study results. The decrease in enthusiasm and motivation resulting from a crisis of meaning could extend to many aspects of an individual's life, while dedication and absorption may be more influenced by specific educational tasks and the processes involved in them.

Satisfaction with learning exhibited a consistent pattern of relationships regarding the presence or absence of meaning in life. Satisfaction tends to increase when individuals find meaning in what they do, and it aligns with their own lives and other facets of their lives. Conversely, satisfaction decreases when these conditions are not met, such as in cases of a meaning crisis. This relationship can be explained by the fact that achieving goals, especially in the context of learning and studying, contributes to satisfaction (Elegba and Adagh 2015). Academic results also contribute to happiness and purpose (Hagedorn 2012). The independence from the search for meaning can be attributed to the fact that although the latter can contribute to the presence of meaning, they are distinct constructs (Steger et al. 2006). The observed satisfaction might be attributed to the achievement of specific accomplishments and goals (Elegba and Adagh 2015) as long as individuals find meaning in life. Further investigations, using more complex analyses, are needed to determine whether the lack of relationship can be conditioned by other intervening variables that may interfere with the negative effect of searching on well-being, especially religious or spiritual expressions given their link to meaning (Keyes et al. 2002; Hill et al. 2013; Hagedorn 2012). The analyses conducted in this study do not allow us to draw conclusions on this matter.

Regarding the influence of religion and spirituality on learning engagement, given the fact that religious beliefs are either outside personal interest in religion or are considered because of the positive effects they have on oneself, well-being, personal relationships, etc., religion was related to persistence, diligence in learning, and student engagement. However, it did not affect students' dedication to learning. Thus, intrinsic and extrinsic orientations exhibited similar patterns of relationships in terms of vigor, absorption, and

overall learning engagement, showing positive correlations with all of them, irrespective of students' engagement, enthusiasm, or the significance that a task holds for them. The difference in focus may explain the distinct correlations, particularly their independence from dedication to learning. The same applies to the religious/spiritual experience.

The importance of spirituality, expressed in terms of cognitive orientation toward spirituality, had a positive effect on all measures of learning engagement and satisfaction with learning. This cognitive–perceptual measure of spirituality is used to assess its relevance to the individual's personal functioning, beliefs, attitudes, and spiritual perceptions, which are distinct from religiosity or expression of beliefs through religious means. This relationship is consistent with the impact shown in González-Anleo et al. (2020) regarding the role of beliefs and spiritual elements in young people's lives, as well as the acknowledgment of the value of the educational processes in which they have participated, particularly education in values and for democratic citizenship. The fact that the religious orientation, in any of its forms, is independent of satisfaction with learning, while the experiential/phenomenological dimension has a positive effect, strengthens this relationship. The significance of the experiential and emotional dimension for the Generation Z (Zarra 2019) participants in this study, as well as the positive relationship between religious/spiritual experiences and psychological well-being in previous studies (e.g., Monson 2012), may explain this finding. Similarly, this result is consistent with the description of emerging adults in other contexts: more spiritual than religious, with a spirituality that is more individualized and private than communal, and where the personal experience of the sacred is more relevant than doctrine or institutional aspects (Watts 2018).

A particular expression of non-religious spirituality is belief in the paranormal. The results showed that higher belief in paranormal psychological phenomena (e.g., psychokinesis) or paranormal phenomena like witchcraft or ghosts was associated with greater learning engagement, across all its dimensions. However, it did not affect satisfaction with learning. Although there are no studies available for direct comparison, these results appear to contrast with the associations observed in previous studies between belief in the paranormal and worse psychological adjustment, as well as poorer well-being (see Dagnall et al. 2022). However, it is reasonable to think that, in the absence of traditional sources of meaning, these beliefs may serve the purpose that traditional beliefs used to fulfill by reducing uncertainty and facilitating a sense of control, structure, and meaning in reality (Irwin 2009). This presence of meaning may have a positive impact on student engagement by activating motivational and cognitive aspects, skills, and attitudes directed toward academic goals, and promoting their full participation (Garrosa et al. 2017).

5.2. Discussion of the Results on the Differential Influence of Measures of Meaning in Life and Religion/Spirituality on Engagement and Satisfaction with Learning

The second and third objectives aimed to contrast the influence of measures of religion and meaning in life on student engagement and satisfaction with learning, respectively. Regression analyses were used for this purpose.

In terms of satisfaction with learning, the measures of meaning (i.e., its presence, search, or absence) were more relevant than religious aspects or the importance of spirituality, which only affected through belief in the paranormal. Traditional religion was not significant in predicting student satisfaction with academic tasks. This independence of religion regarding satisfaction with learning aligns with the progressive decline in confidence in religion observed in Spanish youth since the 1990s, as well as the limited significance of religion for this group (González-Anleo et al. 2020). Conversely, as education is considered quite or very important by the majority of them as a transmitter of values and knowledge, and the academic context may offer a wide range of sources of meaning (e.g., self-acceptance, self-transcendence, achievement, self-actualization, and relationships) (see Schnell 2009; Wong 1998), it is reasonable to think that it can also be expressed in the form of satisfaction with learning.

Regarding vigor in learning, the demonstration of effort and persistence in the face of difficulties was related to dimensions of both meaning and traditional religion. This relationship corresponds to the relationship previously observed between religion and measures of academic adjustment (Good and Willoughby 2014), which, in our case, was shared by intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity measures. Even in the presence of religion, and the fact that it is a source of meaning (Wong 1998), the act of seeking it or being in a state of crisis still proves to be significant, perhaps due to their motivational aspects (Garrosa et al. 2017) that facilitate persistence in academic tasks, even in the face of challenges. The absence of a relationship between vigor and spirituality measures contrasts with the relationship observed between spirituality and well-adjustment and engagement in learning (e.g., Astin et al. 2011). Given the importance of cultural aspects and how different conceptions of spirituality influence questionnaire responses (Means and Jaeger 2016), the measure used in this study, namely the importance of spirituality, may have influenced the observed relationships.

In terms of dedication to learning, which involves the student's involvement in academic tasks, as well as the feeling of being engaged in them, finding meaning in them, and thus having a sense of enthusiasm and pride, it was only linked to the presence of meaning. This was the most relevant variable, even in the presence of dimensions of religion and spirituality, and the experience of the transcendent. Although we might think that the intrinsic connection between dedication and the meaning of the learning task could account for this relationship, the fact that its absence (meaning crisis) was not significant might suggest that expressions of religion or spirituality could counteract its effects. However, the fact that, in the first step of the model, the search for meaning and crisis were not significant, but the correlation between the latter and dedication to learning was significant (albeit negatively so), indicates that it is the search for meaning that interferes with the relationship. While a crisis of meaning is an obstacle to dedication, as it hinders learning engagement goals and objectives that could have a positive impact on the task (Garrosa et al. 2017), the search for meaning is positive in itself, involving an active role on the part of the individual (Steger 2009).

As for absorption in learning, it involves students' immersion and concentration in learning tasks, even experiencing the feeling that time passes quickly. Regression models showed the influence of religious experience. This experiential dimension of religiosity/spirituality affected the influence of meaning measures, specifically the meaning crisis, as it was not relevant until religious/spiritual experience was present. Intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity dimensions and the presence of meaning also remained significant. The fact that the lack of meaning does not negatively affect students' concentration and mindfulness in their tasks, except when they have a religious/spiritual experience, is consistent with the relationship observed in Głaz (2022) between experiencing the presence of God and a cognitive orientation related to well-being, such as life satisfaction. As in our results, the experience of God was independent of the presence of meaning in life. Since religiosity accompanied by religious/spiritual experience is a lived religion (see Hall 1997), practiced and assumed from within (Rincón 2018), and as such has a wide impact on the individual's daily life, as opposed to merely cultural or normative religiosity (e.g., Gebauer and Sedikides 2021), it is reasonable to think that this lived religiosity (Hall 1997) affects the meaning dimensions more significantly. It forms part of structures that, for the religious individual, support domains of intention, purpose, interpretation of reality, etc. (see Park 2005), and in this case, it influences the fact that not finding meaning in life when one is religious and has a divine experience negatively affects concentration and dedication, due to the effect of religious/spiritual inner struggle (Exline and Rose 2005).

Finally, learning engagement, a global measure that integrates vigor, dedication, and absorption, has been shown to be sensitive to the presence of meaning, being religious, or having a religious quest orientation. When it was present, engagement tended to be lower but only when we considered spiritual aspects such as the importance of spirituality, experience, or paranormal beliefs. These aspects did not impact total learning engagement.

While it is logical to think that when the academic task is meaningful to the student, they commit more, we also know that emotional aspects affect learning and its processes (Santrock 2021) and that learning engagement can also be affected by these (Kahu et al. 2015). In this sense, searching for religiosity can also interfere with well-being, even leading to mental health problems (Messay et al. 2012). These, in turn, can interfere with learning, given the previous relationship observed between emotional aspects and academic engagement (Kahu et al. 2015).

In future studies, it would be advisable to investigate whether this positive relationship between the importance of spirituality for the individual and engagement depends on an intrinsic interest in it, or perhaps it is linked to the participation, social contact, and support that some spiritual practices may offer over others, or even the type of well-being it provides, whether with oneself, the community, transcendence, or even nature. This can be especially relevant in the context of today's society, where a spirituality that connects the individual with nature, the universe, or the sacredness of life, outside of traditional religions, coexists with the transformative role of traditional religion, significantly diminished in contemporary times compared to the past (Tracey 2023). The religious–spiritual traits that sociologically characterize the generation to which the participants in this study are linked, indicating their interest in the search for purpose and meaning in life but without committing to traditional religious institutions (Howe and Strauss 2000), would also justify additional research aimed at delving into the aspects mentioned above.

5.3. Limitations, Theoretical–Practical Implications of the Study Results, and Conclusions

As for the limitations of this study, there are several to consider. The sample was observed to be diverse when looking at the dispersion observed in all study variables, with generally adequate levels in each of them, even with lower scores where the trait was healthy (i.e., meaning crisis). While this can be considered suitable, it would also be interesting to study how dimensions of engagement and satisfaction with learning are expressed in the presence of less meaning, less religious orientation, and less spirituality. Additionally, the distribution of the variables was not normal, which could have also influenced the results, although the techniques employed (i.e., non-parametric) were appropriate for the nature of the variables. Furthermore, the characteristics of the sample, consisting of young adults and university students, also hinder the generalization of the results to other age groups, just as the sociological characteristics of the sample make it desirable to study the issues raised in this study with a population with higher religiosity and spirituality. We should also not forget the nature of the constructs used, as, although the measures were diverse (i.e., three measures of meaning in life, three measures of religious orientation, and three measures of spirituality), in the case of religiosity variables, they had, by definition, a motivational orientation (i.e., religious orientation). Perhaps other measures, focused on the type of belief, the image of God, or the frequency and type of religious/spiritual practice, can yield results in a different direction. Another significant limitation arises from the results observed and the analyses conducted. The results pointed toward exploring possible interactions between variables. Although the purpose of this study was more limited, and the analysis of such results went beyond the scope and objectives of this article, future analyses could provide more specific information on the specific religious, spiritual, and meaning-related aspects that interact with each other, conditioning vigor, dedication, and absorption in learning.

Despite these limitations, we consider the research questions posed in this study to be innovative in the fields of the Psychology of Religion, Educational Psychology, and Developmental Psychology. The implications of the study can also be significant in a context where the comprehensive education of the individual is valued, as is the case in the concept of higher education in the European context: We observed that satisfaction with learning, which expresses a global cognitive assessment of a student's academic performance, considering the time spent and the results, is more affected by spiritual dimensions than religious ones. From an educational perspective, students might be more

satisfied with their learning by emphasizing the aspects and spiritual practices that have meaning for them, especially those that involve not so much knowledge as experiences of the transcendent in any of its manifestations (e.g., religious, spiritual, transpersonal, peak, etc.). The fact that none of the religious orientations or beliefs in modern spirituality (i.e., paranormal beliefs) were significant, but the experiential dimension was, reinforces the idea that in facilitating satisfaction with learning, the content is not as important as the actual experiences that genuinely contribute to students' spiritual growth.

Regarding learning engagement, the relevance of religious orientation was observed, extending the social relevance of religion observed in relation to other aspects (e.g., environmental, prosocial, etc.) to the realm of individual engagement of the person in their study and learning processes. The results show that this has a direct relationship with valuing religion as an important dimension of life, regardless of whether one is religious for intrinsic or extrinsic reasons, or has doubts. Even in this situation, it is essential for life to have meaning, which is also a characteristic of individuals for whom religion is significant. In this case, as in other studies, spirituality was not as relevant when it came to overall learning engagement. Similar results were observed concerning absorption in learning. These results do not imply that the religiosity of individuals should be fostered to make them committed to learning, which is not ethical and can even undermine the secular nature of public educational institutions. However, they do suggest that, for individuals for whom religiosity is important, and whether they have religious problems or not, appropriate religious and spiritual education should be provided and justified, as it was before, by the obligation to provide comprehensive higher education that considers all dimensions of the human being and the competencies specific to each of its areas (e.g., religious/spiritual, cognitive, affective, and physical). To facilitate effort and persistence, it is important to present an active attitude regarding the search for meaning: It does not matter as much whether life has meaning when it does, which anguishes and reduces effort. The results underscore the importance of fostering an active and attentive disposition in students to engage in activities that provide meaning, as well as paying attention to the content and reasons why a person is religious. The enthusiasm implied by dedication to learning is also affected, especially by the presence of meaning. It is important that the learning and study experiences offered in university classrooms genuinely relate to what students are interested in and concerned about. This is more important than their religious or spiritual dimension.

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